

# DC.128

**MINUTES OF A MEETING  
OF THE DEVELOPMENT CONTROL  
COMMITTEE**

**HELD AT THE CIVIC HALL, WANTAGE  
ON WEDNESDAY, 3RD DECEMBER,  
2008 AT 6.30PM**

**Open to the Public, including the Press**

PRESENT:

MEMBERS: Councillors Richard Gibson (Chair), John Woodford (Vice-Chair), Paul Burton, Roger Cox, Terry Cox, Mary de Vere, Richard Farrell, Jenny Hannaby, Anthony Hayward, Sue Marchant, Jerry Patterson, Terry Quinlan, Val Shaw and Margaret Turner.

SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS: Councillor John Morgan for Councillor Matthew Barber.

NON MEMBERS: Councillors Tony de Vere, Angela Lawrence and Richard Webber.

OFFICERS: Katie Barrett, Tim Treuherz, Rodger Hood and Carole Nicholl.

NUMBER OF MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: 15

DC.172      **NOTIFICATION OF SUBSTITUTES AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

The attendance of a Substitute Member who had been authorised to attend in accordance with Standing Order 17(1) was recorded as referred to above with an apology for absence having been received from Councillor Matthew Barber.

Apologies for absence were also recorded from Councillor Melinda Tilley who had intended to be present at the meeting in her Ex-Officio capacity as Leader of the Opposition.

DC.173      **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Margaret Turner declared a personal interest in the Local Development Framework: Core Strategy Preferred Options in so far as a number of the speakers were known to her.

Councillor Jerry Patterson declared a personal interest in the Local Development Framework: Core Strategy Preferred Options in so far as he was a Member of on the Executive Regional Planning Committee of the South East England Regional Assembly and also a member of the Central Oxfordshire Steering Group.

Councillor Roger Cox declared a personal interest in the Local Development Framework: Core Strategy Preferred Options in so far as he was a Member of the Faringdon Town Council and had voted in support of the Faringdon Plan which had included development at Wicklesham Quarry.

DC.174      **URGENT BUSINESS AND CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Chair introduced himself and welcomed everyone present to the meeting.

He explained that the purpose of the meeting was to consider a report on the Local Development Framework: Core Preferred Options.

For the benefit of members of the public the Chair pointed out the Officers who were present to give advice and to minute the proceedings and he explained that only elected Members of the Committee could vote on the items on the agenda. He commented that as the process was that this Committee made a recommendation to the Executive, those Members of the Executive who were not on the Development Control Committee had been invited to the meeting to hear the presentation of the report by the Officers, ask any questions but not to take part in the debate on the matter.

In the unlikely event of having to leave the meeting room, the Chair pointed out the emergency exits.

The Chair asked everyone present to ensure that their mobile telephones were switched off during the meeting. He also asked everyone to listen to the debate in silence and allow anyone speaking to make their comments without interruption.

DC.175 STATEMENTS AND PETITIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER STANDING  
ORDER 32

Five members of the public made statements as follows: -

1. Stewart Lilly – Harwell Parish Council

Mr Lilly commented that Harwell Parish Council was coming to grips with the Great Western Park which was imminent, noting that lots of the development was coming into the Parish. He noted that the extension of the Didcot area had been divided across two districts. He stated that the Parish Council's objections were directed at the South East Plan as well as at the Vale and in particular at the lack of involvement with the village in this important expansion. He commented that the acceptance by the Vale of 50-50 around Didcot was taken after a meeting in January 2007 where the Parish Council had asked for liaison. He explained that the parish had heard nothing of the proposals until the Vale's Officer had visited a few weeks ago. He stated that there had been little consultation or discussion. He reported that the Core Strategy stated in the Plan that separate identities of villages must be maintained with well landscaped areas between towns. He asked that these gaps should not be closed to avoid coalescence and that these proposals could result in this.

Mr Lilly referred to Planning Policy NE10 which identified the gap near Harwell as important open land. He emphasized that there were other areas which were not designated this way. He commented that the Parish Council was saddened that the landscape gap had been swept away.

He commented that infrastructure in all respects had come into consideration, especially sustainability issues. He stated that the Parish Council felt that too

much emphasis had been placed on the Didcot railway as a solution to this area. He commented that he was aware that the railway companies would not consider another station at Grove because of capacity problems and he questioned how were those capacity problems to be resolved when Didcot station was already nearly at capacity. Finally, he asked the Council undertake positive close and proper dialogue with Harwell and other parishes affected by the proposals.

