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Date: 16/12/2014 18:09
Subject: Response to Consultation on draft Local Plan Part One 2031
Attachments: Hindhaugh_Assocs_VWHDC_Local_Plan_-_FINAL__Infrastructure_requirements_Dec14(1) copy.pdf;
CPRE_OXON_RESPONSE_TO_VALE_LOCAL_PLAN_-_12_Dec_2014_-_final_draft (2) copy.pdf

Vale Local Plan

Response to Consultation on the draft Local Plan Part One 2031 - by email to planning.policy@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

From:
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Woolstone Parish, wish to participate, via a WVV (Western Vale Villages) representative, at the oral examination of the Local Plan and to present further and more detailed evidence in support of all of the representations set out in the CPRE document attached. In particular we wish the oral evidence and any further written evidence which may be required of him by the Inspector to be presented by our road transport consultant Bob Hindhaugh and/or his associate Simon Boone.

We are also particularly concerned about the impacts of the Plan on the already seriously congested A420. The Plan proposes 1,650 homes in the Western Vale, of which 1,450 would be adjacent to Shrivenham and Faringdon close to the A420. This is in addition to the 8,000 houses allocated in the Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 Submission Document, June 2013, as part of a mixed use development to the east of the A419 and north and south of the A420. In its Evaluation of Transport Impacts Stage 2 and 3a Report, the Vale rightly identified that the proposed strategic sites are likely to lead to some impacts on the A420, particularly around Faringdon. The plan makes no realistic attempt to provide for employment growth in the immediate area to counter the inevitable out-commuting that will result. It seems to rely almost entirely on existing available employment land at Faringdon which has been available for over 10 years without any interest from either developers or occupiers despite various initiatives from Government and Local Bodies to stimulate development.

From a market perspective this is not surprising as Faringdon is not and never has been a viable commercial centre as envisaged and simply building large quantities of new housing will not change this. There is no employment expansion potential at Shrivenham and with considerably more prime opportunities emerging only a few miles away in Swindon and to the east with the Science Vale growth initiative, it is inevitable that businesses will prefer to locate in these areas, particularly when the main arterial route serving Faringdon and Shrivenham, the A420, is so notoriously congested.

The plan proposals are therefore simply not sustainable without a clear and unequivocal commitment, as a precondition to development, to the essential upgrading of the A420 (as well as the other main routes through the Vale- A34/A417/A338) as outlined in the document attached prepared by Hindhaugh Associates following on from their TIA produced in the Spring of 2014; and the recognition of and a plan to deter, the potential for "ratrunning" through the Vale villages with the enormous environmental damage that will result.

In recognition of the adverse impact that these various housing developments would have on the Western Vale, Swindon Borough Council, the Vale District Council, Oxfordshire County Council and the Western Vale Villages - comprising of a group of affected parishes, entered into a Statement of Common Ground in April 2014. This statement sets out the common ground between the parties with regard to the Swindon Borough Local Plan and outlines all the Councils' commitments to upgrading and improving road capacity on the A420. We are aware that until very recently no meaningful attempt has been made by any of the authorities to advance this understanding and turn it into policy.

We are aware that Oxfordshire County Council has committed to producing a Route Strategy for the A420 as part of its development of its new Local Transport Plan, but understand that this will not be finalised until the Spring of 2015. There is clearly therefore an obvious disconnect in that the urgently required modifications and improvements to the A420 will not be addressed until after the consultation on the Vale Local Plan closes. How can the housing allocations possibly be considered sustainable without an understanding of the infrastructure proposals in the Transport Plan?

It is obvious that essential improvements to the A420 should be a precondition to any housing development in the Western Vale. We therefore endorse the Western Vale Villages submission on Core Policy 7 of the Plan, which outlines modifications and improvements to the A420.

Uffington and the Smaller Villages - In the WVV's response to both the February 2013 consultation on Local Plan Part 1 and the Housing Delivery Update we questioned whether Uffington should be reclassified as a Smaller Village rather than a Larger Village because of its unique proximity to the AONB and the very rural nature of the roads serving the village. There can be few residents in, and visitors to, the Vale of White Horse who would want to see Uffington developed in the same irresponsible manner as you have now proposed for most of the other Larger Villages and we repeat our request to allow it to be classed as a Smaller Village.

