

## Written answers to questions from Members at Council 10 December 2014

### 1. Question from Councillor Pat Lonergan to Councillor Mike Murray, Cabinet member for planning policy

What system was used to rank and evaluate potential strategic housing sites considered for inclusion in the Local Plan 2031?

The Council followed a comprehensive process to assess sites for inclusion in the local plan. This is described in detail in the Sites Selection Topic Paper available from the council website:

<http://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/services-and-advice/planning-and-building/planning-policy/new-local-plan-2031/evidence-base>

The key stages are summarised by the attached table and involved investigating all land around each of the market towns, local service centres and larger villages across the district and assessing them for their suitability.

Stage	Description of process
Stage 1	<b>Identification of potential sites</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Informed by Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA)</li><li>• Investigation of land around main settlements and at employment locations</li></ul>
Stage 2	<b>Initial Site Filters</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Site size threshold (200 homes)</li><li>• Exclusion of sites with planning status</li></ul>
Stage 3	<b>Identification of key constraints/ opportunities and further site sift</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fit with spatial strategy, supporting Science Vale and main settlements</li><li>• Constraints (AONB, Flood Zone, Green Belt, and others)</li><li>• Level of facilities and services available at site locations</li></ul>
Stage 4	<b>Detailed evidence testing, informal consultation and sustainability appraisal</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Landscape Capacity Study</li><li>• Transport Modelling</li><li>• Viability Assessment</li><li>• Historic Landscape Character Assessment</li><li>• Green Belt Review</li><li>• Informal consultation with infrastructure providers and key stakeholders</li><li>• Sustainability Appraisal (SA)</li></ul>
Stage 5	<b>Identification of Preferred Sites</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To meet objectively assessed housing need in the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment</li><li>• Sites which can deliver homes in the first five years identified to contribute towards the five year housing land supply</li><li>• Preferred sites included in February 2014 Local Plan Part 1 Consultation Document</li></ul>

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### **2. Question from Councillor Andrew Skinner to Councillor Reg Waite, Cabinet member for human resources**

Internal Audit has recently lost employees who had lengthy commutes. In the last 12 months, how many council employees have left, and, of these, how many mentioned difficulty affording housing in the area in their exit interview?

**Over the past 12 months, 52 employees have left the Council. Of those, 17 completed an exit questionnaire. None of them mentioned any difficulty in affording housing in the area. Of those leaving in the last 12 months almost half did so due to the ending of temporary contracts, retirement or redundancy as a result of structural changes. Of the 17 completing questionnaires none cited affordable housing as their reason for leaving.**

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### **3. Question from Councillor Judy Roberts to Councillor Matthew Barber, Cabinet member for legal and democratic services**

What response should petitioners expect when a petition is presented at full council?

**Petitioners who present a petition to Council are normally advised that their petition will be passed to the relevant officer or committee for consideration.**

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### **4. Question from Councillor Debby Hallett to Councillor Elaine Ware, Cabinet member for economy leisure and property**

What's the status of the free wifi the Vale planned to install in Botley?

**The free wi-fi is installed at West Way, Botley and is operational. However, there remains an outstanding issue of landlord's consent for the placement of some of the equipment. Vale officers are working with all parties to resolve this issue as quickly as possible and will not be promoting the service until consent has been obtained.**

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### **5. Question from Councillor Judy Roberts to Councillor Matthew Barber, Leader of the council**

In the light of hundreds of people objecting to the Doric plans and signing petitions asking the Vale to terminate their land sale contract with Doric, what does the Leader of the Council have to say to the people of Botley?

**Throughout the progress of the application I have reminded Cllr Roberts that the Vale is not the applicant in the planning application and it must, and has successfully, separated its dual roles as planning authority and land owner. The Vale as land owner did not put forward the proposals and I have personally and publicly raised a number of the concerns of the community with Doric. The Council's planning committee has independently considered the facts of the application including representations from both the applicant and objectors and unanimously rejected the proposal. The Council has a contractual arrangement with Doric which is extended by their decision to appeal. Whilst I am disappointed by the appeal, I am confident that an alternative solution can be found and have already committed to meeting with West Way Community Concern in the New Year.**

**6. Question from Councillor Debby Hallett to Councillor Elaine Ware, Cabinet member for economy leisure and property**

In June 2013, after completion of the Leisure and Sports Facilities Study, the Cabinet Member said there was to be a “follow up piece of work” that would include surveys of community or village halls. When is this survey due to be completed, and when will the report be available?