2. Norman Staples – Keep Harwell Rural Campaign.

Mr Staples commented that he appreciated the opportunity to comment, but realised that the LDF report was unlikely to be altered before approval tonight. He hoped that the consultation process would result in significant modifications. He reported observations at this stage as follows: -

1. Harwell Bypass. – He was concerned that both the report and the Halcrow SCOTS report made the assumption that traffic through Harwell would be relieved by just the A4130 to A417 link without a continuation south to the A34 at Chilton. He commented that this ignored the fact that the A417 went through Harwell, and thus the single link north of the A417 simply re-routed traffic from Harwell High Street to Harwell A417. It was an incomplete, unsatisfactory and unacceptable solution to growing traffic through Harwell. He therefore did not accept the Halcrow preference for the Rowstock bypass (estimated cost £6m) to the Chilton link with Featherbed Lane improvements (estimated cost £6.6m).
2. Great Western Park "Green buffer" – Mr Staples stated that the Vale's decision to provide 2,300 of the houses required had thus ruled out the previous "options" of sites other than the only land they could offer - namely that to the west of Great Western Park up to the A34. This effectively eliminated the gap between Didcot and Harwell (and would involve yet more building on best and most versatile land). He commented that what was so disturbing about this move was the effect on previous "commitments", namely the note in the report that this choice required the Green Buffer element of Great Western Park to be "revisited". He commented that we all knew what that meant, i.e. it was a euphemism for "abandoned". Therefore, what was a key requirement/commitment in plan 1 could now be abandoned in plan 2. He commented that the re-siting of the green buffer might be a good idea, but he queried the location of the spine road, whether it was the right walking distance from the new houses and so on.

Mr Staples explained that he had looked at the GWP exhibition in Didcot and had noted that infrastructure work was now scheduled to start in June 2010. By that time the status of this new project should be clear. He reported that Taylor Wimpey had options on some of the land now being considered and yet it seemed likely that GWP would go ahead largely as planned so that this new project would be an "add-on" rather than part of a fully integrated scheme for the total 5,500 houses. Indeed he questioned whether the outcome of

infrastructure works would be quite different if the two developments were treated as one.

Finally, he stated that of course circumstances changed but this did not undermine confidence in the whole process of planning, consultation, Public Enquiries, Inspector's Recommendations etc.

3. Frank Dumbleton – Chilton Parish Council

Mr Dumbleton reported that the Parish Council was disappointed to see at paragraph 5.3 on page 70 in the report - Main Proposals for Didcot that only two alternatives as a solution for congestion at Rowstock roundabout had been made, namely Rowstock bypass or Featherbed Lane improvements and link from A417 to the A34 at Chilton.

He commented that the link from the A417 over Hagbourne Hill to the A34 at Chilton would require upgrade to the existing road, which Chilton Parish Council vehemently opposed. The reasons were explained as follows: -

- Hagbourne Hill was a gateway to the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It provided glorious views across to the Ridgeway and looking from the Ridgeway it was a similarly prominent and attractive natural feature. Vale of White Horse Council was a custodian of part of the AONB and had a policy as well as a duty to protect it as did national government.
- Any upgrade of the road would be an unacceptable encroachment on this sensitive landscape, therefore Chilton Parish Council called for the discussion paper to include other alternatives to cope with the anticipated increase in traffic. Hagbourne Hill was a landscape equally as sensitive as Wittenham Clumps and any proposal to drive a bypass across the Clumps would be met with a justifiable outcry. He suggested the same applied to Hagbourne Hill. A bypass should be routed elsewhere and the rural character of Hagbourne Hill preserved.
- Apart from the detrimental effect on the AONB, there were practical reasons why Hagbourne Hill was not suitable for upgrade. It had very steep gradients on both sides and there was the additional hazard of a junction at its summit with the road from Upton. Moreover, this junction was also a crossroads for cycle route 44. Any measure to increase traffic on Hagbourne Hill would therefore increase the danger to cyclists crossing it on route 44. This was diametrically opposed to paragraph 4.11 in the report which stated that national and regional policies and the advice of the Highways Agency indicated the Council should give priority to measures that increased the use of public transport, cycling and walking. He commented that the crossing was well used by commuters cycling to Harwell Campus, which route 44 passes en route to Wantage.
- An upgrade to Hagbourne Hill would most likely require junction improvements, such as a roundabout or traffic lights, where cycle route 44 crossed it. This would no doubt require street lighting that would add light

pollution on the top of this very visible landmark and would cause the hazard of queuing traffic on the steepest part of the hill.

