

Vale of White Horse

District Councillors' Report

Katherine Foxhall and Viral Patel
Watchfield and Shrivenham Ward

July 2023

Ward News

Stonewater Housing (Shrivenham)

Katherine has been supporting Stonewater tenants in Shrivenham with housing issues. Two tenants reported long-term issues with damp, mould and poor response from the HA. With the Vale Housing team KF is working to remedy a number of issues including leaks above bathroom ceiling (now fixed), and maintenance of a bin store. A housing officer is following up more substantial concerns around damp and mould. Katherine would be keen to hear from any other residents facing issues with housing.

Waste bin mapping project (Great Coxwell, Watchfield)

A number of parishes within our ward and outside have requested bins to be provisioned or replaced by the Vale, in the past they have been notified that any new bins will need to await completion of the bin mapping project under way by the Vale.

Viral has been following up with the officers on the process and timeline, and now understands provision need not necessarily await the mapping project completion, however further follow-ups are still required as there is still some uncertainty on what this means for our parishes.

Tuckmill Meadows (Shrivenham)

The tender process for the ongoing management of the meadow is under way, with a contract due to be decided in September. Katherine will continue to work with Vale and FoT on this transition to a longer-term management.

Abandoned Vehicles (Watchfield)

Following a request from Watchfield PC, we have asked Vale Environment team to looking into the removal of trailers have been left in a residents' car park and are in a deteriorating state and blocking several parking spaces.

Bloor Homes (Shrivenham)

In line with council constitution, and on advice of officers, we declined to meet with developer Bloor Homes to discuss potential plans for the development of the Shrivenham Golf Course. We will of course keep an eye on this.

Church yard maintenance (Bourton)

The Parish clerk contacted Viral in relation to a Scots pine in need of maintenance in the church yard and whether the Vale forestry team could help.

Viral followed up with both planning and the forestry team, having visited the tree in question and taken pictures Viral was able to have a member of the forestry team give an assessment of the viability of the tree. Unfortunately, the Vale is unable to fund or maintain trees on private land directly, however in a follow-up discussion at a Parish meeting Kathrine noted there are grants the parish could apply to specifically for the maintenance of church yards (**see Funds below**).

Planning

Wicklesham Quarry (P23/V1476/O Faringdon, Little Coxwell, Great Coxwell & Longcot)

An outline planning application was submitted to the Vale of White Horse to develop the former quarry site at Wicklesham and Coxwell Pits, with the initial step being to agree planning for road access. Katherine and Viral have spent much of July responding to residents' concerns in relation to this application.

While the site is not within the ward but adjacent, the impact on residents within the ward is tangible, Katherine and Viral had deemed it important to represent our residents views with Katherine looking at the application from a nature recovery perspective while Viral focused on the safety and infrastructure impact given the sites proximity to the A420 and the already considerable expansion in the surrounding area.

The site in question is geologically important and designated as a SSSI and is allocated as such in the Vale local plan 2031, however the Faringdon neighbourhood plan designated the site for employment purposes, with a number of preconditions. This put the Faringdon and Vale plans in conflict.

There is a further question in relation to the site as 'brownfield', while there has been a business operating on the site, quarrying is a temporary operation with the site to be restored after mineral extraction completes, as such 'farmland' would be a more accurate description.

Having decided how we were going to proceed to scrutinise this application, we found the application was removed from the public facing planning portal, and after reaching out to the officer in charge we learnt the application had been deemed "Invalid" following a meeting between the Oxfordshire County and Vale planning officers. Once it was deemed invalid, it was removed from the Vale's public planning portal.

The reason for the “Invalid” status from the Vale perspective, came from it being a mineral extraction site, which falls under “county matters” (Town and Country planning act 1990), for as long as any preconditions for the mineral extraction permission remain to be discharged. In this specific case, the county had required 5 years of aftercare to restore the site to a natural state and the aftercare provision is not due to expire until at least 14th June 2024.

Under those circumstances the Vale could not decide on any application on that site.