**The surveys of community and village halls form part of the survey work that is being carried out currently for the joint playing pitch strategy and associated work. Survey work takes a number of months to complete, particularly given the need to capture both winter (football and rugby) and summer (cricket) seasons for the strategy. The report on the strategy and associated work is expect in summer of 2015.**

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**7. Question from Councillor Margaret Crick to Councillor Matthew Barber, Leader of the council**

Councillor Lovatt has inferred in the press (Abingdon Herald, 9th April) that developers behind the north Abingdon housing schemes could also pay for the £12m conversion of Lodge Hill to a diamond interchange. Would the leader confirm or correct this?

**The Publication Version of the Local Plan 2031 sets out clear policy requirements for each strategic allocation. The Lodge Hill slip roads has £9m, funded via the LEP and the balance will be secured via a contribution under s106 by each of the sites proposed to the north of Abingdon-on-Thames (North Abingdon; North West Abingdon; North West Radley and South Kennington). The amount of the individual contribution is a matter for negotiation and has not yet been finalised.**

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**8. Question from Councillor Tony de Vere to Councillor Elaine Ware Cabinet member for economy, leisure and property**

Can the Leader inform Council what the position is with the redevelopment of the Charter area in Abingdon?

**Officers continue to meet regularly with Scottish Widows to discuss the Charter area. Discussions to secure a potential supermarket operator is proving difficult and officers are now considering what alternative options are available to the Council in relation to this site. Good progress is being made in relation to the letting of the new units in Bury Street with further tenant announcements likely in the coming months. Cllr de Vere wil recall that at the time the previous administration signed the agreements over Bury Street and the Charter we warned of the danger of how the deal as structured with two separate agreements. This is however the situation that we inherited and we will continue to seek the best results for the people of Abingdon and the wider Vale.**

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**9. Question from Councillor Catherine Webber to Councillor Charlotte Dickson, Chairman of the General Licensing Committee**

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Please would the Chair update the Council on the state of the AQMAs in Abingdon, Botley and Marcham?

**Abingdon:** There has been some reduction in NO2 levels over the last couple of years. If this improvement continues, next year we will consider reducing the size of the air quality management area (AQMA).

**Botley:** The NO2 levels in Botley have remained constant over the last 7 years and remain above the Air Quality Objective. It is very difficult to influence the number of vehicles on the A34. We will be looking at the feasibility of erecting barriers along the southbound carriageway and the district wide air quality action plan has actions to reduce the overall emission which hopefully will have some effect on the NO2 emissions on the A34.

**Marcham:** We will be carrying out a consultation process with residents in Marcham about the AQMA and in early 2015 we will be taking a report to Licensing Committee recommending that the council formally declare the area.

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### **10. Question from Councillor Jenny Hannaby to Councillor Roger Cox, Cabinet member for planning**

Please would the Cabinet Member give the Council a brief update on the Grove Airfield s106 negotiations?

**I am delighted to inform Council that after much detailed work, effort and firm negotiations, officers have successfully concluded section 106 negotiations.**

**Members will recall that with the land being in multiple ownerships and with major infrastructure contributions being sought, the discussions have been particularly complicated.**

**Additional time has been spent in recent weeks in seeking to meet the needs of Grove Parish Council in relation to the public open space.**

**The S106 agreement is now with the developers to be signed by individual landowners.**

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### **11. Question from Councillor Julie Mayhew-Archer to Councillor Mike Murray, cabinet member for planning policy**

Has land been reserved in the Local Plan 2031 for the necessary widening and/or dualing along Dunmore Road and Twelve Acre Drive, which would be needed if the housing proposed in the plan is delivered?