- There would also be a detrimental effect on Chilton village. With the existing level of traffic over Hagbourne Hill in the morning peak it was very difficult to drive out of Chilton village. The proposal to direct more traffic over Hagbourne Hill would only add to the difficulties for Chilton residents.
- In addition the proposed 275 new houses on Chilton Field would have access to the A4185 on a blind bend between the A34 interchange and Harwell Campus. This junction was already hazardous because of the speed and volume of traffic. Conflicting flows of additional vehicles routed over Hagbourne Hill and headed for Harwell Campus meeting those from Chilton Field at this junction would add to the risk of accident.

Mr Dumbleton commented that other options for a Rowstock and Harwell bypass had been looked at recently, notably by consultants on behalf of UKAEA. Chilton Parish Council believed that a less environmentally sensitive route than Hagbourne Hill could be identified.

He reported that Chilton Parish Council therefore requested that the Preferred Options report was not approved for publication until additional options for a Rowstock/Harwell bypass had been researched and were included for consultation. The Parish Council asked the Committee to reject the report for this reason.

4. Tom Allen Stevens – Owner of Wicklesham Quarry, Faringdon

Mr Allen-Stevens introduced himself explaining that he was a third generation farmer to the south of Faringdon and owner of Wicklesham Quarry, from which extraction would cease in 2010 when Grundons lease terminated. He commented that as councillors and officers, those present would be aware of the journey Faringdon had gone through with the last Local Plan which had resulted in the successful allocation of much-needed B1/B2 employment land, now known as the 4&20 Business Park.

He commented that Faringdon businesses were grateful to the District Council for allowing the leeway in the last Local Plan for the 4&20 Business Park to progress. It was attracting a lot of interest from businesses looking to expand, relocate or come afresh to Faringdon, despite the credit crunch, which was great news.

He explained that whilst he welcomed the Preferred Options report and noted that much of it represented a good deal for Faringdon, there was one area that needed to be improved and again that was the allocation of employment land.

He stated that specifically no land had been allocated for businesses with B8 requirements or heavier industry and Faringdon desperately needed this. He reported that was why Faringdon Town Council, in its development strategy report, had suggested Wicklesham Quarry should be allocated for heavy

industry and warehousing. He stated that the quarry sat below ground level; was well-screened and had its own access on to the A420. Yet it was only a five-minute walk from the town's residential centre. He commented that it offered considerable advantages to be Faringdon's industrial centre, not least because it would take heavy lorries away from Park Road, which was now the town's main entrance road. If developed he would expect the current entrance to the site to be upgraded by way of a fourth leg to the roundabout on the A420 at Park Road to gain access to the quarry.

He commented that the Preferred Options report suggested that the quarry would take businesses out of Faringdon. However, businesses in Park Road and elsewhere had already outgrown their cramped and inadequate sites. He commented that he knew of at least five companies with B8 storage or distribution requirements that were seeking to relocate and were unsuitable for the B1/B2 4&20 Business Park. If no further B8 land allocation was granted, they would join the many businesses that had already relocated to Swindon and further afar, taking jobs with them.

Mr Allen-Stevens stated that the solution put forward in the Preferred Options report was for 4ha of B1/B2 employment land, included in a mixed residential/employment development to the south of Park Road. He commented that this would be a prominent development on Faringdon's gateway, seen both from the A420 and Park Road. Mixing the residential and commercial development would mean the needs of residents would be compromised for business users and business users looking to develop and expand would continually come across barriers put up by residents, plus it would put heavy business traffic into a residential area.

He stated that by contrast the quarry offered a dedicated site for B8 and heavier industrial businesses to grow and prosper. He was keen to talk about improving the link of the site to the town and he welcomed the debate that was currently taking place on Faringdon.org's talking point over the pedestrian footbridge. He commented that this would offer easy access not only to the quarry, but also to the network of footpaths and bridleways to the south of Faringdon for all town residents to enjoy. It would also open up brighter prospects for a cycle route that had long been an ambition for the town. Of course there was also the option to improve bus links with the site.

Mr Allen-Stevens recognised the Vale must concentrate its allocation of heavy industry to Milton Park on the district's eastern fringe, in accordance with the South East Regional strategy. However this put Faringdon at a further disadvantage, being the only main town serving the west of the district. A lot of the larger town businesses had an element of B8 requirement within their business model.

He stated that as the Council was well aware, Faringdon did not fit the mould of an ordinary market town. Its aspirations were to develop further as a better service provider and employment zone for the town's people and rural hinterland. Faringdon was the only main town outside the central Oxfordshire

zone that could do this. As such it was essential all sectors of its businesses were future-proofed, not just B1 and B2.

