

Harwell village has a long history – we have been a village for 1000 years and although all villages need to grow and develop, we are in danger of losing our identity completely. Small developments in and around the village, of 20 or more houses can be coped with, but when these developments reach the hundreds, as shown in the local plan for the back of The Croft in Harwell, the whole structure of the village is compromised, let alone its character. Harwell's population of some 2300 people in 1000 dwellings, is set to quadruple with the extensive plans outlined in the Local Plan. Living in Harwell village I am aware that the village is only a small part of the Local Plan but I would argue that the proposals do not 'focus sustainable growth within the Science Vale Area'. It is the sustainability that I take issue with because what is planned for Harwell is planned for the whole county. How are you, as a Council hoping to 'promote thriving villages and rural communities whilst safeguarding the countryside and village character' when you are even suggesting houses in Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Villages and rural communities are being swamped and are in imminent danger of losing their village character, while the countryside, far from being safeguarded is under threat.

Grove Road, Harwell, which is the main route into and out of, this suggested estate of 200 houses, is already unsuitable for the volume of traffic entering and leaving the village and this is before the Taylor Wimpey build, of some 66 houses, on the other side of the road, (Greenfields or Alder View), is occupied. Grove Road is subject to flooding and is often closed for weeks or as last year, months at a time, has poor visibility and is very narrow, indeed there is a width restriction in place, conveniently ignored for the current contractors! There is no pavement down Grove Road from the village centre to Manor Green, 30+ houses, The Croft, 44 houses or the new development being built by Taylor Wimpey, 66 houses and, if the 200 houses at the back of the Croft are allowed, this problem of pedestrian access will be exacerbated greatly. Indeed, even if developers were willing to put a footpath in place, the road is too narrow at the High Street end to be a feasible option. This in effect, cuts the occupants of these developments off from services within the village, which are all on the High Street, such as our two shops, the pub, the Village Hall, bus stops and the hairdresser and from taking an active part in the life of the community. We have no doctors, dentists or secondary schools in the village, so residents have to drive or use the bus, putting extra strain on the poorly maintained roads. If we as a nation cannot sustain the present infrastructure of roads, drains, sewage and the myriad of other services that are already in place, how on earth will we cope with these added demands?

At what point will the Council 'reinforce the service centre roles of the main settlements across the district' and what exactly does that mean or can we expect? With the next round of cuts that Councils are expected to make, this whole plan seems to ill advised to say the least, or unsound if you prefer!

As well as the proposed development in the local plan of 200 houses, the Taylor Wimpey estate being built at present (66 houses) and the two other suggested sites, at Blenheim Hill (Bloor Homes 80+) and the Reading Road (45 houses) a total of almost 400 houses, we also have the Great Western Estate between Harwell and Didcot, but in the parish of Harwell, of some 2000+ houses and the promise, of several thousand more at Valley Park. Sustainable growth this is not! If these three developments get planning approval why do the Vale need to build another 200 houses?

I notice that 'Providing Supporting Infrastructure and Services' is Chapter 4 Policy no 7, this suggests it has less impact or importance than the other policies which seems to be a ridiculous approach. Surely preparing the area, whatever plan or project one is working on, should be the first priority not the last. Much of the infrastructure should surely be in place before the building of these vast estates.

Our infrastructure is stretched to capacity at the moment in all areas – roads, water, sewage, transport, doctors, dentists and schools etc. We seem to be living in and on a huge housing development at the present time, which is affecting all our lives. Living as we do on the border of VWHDC and South Oxfordshire means that we are surrounded by these huge building projects; we are already inundated with traffic and the problems this increase in traffic brings. The prospect of years of disruption and strain on services that we may have to endure until 2031 is not one that brings joy or enthusiasm for the Local Plan.

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