**The Council is working closely with Oxfordshire County Council and independent consultants to investigate any impacts on the highway network as a consequence of local plan proposed allocations. The detailed master planning stage of work, to be progressed to inform a planning application, will investigate the specific requirements for road improvements and the necessary details, should this be necessary. Land is not required to be safeguarded (as for example with Lodge Hill) as the land likely to be required for any widening would be in the**

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**same ownership as the application site and controlled through the planning application process.**

### **12. Question from Councillor Richard Webber to Councillor Elaine Ware, Cabinet member for economy, leisure and property**

Please could the Cabinet Member explain the thinking behind the “option packages” being offered as part of the consultation on Abbey Meadow?

**The council has committed itself to creating a vision for the future of Abbey Garden and Meadow in Abingdon. We think it is important the vision reflects the views and aspirations of people living in the town and the rest of the district.**

**The project has the opportunity to bring about significant improvements to the site and have a positive impact on the attractiveness of the town as a whole. It is not, however, without significant risk.**

**If public consultation on the project is poorly managed, there is a risk of raising public expectations which cannot be met. The worst case scenario is a high-profile consultation which results in a ‘wish list’ of desired improvements to the site which are not viable.**

**To mitigate this risk, we have developed are three scenarios through an initial consultations phase involving councillors, key stakeholders and some local residents.**

- **a focus on structured sport and recreation (i.e. improve what’s already there)**
- **a focus on tourism and leisure (i.e. develop a café / restaurant on site to make it a more informal open access, all year round venue)**
- **a focus on green open space (i.e. low key development that is open access and makes the most of the natural riverside landscape).**

**The scenarios afford the council some degree of confidence that it can deliver on at least some of the improvements stakeholders have put forward.**

**There will be a widely publicised, high profile vote on the three scenarios in early 2015. The vote will give people the opportunity to get behind the vision for Abbey Garden and Meadow that pleases them the most.**

**We will also look to provide people with an opportunity to comment on some of the specific improvements that could be made for each scenario.**

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### **13. Question from Councillor Jim Halliday to Councillor Mike Murray, Cabinet member for planning policy**

Please could he state how many Local Plan leaflets and CIL leaflets were printed this Autumn, the cost of each print run, the number of households and business each leaflet was mailed to, and the cost of each mailshot?

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**60,000 copies of the Local Plan leaflet (The Future of the Vale) and 60,000 copies of the CIL and Design Guide Leaflet (Supporting Growth in the Vale).**

**The combined design and printing costs were £7,117.**

**The two leaflets were distributed to 52,499 residential premises**

**The total cost of distribution was £34,012.78, a delivery cost of 32p per leaflet per household.**

**The total cost of design, print and delivery of both leaflets per household was 78p**

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**14. Question from Councillor Jeanette Halliday to Councillor Matthew Barber, Leader of the council**

Did you review the content of the letters concerning individual election registration before they were sent out?

**No. However I, along with all councillors, received a copy of the letter via email on 3 November 2014 prior to its despatch.**

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**15. Question from Councillor Jim Halliday to Councillor Matthew Barber, Leader of the council**

Please could he state how many letters were dispatched to residents about the introduction of Individual Electoral Registration, the cost of mailing these letters, and whether the Council received any funding from Government for this exercise, and if so how much ?

**The introduction of Individual Electoral Registration is ongoing as we remain in a transition phase and as required we continue to mail residents. This response relates to the mailings required as part of the transition phase that has involved the use of the print company to produce two mailings of Invitations to Register (ITRs) and Household Enquiry Forms (HEFs) as well as a third print run of these documents for the canvass: these mailings relate to those electors that we could not immediately confirm on the electoral register. So far, the print company has printed and posted in the region of 30,000 ITRs and 17,000 HEFs.**

**Each ITR or HEF sent can generate a response from the elector on which administrators act and this is likely to generate yet another letter. These additional costs are not referred to here as they continue to accumulate.**

**The print company also sent out 82,933 confirmation letters.**

**Costs via the print company have amounted to £14,311.70. Postage costs have amounted to £24,485.21. The council received £40,477 in grant money.**