He stated that very few towns had such a golden opportunity as this to future-proof their industry, the life-blood of a community's prosperity. He explained that Wicklesham Quarry could do this for Faringdon as: -

- it was located close to the town;
- it could reduce the visual impact of heavy industry that blighted many a townscapes;
- it could reduce the amount of lorry movements that conflicted with residential sites;
- it was supported by Faringdon Town Council in its report sent to the Vale's planners; and
- it could secure jobs and fuel sustainable business growth for the next 20 years.

In conclusion Mr Allen-Steven asked the meeting and officers that when considering the Preferred Option Report they include Wicklesham Quarry in the Local Development Framework.

5. Keith Sadler – Milton Parish Council

Mr Sadler stated that he wished to focus his comments on the difficulties that existed within the Milton Parish area and what there was likely to be in terms of the detail of the Plan. He stated that the Parish Council's main concern related to Milton Park in terms of the transport infrastructure, which was a concern for many. He referred to the consultation document, commenting that the detail of how these options, including others mentioned by the members of the public, were all going to be addressed and in particular how the major concerns of transport infrastructure were to be resolved. He stated that Milton Park employed 6000 people. Planning permission had been granted for expansion which included 1200 car parking spaces and more recently a hotel with a further 300 car parking spaces. The Parish Council recognised that there were constant changes to the Milton interchange, but parish councillors could not understand how these proposals would address the transport problems. He highlighted that at the moment there was a problem in terms of the egress at the Milton interchange, with traffic queuing back on the A34 to the Marcham interchange at peak times. He commented that given the additional employment which was progressing at present, let alone the additional housing from the Great Western estate, the Parish Council needed to understand how this road would be improved. The Parish Council therefore requested that given the adoption of this paper, there should be further detailed information relating to infrastructure including housing and local estate infrastructure which would then enable the Parish Council to reply to consultation over the next few months.

The Chair thanked all the speakers for their statements.

None.

DC.177 LOCAL DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK: THE CORE STRATEGY  
PREFERRED OPTIONS

Councillors Margaret Turner, Jerry Patterson and Roger Cox had each declared a personal interest in this item.

The Committee received and considered report 122/08 of the Deputy Director (Planning and Community Strategy) which reminded Members that the Council had to produce a Local Development Framework which was a new style of development plan that would replace the Local Plan. The first document to be prepared was the Core Strategy and an important part of the process was engaging with the public. To this end under the guidance of the Strategic and Local Planning Advisory Group a draft Preferred Options report had been prepared, which Members had before them

It was noted that the Committee was asked to consider the report and make recommendations thereon to the Executive with a view to the document being published for consultation in January.

The Officers introduced the report making the following comments: -

Background

- Under the new planning system the Local Plan would be replaced by the Local Development Framework Core Strategy and the Managing Development document.
- Officers were progressing work on the Core Strategy, which would establish the broad framework to guide development to 2026 and identify major sites for development.
- It had to comply with the policies and requirements in the South East Plan and government guidance and help deliver the priorities in the Community Strategy.
- The Strategic and Local Planning Advisory Group had been guiding the work preparing the Core Strategy Preferred Options report. If Members agreed, this will be published for consultation in January.

Summary of the main points in the report

The structure of the preferred options report was set out in paragraph 5.1.

The reasons why a strategy of urban concentration was being recommended were set out in paragraphs 4.27 and 4.28 of the report. Urban concentration would locate people in places with the best range of services, facilities and infrastructure and where there was the best chance of securing new infrastructure and services.



- It would locate people where there were more opportunities for cycling, walking and using public transport which would reduce the need to travel by car and hence carbon emissions.
- It supported the vitality of the market towns.
- It was consistent with the policy of urban focus set out in the South East Plan.
- The urban areas had the most pressure for affordable housing.
- Development here was supported by the Primary Care Trust, the County Council as highway authority and the emergency services.

## Key Elements

Paragraph 5.2 of the covering report set out the key elements of the preferred options report.

### (a) Housing

- The draft South East Plan required that at least 11,560 new homes must be built in the Vale between 2006 and 2026.
- Government guidance indicated that the Council should have a 15 year supply of land when the plan is adopted. To make sure the Council has this, Officers are looking to provide sufficient land to 2027.
- Many sites already had planning permission or were identified in the Local Plan and the Council could be reasonably sure that other sites could be developed in settlements.
- To meet the target the Council had to identify land for some 4,470 homes. This was most likely to be on greenfield sites on the edges of the main towns (not green belt). The preferred strategy involved:
  - 2,300 homes west of Didcot in Harwell parish – (A plan on page 129 showed the preferred site (site A) between the A4130 Didcot-Milton Heights link road and the B4493 Wantage Road. The outline of a policy for this site was on page 130).
  - 250 homes at Wantage and Grove on sites of less than 200 homes – these would be identified in the Managing Development document.
  - Either 1,500 homes south west of Abingdon or 1500 homes north east of Wantage in Grove parish. The preferred site at Abingdon was shown on the plan on page 114. The preferred site A was west of Drayton Road. The preferred site at Wantage was to the north east of the town within the line of the proposed relief road as shown on page 122 and the outline of a policy on page 123. It was reported that the County Council had not been able to progress the essential work and studies for the

Local Development Framework due to other work priorities but it was hoped that this work would be completed in the new year.

