

Hallam Land Management

Unit 3 Apex Court, Woodlands, Bradley Stoke, Bristol BS32 4JT
t: 01454 625532 f: 01454 625534
e: hallamlandsw@henryboot.co.uk
www.hallamland.co.uk

Our ref:

Your ref:

Date: 6 October 2015

To all members of Vale of White Horse District Council Planning Committee

Dear Councillor,

Vale of White Horse District Council Planning Committee
Application no. P14/V2873/O
Valley Park, Didcot

I am writing to you regarding the application by Hallam Land Management, Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd and Persimmon Homes to build new homes at Valley Park, on the western edge of Didcot. Amended plans have just been submitted to Vale of White Horse District Council, and I very much hope you will feel able to support these when they go before your committee in the near future.

We have been through an extensive process of consultation with officers and other consultees (including statutory consultees) to produce the amended masterplan for Valley Park, which I am pleased to say is now agreed in principle with officers at your council. Our proposals have been the subject of a public exhibition in June 2014, four design reviews with the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), a masterplan review by IBI Group, a Development Forum meeting with your council in April 2015, and regular meetings since then with council officers. These meetings have led to a number of design changes, including a reduction of 196 in the number of homes to be accommodated within the planning application site area (now 4,254).



There are many compelling reasons why we feel Valley Park deserves your support:

New homes

Hallam Land Management, Taylor Wimpey UK Ltd and Persimmon all have reputations for delivering high-quality, sustainable developments across the country. Our aim is to deliver reasonably-priced, well-designed homes for the Vale area, helping young families to make their first move onto the housing ladder. Valley Park is an appropriately sustainable location to deliver a considerable number of new homes of different types alongside new infrastructure, protecting the rural villages of the Vale from excessive housing development.

Affordable housing

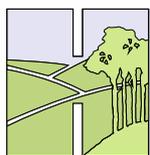
The Oxfordshire SHMA concluded that there is a “significant” need for new affordable housing in Oxfordshire. A proportion of the homes at Valley Park will be defined as ‘affordable housing’, making a major contribution towards reducing the council waiting list.

Science Vale UK

4,254 homes at Valley Park will help your council take full advantage of the opportunities presented by Science Vale UK. By placing new homes in close proximity to Harwell Campus, Milton Park and Culham Science Centre, Valley Park will help grow these important employment centres, help promote the wider Vale area as a sustainable business location, and help create the 23,000 new jobs your council wishes to see in the district by 2031. Other employment centres nearby include Southmead Industrial Estate, The Orchard Centre, Didcot town centre, Didcot Power Station, Vauxhall Barracks and Didcot Community Hospital. As well as providing housing for the built-up demand within Didcot and surrounding areas, the development will provide homes for employees of the many rapidly growing businesses in Science Vale UK and will support the council’s aspiration for significant economic growth in the SVUK area.

New schools & community facilities

4,254 homes at Valley Park will provide the critical mass of housing needed to provide significant new facilities for new and existing residents, including two 2-form-entry primary schools (one with room to expand further if necessary), land for a special needs school, a mixed-use local centre with shops and other community facilities, and a further secondary local centre to the south of the site. These will supplement existing facilities in the Great Western Park development.



New link road

We will also make land available to Oxfordshire County Council to facilitate the Harwell Link Road, a new strategic link from the B4493 to the A417. Additionally, the main access roundabout from the A4130 will allow for a connection to the Science Bridge – proposed by Oxfordshire County Council to cross the A4130 and Bristol to London railway line – to help enable its delivery.

Open space

Around 23% of Valley Park's residential area will be informal, useable green space, exceeding the 15% open space requirement in your council's Local Plan, and 12% of this area will be dedicated to sports pitches, in line with Sport England recommendations. An additional 3.11 hectares will be used for allotments. The bridleway that runs across Valley Park – known as Cow Lane – will be retained, as will all other public rights of way and the stream that passes through the site (with one footpath being slightly diverted).

We will also retain existing hedges and trees where possible. There will be a new additional footpath network introduced to supplement and improve the existing network and there will be significant new planting of hedgerows and trees.

Improved drainage

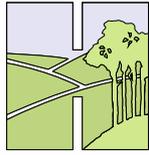
We will incorporate sustainable drainage systems, including attenuation ponds to store surface water run-off and release it into the formal drainage system at 60% - 70% the current rate. This will have a significant positive impact on flood risk in the wider area.