Our understanding is there is nothing more to be done from either the Vale or OCC side, and it is up to the applicant to decide on how they choose to proceed, the choices as we understand them are:

- Apply to OCC to vary the aftercare condition as complete early, if granted resubmit the application to the Vale.
- Apply to OCC with the full application (as was submitted to Vale). OCC would likely only consider the mineral extraction part and consult with the Vale for the remainder of the application, and how to proceed.
- Wait until after June 2024 before reapplying to the Vale.

We will continue to monitor this and have asked our County colleagues to inform us of anything that may arise in relation to the site.

Care home off Townsend Road (P22/V3010/FU Shrivenham)

Viral has been following up on this with the case officer. A decision on the planning application was on hold, pending a request to the agent for the applicant to provide clarification on a number of technical issues with the planning application as submitted.

The agent has since withdrawn the application prior to any decision being made.

Redevelopment off Townsends Road (P20/V1279/FUL Shrivenham)

This is an approved application for 10 residences that is nearing completion, as a part of planning consent it was a requirement for foul water management to be complete prior to the properties being occupied.

We understand the applicant has two options, install a private pumping station and apply to the Environment Agency to discharge to the brook, or apply to Thames Water to connect to their infrastructure.

The applicant has not shown that either of these are in place, but has applied to discharge this condition in 2022, early 2023 and once again recently.

The planning authority continues to reject the condition disposal until such work is shown to be completed.

Katherine and Viral will continue to keep an eye on the development as it progresses.

Council News

Sewage

With amendments from the Green group, Vale full council unanimously passed a motion to make sure that the Council is doing all it can to take action on sewage. These include:

1. requesting the full extent of Thames Water's plans to upgrade sewage treatment works in the Vale.
2. Looking at if the Joint Local Plan could be used to ensure that adequate sewerage capacity is in place before new homes are occupied and whether this can be made a condition of any planning consent.
3. Requesting planning officers include in all reports relating to major development a section that outlines the potential effects a development may have on sewage outflow.

Homelessness

In response to a question from Green Cllr Cheryl Briggs at the July Council meeting, the Leader of the Council confirmed that extra resources are being allocated to manage an anticipated rise in homelessness. The council support those who are homeless or threatened with homeless through its Housing Needs team. Anyone who is in this position is urged to approach the council as soon as possible, and they will be assigned a housing needs officer who will assess their situation. Any residents who are worried about money and would like advice can also contact the council's Community Hub (01235 422600 option 1) who can talk residents through a range of options for support and advice.

Scrutiny Committee

Cllr Katherine Foxhall chaired the first two scrutiny meeting of the new council, the committee met and reviewed:

- The officer delegated decision on the renewal of the council's fleet of ground maintenance vehicles.
- Report to Cabinet on the revised Affordable Housing Section106 Commuted Sums Grant Policy

Further details can be found on the Vale of White Horse website: [12th July](#) & [31st July](#)

Funds

Churchyard grants

With a number of parishes discussing churchyards in various ways, here is a comprehensive and up-to-date list of general and environmental funding available for parishes and churches:

[Charitable-Grants-for-Churches-July-2023.pdf \(parishresources.org.uk\)](#)

[Doc-4-Environmental-Grants-List-updated-June-2023.pdf \(parishresources.org.uk\)](#)

The Vale Climate Fund might also be used for churchyard projects (In June 2022 Marcham PC were awarded a grant for churchyard. Do please get in touch if you have ideas that you'd like to develop further for the next round:

[Climate Action Fund 2023/2024 - now closed - Vale of White Horse District Council \(whitehorsedc.gov.uk\)](#)

Rural England Prosperity Fund

More than £500,000 is available to help improve the rural economy in the Vale of White Horse. Funding from the government's Rural England Prosperity Fund can be used to provide a boost to projects such as creating rural business hubs, setting up community energy schemes and diversifying farm businesses beyond agriculture. The Council is asking for Expressions of Interest to understand which organisations might apply and for what type of project. Please do pass this information on to anyone who may benefit:

[Rural England Prosperity Fund - Vale of White Horse District Council \(whitehorsedc.gov.uk\)](#)