- 420 homes south of Park Road at Faringdon. This was shown on the plan on page 137 and the outline of a policy on page 138.

- It was envisaged that there would be over 1400 homes built in the villages and on brownfield sites.

(b) For employment

- The Employment Land Review undertaken by consultants URS indicated there was enough employment land in the District to meet the needs of businesses to 2026.
- It was thought that the Council should locate most employment development at the existing large employment sites of Milton Park and the Harwell Science and Innovation Campus, where an additional 12,000 jobs could be created.
- Some limited additional land could be identified close to where people lived at Wantage & Grove and Faringdon and at Abingdon if the site south west of the town was selected for housing development

(c) Population

- The number of people in the Vale was expected to increase from 115, 000 in 2001 to 137,000 in 2026 – an increase of about 20%.
- Clearly there would be a need for more services and infrastructure to support them.
- Officers had tried to make sure that the most was made of the opportunities arising from new development.

(d) Shopping

- The retail study carried out for the Council by Savills showed a need for just over an additional 25,000 square metres of shopping floorspace by 2026 (Waitrose in Abingdon was 2,500 sq m).
- In line with government guidance the consultants had recommended that this should be located within the town centres. If new shopping centres grew up on the edges of the towns it would undermine the vitality of the existing centres and could lead to their decline.
- There were opportunities to redevelop the shopping areas built in the late 1960s to increase the floorspace and give retailers and shoppers a better environment. This would mean redeveloping: -
  - Bury Street precinct and the Charter in Abingdon (plan on page 117 referred);
  - Waitrose/Campbells Yard area in Wantage (page 125);

- West Way shopping centre and Elms Parade in Botley (page 134); and
- The area of Budgens store and Southampton Street car park in Faringdon (page 139).

(e) Roads

- Safeguarding land and seeking contributions where appropriate for new road construction. These were shown on the diagram on page 60.
- Those shown in purple had been identified in the draft Southern Central Oxfordshire Transport Strategy as being necessary to support the growth at Didcot, Wantage, Grove, Harwell and Milton Park to 2026. They included: -
  - a relief road north east of Wantage shown as R4 on the diagram;
  - (the requirement for the link road north of Grove needed in association with the development of the former airfield is unchanged R3);
  - a range of road safety and junction improvements on the A417 east of Wantage and the A338 north of Grove;
  - a link road from the A4130 to the A417 west of Didcot running more or less parallel with the A34 R8; and
  - a link from the A417 to the A34 Chilton interchange and improvements to Featherbed Lane R7, or a southern bypass to the Rowstock crossroads R6.
- Those shown in green were being investigated through the Local Transport Plan for the medium-long term including: -
  - Improvements to the A415, including a new bridge over the Thames at Newbridge;
  - a bypass for Marcham ; and
  - a southern bypass for Abingdon (subject to further study).
- Those shown in blue were desirable in the long term. They included: -
  - a Wantage western relief road (D1);
  - land for a station at Grove (D2);
  - the reopening of the A34 slip roads at Drayton (D3); and
  - providing south facing slip roads at the A34 Lodge Hill interchange (D4).

Other Comments

- Some elements would take time to come to fruition. However, the Core Strategy was a long-term plan and it was important that the Council established what it wanted to achieve to guide future development and investment decisions.

- The Government made it clear that through core strategies Council's must make difficult decisions and that all reasonable alternatives must be considered.
- This was a consultation document and Officers were asking Members to agree that it should be published for consultation so that people's reactions and arguments could be fully assessed.
- The decisions on what to include in the Core Strategy would not be made until next year.

## Consultation

It was explained that if approved by Council the report would be published and widely circulated in January. A series of exhibitions and workshops would be held from late January to the middle of February with comments being sought by the end of February.

The Chair thanked the Officer for a thorough presentation of the report.

