

# **Supplementary Papers**

## **Council**

held in the Guildhall, Abingdon  
on Wednesday, 11 December 2013 at 7.00 pm

### **Open to the public including the press**

#### **45. Statements, petitions and questions from the public relating to matters affecting the Council (Page 2)**

Appended is a response from Councillor Matthew Barber to the following question raised by Dr Les Clyne:

"Please could the Leader of the Council comment on the following observations and question:

On Wednesday 4 December the Vale Planning Committee ratified a recommendation from officers that the Grove airfield development should go ahead with in the order of 35 per cent affordable housing on the site. When Councillor Hayward queried the term 'in the order of 35 per cent' no clear response was given by the Development Manager. Policy H5 of the Vale states that 40 per cent of dwellings shall be affordable housing. In fact the officers report says that at present the developers are only willing to offer 32 per cent. Whilst it is commendable that the Planning Committee has recommended a minimum of 30 per cent affordable rented in line with Policy H5 and supplementary Vale housing guidance, it is regrettable that;

1. they have not met the 40 per cent overall target for rented and shared ownership;
2. that it was not explained clearly to the meeting in general, and councillors in particular, that the officers recommendation breached the Vale's policies.

Is it possible to instruct the officers to obtain at least 40 per cent via the Section 106 negotiations, or failing that at least 35 per cent, in both cases without jeopardising the 30 per cent minimum affordable rented requirement approved by the committee (in view of the continuing escalation of applicants on the Vale's housing waiting list, up from 1175 in April 2013 to 1272 by 29 November 2013)"?

#### **46. Questions under standing order 12 (Pages 3 - 4)**

Attached is a response from Councillor Matthew Barber to question 3 raised by Councillor Jenny Hannaby:

'Please can he outline the timetable for improving the road network in the Wantage Grove area, which, as he is aware, is about to see construction of a large number of new houses and also outline how he expects these vital road improvement to be paid for?'

**Written replies to questions  
from the public at the Council  
meeting held on 11 December  
2013**



This document sets out the written replies to a question asked at the Council meeting on 11 December 2013.

Question from Dr Les Clyne to Councillor Matthew Barber, Leader of the Council

"Please could the Leader of the Council comment on the following observations and question:

On Wednesday 4 December the Vale Planning Committee ratified a recommendation from officers that the Grove airfield development should go ahead with in the order of 35 per cent affordable housing on the site. When Councillor Hayward queried the term 'in the order of 35 per cent' no clear response was given by the Development Manager. Policy H5 of the Vale states that 40 per cent of dwellings shall be affordable housing. In fact the officers report says that at present the developers are only willing to offer 32 per cent. Whilst it is commendable that the Planning Committee has recommended a minimum of 30 per cent affordable rented in line with Policy H5 and supplementary Vale housing guidance, it is regrettable that;

1. they have not met the 40 per cent overall target for rented and shared ownership;
2. that it was not explained clearly to the meeting in general, and councillors in particular, that the officers recommendation breached the Vale's policies.

Is it possible to instruct the officers to obtain at least 40 per cent via the Section 106 negotiations, or failing that at least 35 per cent, in both cases without jeopardising the 30 per cent minimum affordable rented requirement approved by the committee (in view of the continuing escalation of applicants on the Vale's housing waiting list, up from 1175 in April 2013 to 1272 by 29 November 2013)?"

Councillor Matthew Barber responded that it was not possible to instruct officers to obtain at least 40 per cent. It would be possible to instruct officers to get the highest proportion possible given the viability assessment and the need for other infrastructure, and we will do so. He was happy to say that in the case of 40 per cent or 35 per cent he would wish to maintain the 30 per cent minimum of affordable rented accommodation. He undertook to provide a written response to Dr Clyne.

**Councillor Matthew Barber's written response:**

"No, it is not possible to instruct the officers to obtain at least 40%. It is possible to instruct the officers to get the highest proportion possible given the viability assessment and the need for other infrastructure, and we will do so. I am happy to say that in the case of 40% or 35% I would wish to maintain the 30% minimum of affordable rented accommodation."

## Leader of the Council

Cllr Matthew Barber



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18<sup>th</sup> February 2014

Dear Jenny,

I write in response to your question at Council in December. I apologise that I have not been able to respond sooner, I was hoping to have some more detail to be able to disclose, but at the time of writing this is not available and so with the next meeting of Council approaching I am responding as fully as I can.

As you know these matters are still subject to the complex and confidential negotiations for the Section 106 Agreement on the Grove Airfield development and of course the forthcoming planning application and subsequent Section 106 Agreement for Crab Hill, due to be considered later this week. Neither of us will want to jeopardise these negotiations as I know we both want to secure the best possible infrastructure package for the people of Grove, Wantage and the wider Vale.

Once the Section 106 Agreements are in place I think it will be useful to publish full details of how we intend to achieve the infrastructure requirements for this part of the District. This will fit with the Cabinet's intention of publishing an Infrastructure and Community Benefits Strategy and Area Action Plan for the Science Vale area. The funding for both of these projects I am sure you will be extremely supportive of at our Council meeting.

We are obviously concerned to deliver all of the required infrastructure; schools, health, leisure etc, but you rightly highlight roads as being of particular concern in these cases.

The Vale has already achieved a great deal in leading the fight for improvements to the A417 at Rowstock and Featherbed Lane, and continue to press the County Council to prioritise cycle improvements along that route. We have also been instrumental in securing significant funding for the Milton Interchange and Chilton Junction. These may seem remote from the matters being discussed at Grove and Wantage, but as we all know Harwell Oxford and Milton Park are likely to be large employers of those living in these new developments, as well as many who live in Wantage and Grove already, and so improvements to the East will be to the benefit of residents. Similarly I am a firm believer that improvements to cycling provision

along the A417 route will not just be to the benefit of cyclist, but to other road users. That is why we continue to prioritise these matters in discussions around infrastructure.

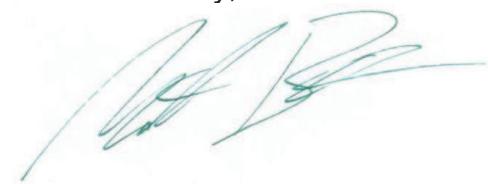
To answer your specific question about funding, we are seeking significant contributions from developers from all of the major schemes in the area, as well as calling on the County Council to prioritise projects in the Grove and Wantage area and to assist with delivery of the Wantage Eastern Link Road by prioritising this scheme for funding from the Department of Transport distributed via the Oxfordshire Local Transport Board. We will also continue to seek additional funding from Government and other sources, as we have been so successful in doing so far. This spread of funding options will help to ensure that we are able to deliver the projects, rather than relying on one source of funding which could falter.

As you are aware the Council has also secured the ability to borrow at favourable rates to help accelerate the delivery of infrastructure. This will be on the basis of repayment from other sources, it is not currently out intention to borrow to fund transport projects directly as it does not appear that this will be necessary.

As for timing, again I am afraid the trigger points for all developments are part of the confidential negotiations which are ongoing, but you can be assured that wherever possible I am pushing for early delivery, ideally prior to development. In order to get the maximum benefit we need to see these improvements in place now and to minimise or eliminate any period during which further pressure is placed on existing infrastructure.

I look forward to being able to update all councillors further in due course once negotiations have been concluded.

Yours sincerely,



Cllr Matthew Barber  
Leader of the Council