Schools within walking distance

Valley Park is perfectly placed to link to existing facilities in Didcot and those already provided and planned as part of the Great Western Park expansion. The secondary school now being built at Great Western Park was planned to also meet need from Valley Park, while other secondary schools nearby include Didcot Girls' School (3.1km) and St. Birinus School (4.5km). A new secondary school is also being provided north of Ladygrove.

New bus routes

Valley Park has been designed to allow for two high-quality bus routes to pass through the development: one running south (from Harwell and beyond) to north (Didcot station and beyond) and one running east (Didcot town centre and beyond) to west (to Milton Park and beyond). The provision of these services will be refined and agreed with Oxfordshire County Council.



The majority of homes at Valley Park will be within 400 metres of a bus stop and the layout has been designed to provide maximum flexibility for bus operators in choosing routes, integrating with the road system for Great Western Park.

Limited impact on Harwell

The facilities that Valley Park residents will use are either located on-site or have been planned for at the integrated Great Western Park development. As such any additional use of facilities in Harwell should be minimal. Furthermore, the proposed Harwell Link Road would ensure local traffic heading for the Reading area, the A34 or Harwell Campus no longer needs to pass through the centre of Harwell village.

The A34 forms the western boundary of Valley Park and serves as a clear defensible boundary for the development, while a new green buffer between the road and the development will further help to mark the limit of Didcot's built-up area, and we have taken on board the views of Harwell Parish Council in revising our treatment of the Wantage/Didcot Road. Valley Park is in a valley and therefore will have very limited visibility from Harwell.

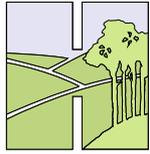
Limited impact on landscape

A full Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment of Valley Park has been carried out by Environmental Dimension Partnership Ltd. The Assessment commented that *'in landscape terms, the proposed Valley Park would be perceived as an extension of residential development of a similar type and character to Great Western Park with which it would form a natural extension of the western edge of Didcot up to the A34.'* Valley Park is neither in the Green Belt nor in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and is not covered by any statutory designations for landscape, natural conservation or heritage.

Traffic impact

High-quality bus, footpath and cycle links to local travel hubs and employment centres will reduce the number of residents who need to travel by car, and the close proximity of these places will make these alternative travel options particularly attractive. The design and layout of footpaths and cycleways will ensure permeability throughout Valley Park for pedestrians and cyclists, with links to the existing network of Great Western Park and external footpaths.

Regarding off-site highway impact, transport modelling is yet to be completed and a revised transport assessment will be submitted soon as a further amendment to the application. An Agreed Position Statement on this issue has been agreed with Vale of White Horse District Council and Oxfordshire County Council.



**Hallam Land
Management**

New Homes Bonus payments

The New Homes Bonus means Vale of White Horse District Council enjoys an automatic, six-year, 100 per cent increase in the amount of council tax revenue derived from each new house built in Vale of White Horse. Accordingly, new homes at Valley Park would provide Vale of White Horse District Council with a significant increase in council tax revenue.

Vale of White Horse Local Plan

Valley Park is allocated for at least 2,550 new homes in your council's Local Plan, submitted to the Secretary of State in March 2015. If our application for 4,254 homes is consented it is unlikely that the full development will be built out during the lifetime of the Local Plan to 2031, but enough will be built to support the council's required delivery of homes in the Plan period. Valley Park is of a sufficient size to accommodate more homes than stated in the Local Plan, some of which will be delivered post-2031, and by masterplanning the site now for 4,254 homes we can ensure that a comprehensive approach is taken that will integrate effectively with neighbouring Great Western Park and employment sites and deliver considerable additional benefits for new and existing residents, as this letter has outlined.

I hope you will agree that our proposal for Valley Park represents a great opportunity to provide much-needed new homes, facilities and infrastructure for the Vale, and I hope you will vote to approve our application when the time comes. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Andy Birch". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Andy Birch

Regional Manager

abirch@hallamland.co.uk

Copy to: All members of Vale of White Horse District Council Planning Committee
Cllr Reg Waite, Blewbury and Harwell ward, Vale of White Horse District Council
Cty Cllr Stewart Lilly, Hendreds and Harwell division, Oxfordshire County Council

Enclosures: Valley Park site plan
Photographs of Valley Park and its surroundings today



Valley Park today, looking northeast and north



New facilities under construction at Great Western Park, adjacent to Valley Park