In considering the matter Members had regard to the statements made earlier in the meeting by members of the public. The Chair specifically referred to a number of points highlighted by those speakers and he made the following comments: -

- The original decision to develop west of Didcot (the Great Western Park site) was not a proposal which this Council had supported. The Council had sought development to the north. The decision had been made by the County Council and would cause development out towards Harwell.
- He referred to comments made regarding the parish of Harwell staying rural commenting that if it was meant that Harwell as a village could remain rural then this could be something which could be fought for. It was unlikely that Didcot would expand into the village of Harwell. It was accepted that this was not much comfort but the solid boundary could be helpful. He did not think that Harwell would coalesce with Didcot. He had hoped that Didcot west (Great Western Park) would be the end of the development. However, the government was asking the Council to look at more housing and that the Council would be remiss if it did not. He accepted comments about piecemeal development, but there was a chance to look at the development in its entirety before any houses had been built.
- He commented that one speaker seemed in support of a continuing bypass linking to the A34 and yet another seemed to be arguing the opposite, thus demonstrating the diversity of views and the difficulty faced by Members in agreeing any preferred options.
- The comments made regarding Wicklesham quarry have been noted and the officers will look at the benefits and dis-benefits of this proposal.
- In terms of the comments made regarding the existing problems at the Milton interchange, the proposals are not aimed at resolving existing problems but that any proposals would not make the existing situation any worse.

At this point in the meeting the Chair invited questions and comments from Members as set out below, together with the responses when given: -

<u>Question / Comment</u>	<u>Response</u>
Not much mention was made to the A420 and any upgrade required as part of the Swindon expansion.	Page 15 paragraph 1.15 referred. There was a need to keep a watching brief on the eastern expansion of Swindon and its impact on the A420.
How would an ordinary member of the public who had not been involved in this matter be able to read and understand the document, for example looking at one of the road improvements referred to in the document, it referred to road junction improvements on the A338 and the question was what did that involve. This was the difficulty with a strategic document. There was no detail. It did not tell people what improvements would come along with the developments.	Core strategies were very high level and strategic. It was very difficult to ensure the public fully understood the detail. Lots of the detail would be evidenced which would be available on the Council's website. The main problem areas were known such as Venn Mill and the A338 / A415 crossroads for example. These could be pointed to but it was recognised that a lack of detail would be frustrating for the public. This document was as clear as other similar documents and that it was difficult to determine how much detail was enough.
One Member had read and commented on many other strategic documents and in his view this document was very good. He thought it was easily readable and made lots of sense. He asked that members of the public note that the Council's advisory group had spent considerable time considering the detail behind this document.	
One Member considered that the chair had responded to the comments made by the speakers admirably but noted that they would be put forward for consideration with other comments received. The Officers undertook to ensure that the comments made were considered as part of the consultation process.	
Another Member commented that the document was as excellent as it could be. She suggested that the public's understanding of matters should not be underestimated and that many had a tight grasp on matters in their area. She noted that the main areas had been highlighted and she was confident that local people would come forward with their own solutions to local problems.	
With regard to the main proposals for Abingdon, what plans were in place for the extra development and particularly in respect of development to the east as half a scheme?	The Officers clarified that the Member was asking what the thicker of the two lines would do if additional housing was on the housing site (page 63 referred). It was explained that lots of traffic would reroute to the new link road and thus there would be more capacity on the Drayton Road itself. In terms of a bypass for Abingdon, this was only part of such a

	<p>proposal. However, the Council needed to start visioning now. The improvements introduced by the Abingdon Integrated Transport Study had bought some time but the advisory group had agreed that the Council should be pressing for the longer term solutions of a bypass.</p>
<p>With regard to the main proposals for Abingdon, if the eastern part of the relief road was phase 2, was an opportunity being missed to get development funding towards this and if there was funding for the western part then would the eastern part have less?</p>	<p>The Marcham Road – Drayton Road link would be costly and it was unforeseeable that there would be any funding remaining that could be put towards completing the bypass. One Member commented he was not sure that the housing would provide sufficient funding for the first part of the route anyway.</p>
<p>If the Swindon expansion went ahead, which was equivalent to the size of Abingdon then there should be something more in the plan.</p>	<p>Reference was made to paragraph 2.16 which set out additional comments. It was recognised that there was a need to thoroughly address and assess the implications of this development.</p>
<p>Could Officers provide any further information about the implications of the de-trunking of the A420 two years ago.</p>	<p>One difficulty was that the impact on the A420 would be from development outside of the District and the correct process would be to secure funding from that development to address any impact on the A420.</p> <p>It was suggested that it would be inappropriate for the County Council to fund any highway works arising from development outside of the County and that it was essential that this Council was proactive in seeking financial contributions in this regard. It was important for Officers to liaise with planners at Swindon Borough Council although it was unknown what the improvements to the A420 would be.</p> <p>It was reported that Officers had raised concerns with the government that there had not been a detailed transport study in respect of the development east of Swindon.</p>
<p><u>Section 2 - Paragraph 2.8 - Education</u> No reference was made to Kingfisher School in Abingdon which was a special school.</p>	<p>It was agreed that reference to the names of special schools should be removed from the document as it was not possible to list them all with certainty.</p>
<p><u>Section 2 - Paragraph 2.9 –</u></p>	<p>Officers relied on outside sources. It was</p>

