

Objection to West Way Plans of Sep 2014

My main concerns are that:

- 1) the proposed scheme isn't viable and will fail, leaving an enormous white elephant in Botley and no plan for how to recover,
- 2) the entire centre of Botley will have been destroyed and we are without services for years or forever,
- 3) even if this scheme IS finally a financial success, the traffic generation required to bring in the money necessary will bring us to gridlock and pollute the air so that it's unhealthy for future generations to live here. I cannot see any winning scenario.

Viability:

- 1) a superstore has been part of the plan from the beginning, and Doric still don't have a food store operator.
- 2) Food shopping patterns are changing so quickly that what seems a good idea today is thrown out tomorrow. The era of the superstore has come and gone. As recently as last week, we saw in the Guardian the story of the new Tesco in Chatteris Cambridgeshire that will never open. Is this why no food store operator wants to get involved with this?
- 3) These plans include land that Doric don't own, and that the Vale must compulsorily purchase. In addition to the ethical problem of the Vale compulsorily purchasing land for a scheme that sees the Vale profit financially, it seems unlikely that the Church of England or the Howse family will concede without a court battle.
- 4) If the CPO fight goes to court, it could be hard to make the case that seizing these properties is in the public interest. There is wide public opposition. (Surely these court cases will have to be heard *before* any demolition begins?)
- 5) The Vale's Retail Study of 2013 defined our objectively assessed needs. The retail offering in this Botley plan is several times larger than what's required, in some cases for the entire Vale.
- 6) The Retail Study found scope for one more cinema in the Vale. This plan proposes 6 in Botley. Surely that would mean no more cinemas for any other Vale location, such as Abingdon, who really want a cinema.
- 7) Doric say this student housing plan is to benefit Oxford City, not the Vale and not Botley. Yet Doric haven't discussed it with Oxford City. In fact, notwithstanding the NPPF's very clear statements about duty for authorities to cooperate with near neighbours, Vale don't appear to have discussed this student housing plan with City either.
- 8) Doric claim the main reason for building student housing in Botley is to free up family homes currently occupied by students (HMOs). Their own Saville's report on the demand for student housing mentions Botley only in the legend to a map in an appendix; it says 0%-1% of Botley houses are student occupied. That's 0 to 20 houses.
- 9) Doric say this housing will be occupied by students from Oxford University and Oxford Brookes University. But the decision-makers in those two universities have stated unequivocally, in writing, that they aren't interested. If there are no university students to live in this housing, what are the plans then? I would recommend that Vale look into Mace's most recent student housing in Commercial Way London, to understand what happened with that white elephant, before committing to this proposal for Botley.
- 10) Student housing underpins the viability of the whole scheme. The bars, restaurants, cinemas, etc all rely on student spend. If the student housing fails, the whole scheme fails.

Cllr Debby Hallett 13 Oct 14

- 11) If, after such investigation and discussion with stakeholders, Vale consider this to be a good idea, then we need planning obligations that equal those in Oxford City. Planning obligations (s106) could cover car parking, and contributions to affordable housing elsewhere in the Vale. My rough calculations are that Doric would need to contribute over £2.5m to Oxford City's affordable housing, if this student housing were built there (£140 per Sq m). What is the Vale's requirement for contribution?
- 12) Doric's original plans included a health centre that would partially offset the students' need for healthcare near where they live. In the amended plans, there is no health centre or doctors surgery. We know our current surgery is over-subscribed. What will these hundreds of students do?

Loss of services:

Doric propose to demolish all of central Botley and leave us without services, in order to build something they claim will be better.

- 1) We lose our food shops, butcher, banks, chemists, cafes, optometrist, post office, barbers, hair salon, other various shops and businesses, for years or forever.
- 2) There's a net loss in housing. We lose residential flats and age-restricted housing.
- 3) We lose the vicarage of St Peter's and St Paul's; there are no plans to replace.
- 4) We lose the Seacourt community hall and Baptist church for years. Both of these facilities provide the main community halls for events and classes.
- 5) We lose the ability to shop locally for years. In order to do this, Doric need to have the Vale compulsorily purchase land that Doric don't own.

This community is to be ravaged by the demolition of our serviceable local centre, to provide a behemoth that serves no one. It's only worth knocking things down if the new stuff will be an improvement and a success. Hence the viability question (above) is most germane.

What does 'success look like'?

If the scheme doesn't fail in the ways listed above, and the residents make it through the years of construction and lack of local services, then what do we have in Botley?

We will have hundreds of students with no particular tie to this community. We also will have thousands of cars arriving here to work, live, shop and spend. Where will the employees, cinema goers, shoppers, hotel guests, students and service vehicles all park?

Success of this scheme depends on people coming to Botley from a wide catchment area. The traffic generated from people arriving by car will clog roads already at capacity. Botley is an AQMA, currently the only place in the Vale where pollution is above the EU threshold. The projected added traffic will make this a stressful and unhealthy and community to live in.

In short:

- Duty to cooperate: not met
- Case for student housing: not made
- Retail offer: many times larger than objectively assessed need
- Student Housing: no case, no management, no track record, no cooperation
- Environmental impact: severe
- NPPF doesn't support plans that damage a community. These plans destroy our community.