

South Oxfordshire District Council Consultation October 2010: Proposed Changes to the Core Strategy

Response from the *Keep Harwell Rural Campaign*

We are directly affected by SODC's plans for Didcot and wish to answer Q1: *What do you think about us working to the South East Plan numbers?*

Our main concern is the further westwards expansion of Didcot that will use up more best and most versatile agricultural land and will virtually remove the rural gap between Harwell and Didcot. Our objection is therefore largely to the Vale's plans for Didcot rather than to SODC's plans, but we would like to comment on the implications of SODC working to the South East Plan numbers, since the two Councils should be planning for Didcot as a whole rather than just their own territory.

The demographic evidence considered by SODC to be robust is based on reports that are now a few years old. We are sceptical of the realism of these forecasts, partly because of the recession, but more importantly because the evidence on the ground does not bear out the urgency of new housing provision that the forecasts envisage. We do understand the reality of the need for affordable housing, but this depends on building much larger numbers of houses for private sale. The true need for all these private sector houses is hard to understand. The houses associated now with Great Western Park were originally planned for 2011. None of them will be there when 2011 starts. Ladygrove East's houses are even longer awaited. Yet there do not seem to be droves of people queuing up for every house that comes on the market in Didcot and the surrounding villages.

These two developments, when they are complete in perhaps ten years' time, will expand the population of Didcot by about 40%. Given their delay in delivery, and the concerns about the adequacy of the area's infrastructure to cope with this expansion, it is not necessary to commit to a further full scale expansion of similar magnitude until the effects of the current phase, and the way this should influence the next phase, can be more fully assessed. The flow of availability of new housing in the Didcot area is well assured over at least the next decade – why prejudice the future shape of the town and the surrounding rural areas so far ahead of real evidence of the requirement?

We therefore urge SODC to consider, with the Vale, a pause or slowdown in the further housing numbers proposed for Didcot.

Contact:

Dr A E Hughes (Chairman)
Kingswood
2 King's Lane
Harwell
Didcot
OX11 0EJ
Tel: 01235 835301
E mail: a.hughes09@btinternet.com