<p><u>Employment and the Economy</u> How confident were officers regarding the figures suggested for population and size of growth over the next 20 years.</p>	<p>noted that the County Council had commissioned new population projections in the County based on housing growth.</p>
<p><u>Section 2 - Paragraph 2.11 – Employment and the Economy</u> With reference to the types of skills levels needed in this area how was it anticipated that science and engineering would be promoted in schools?</p>	<p>This was a matter not within the remit of this document. However, there was a community strategy within which the Council and its partners were looking at this sort of issue, namely skills gaps. It was noted that other organizations would help tackle this types of issue.</p>
<p><u>Section 2 - Paragraph 2.16 – Transport and Accessibility</u> With reference to the Didcot expansion, had any assessment been made in terms of people moving out of London to the area?</p>	<p>Officers commented that this had not been factored into the strategy it being noted that there was nothing which could be done if people chose to live in Didcot, but commute to London. It was expected that people would make choices about whether they could afford to commute to London.</p>
<p><u>Section 2 - Paragraph 2.33 - Abingdon</u> Were the Marcham Road improvements still proceeding?</p>	<p>One Member commented that she thought that the Marcham Road improvements would be carried out in Spring 2009, but that the proposed filter lane and roundabout would not be progressed.</p> <p>It was agreed that Officers would check the position of the Marcham Road improvements and those of Colwell Drive in Abingdon and update the document accordingly.</p>
<p><u>Section 2 - Paragraph 2.45 - Wantage</u> The leisure centre belonged to King Alfred's school and was not open to the public.</p>	<p>The leisure centre was known as the Wantage Leisure Centre and it had a dual use.</p>
<p><u>Section 3 – Paragraph 3.3 – Objectives for the Vale in 2026 – Point 8 – Railway Station at Grove</u> What was the status of the Grove Station?</p>	<p>This was an aspiration.</p>
<p><u>Section 3 – Paragraph 3.4 – Objective for Abingdon – Point 5 – Traffic Congestion</u> The document should be realistic in terms of the southern bypass.</p>	<p>It was agreed that this paragraph needed to be rationalised. It was suggested that the document should be clear and state that the most likely part of the southern bypass to be built would be the section across the river Ock.</p>

	<p>To this end it was agreed that the last sentence should be deleted.</p>
<p><u>Section 3 – Paragraph 3.9 – Objective for the Rural Areas – Point 6 – Countryside</u> There was a need to depict the Wilts and Berks Canal on the maps.</p>	<p>The Officers considered that the Wilts and Berks Canal should be added to Figure 5.1 for Abingdon and Figure 5.2 for Wantage and Grove and that the canal should be depicted on the maps in the Appendix.</p>
<p><u>Section 4 – Paragraph 4.10 – Shopping and Town Centre Uses</u> Does this suggest that Wantage and Grove are going to become larger than Abingdon.</p>	<p>No.</p>
<p><u>Section 4 - Paragraph 4.27 – More development on the edges of villages</u> It was commented that by concentrating development more section 106 funding could be secured. However, the development at the Great Western Park had not resulted in provision of everything that had been wanted. Now with the recession, it was likely that the delivery of infrastructure would be even more difficult and there was real concern that this policy would not deliver the infrastructure which had been identified.</p>	<p>There was evidence that developers were looking to go back to section 106 negotiations, although in Faringdon developers had looked to defer payment rather than not pay at all. Deferral tied in with slower development. Officers did not know what the developers' ability would be to meet section 106 requirements. In the past there had been a proportion of affordable housing. It was confirmed that infrastructure which was needed to meet the demands of any development would not be sacrificed.</p> <p>A large amount of infrastructure would be needed wherever the housing was sited. The need for infrastructure would not be any less and the developers would not be able to argue otherwise.</p>
<p>It was noted that the Local Development Framework (LDF) was looking 20 years ahead. It was commented that if there was a long recession would the Council be able to revisit the document in the future and perhaps agree a review of the strategy?</p>	<p>Yes the Council could review the strategy but Officers did not consider that any review would lead to a radically different strategy, but rather different funding opportunities or different infrastructure could be considered.</p> <p>One Member commented that if there was a recession or major infrastructure costs as part of any site, there may be less social housing although this was not supported by another Member.</p>
<p><u>Section 4 - Paragraph 4.30 – Housing</u> Were any of the mineral reserves likely to be extracted beneath houses?</p>	<p>No.</p>



<p><u>Section 4 – paragraph 4.35 – Abingdon , land to the south west of the town</u> Would a Marcham Road – Drayton Road link road displace some of the problems. Could communication across the river Ock between the south and the north be better?</p>	<p>All the matters would be looked at. There were lots of issues around the Abingdon link road.</p> <p>One Member commented that there was a fully funded footbridge across the Ock but this was not supported by the Town Council.</p>
<p><u>Section 4 - paragraph 4.43 – Faringdon south of Park Road</u> This made reference to the potential for development at the Wicklesham Quarry.</p>	-
<p><u>Section 4 – Figure 4.7 – Highway Improvements</u> It was unclear which schemes were aspirations.</p>	<p>All those shown in purple (and marked R) were those which had been identified as required; green were those in the Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan; those in blue (and marked D) were desirable.</p>
<p><u>Section 5 – Figure 5.3 – main proposals for Didcot</u> With reference to Didcot, what measures were proposed to address pedestrian traffic across the road and what consideration was being given to parish boundaries?</p>	<p>Pedestrian traffic would be considered and consideration of impact on parish boundaries was not within the remit of planning.</p>
<p><u>Section 5 – Paragraph 5.11 - Botley</u> Could the Officers provide an update on progress with working with Thames Water in terms of the water problems at Botley and Cumnor?</p>	<p>The Officers referred to a recent appeal decision where the appeal had been dismissed mostly on drainage grounds. It was commented that this placed an onus on the Council to resolve the drainage problems. Officers had sought a meeting with Thames Water but it was noted that Thames Water had no funding for improvement works in this regard at present. Therefore there was currently a restriction on development on Cumnor Hill.</p>

One Member commented that she was not happy with the document, particularly having regard to the area she represented. She noted the hard work of the Officers and the conclusions reached but expressed her strong concerns regarding the expansion of Didcot commenting that it would become larger than Abingdon. She expressed concern regarding the impact of development on the villages in her Ward.

She stated that when the Great Western Park had first been proposed residents had thoughts of welcoming new residents into village life but the numbers had just grown and grown. She was concerned that the intention was that the surrounding areas would simply become part of Didcot. She expressed concern about the continual focus on development at Didcot on parish land and questioned why land in South Oxfordshire District could not have been found for further development of the town.

She commented that one of the few mitigation measures as part of the GWP development was the requirement for landscaping areas and she noted that this was to be revisited. She suggested that if other areas were put forward this continued expansion from Didcot towards the villages could be avoided.

The Chair commented that Members had a duty to do what was best for the district as a whole and that councilors should have regard to that when commenting on the strategy.

The Member replied that all councilors should be given an opportunity to express views on what was best for their Ward but that she had no objection to looking at the Vale as a whole.

The Chair replied that it had not been this Council's choice to have development to the west of Didcot and he asked the Member to suggest where the proposed housing should go instead. The Member asked that the comments of the Chair be recorded in the minutes reiterating that she had no difficulties in considering the wider picture but that it was important for her to express the views of the local people from the area she represented.

Another Member commented that Members were here to shed light on local effects and local communities.

Immediately prior to consideration of the recommendations, the Chair was joined by all Members present in thanking all the Officers involved in the production of this excellent document.

In addition Members commended the Reprographics Team of the Council for the excellent quality of printing.

By 13 votes to 1 with 1 of the voting Members having left the meeting, it was

**RESOLVED**

- (a) *that the Executive be recommended to agree that the Preferred Options report be approved for publication in January 2009 subject to the following amendments: -*
  - (i) *reference to the names of special schools should be removed from the document;*
  - (ii) *Officers clarifying in the document the position of the Marcham Road improvements and those of Colwell Drive in Abingdon;*

- (iii) *the need to make clear that the most likely section of the southern bypass at Abingdon would be the section over the river Ock and to this end the last sentence in point 5 in paragraph 3.4 should be deleted;;*
- (iv) *the Wilts and Berks Canal being added to Figures 5.1 and Figures 5.2 and that the canal should be depicted on the maps in the appendices for Abingdon, Wantage and Grove.*
- (b) *that the Executive be recommended to agree that the Deputy Director (Planning and Community Strategy), be delegated authority to make changes to the report which do not alter the overall content and message of the report and if necessary in consultation with the Chair and Opposition Spokesman of the Strategic and Local Planning Advisory Group be delegated authority to agree more substantive changes to the report.*

**Exempt Information Under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972**

None.

The meeting rose at 8.25 pm