

District Councillor Debby Hallett's Report to North Hinksey Parish Council

28 November 2013

1. **West Way Redevelopment:** Most of my working time for the past several weeks has been filled with work in support of West Way Community Concern, and the people of Botley who have contacted me about their views of the proposed Doric Plans.

First, I launched a petition for the Vale to Drop the Doric Deal. That got over 900 signatures in about 2 weeks, before it was closed.

Next, I presented a motion to Vale Council to Drop the Deal. That resulted in agreement by the Vale Leader to bring their decision-making to Scrutiny for a closer look at what's gone on. What I wanted to know is how this proposal, which began in 2010 as a plan to sell property near the corner of West Way and Westminster Road and use the proceeds to improve West Way Shopping Centre, became the behemoth it is in 2013-14, with plans to demolish all of the centre of Botley and build a new High Street (or a new mall, depending on who is speaking).

At Scrutiny, we discovered a lot about that, but unfortunately, most of it is bound by commercial confidentiality. Frustrating that there was no local consultation and it's moved on now to these massive proposals.

Coming up: West Way Community Concern have petitioned the Vale to come back to the table and consult with local people about local needs in this development scheme. Their petition has over 1200 signatures, and will be presented to full council on 11 Dec 2013.

Keep up to date here: <http://westwayconcern.wordpress.com/>

2. **Lime Road Development:** Development has begun with the road construction, which will enable builders' vehicles to park on site. Already this development seems less of a road parking nuisance than the Arrundale development has been. Arrundale was too small to require a Construction Management Plan (CMP), which Lime Rd has. Saturday working hours surprised everyone, but residents contacted me and I contacted Bovis, and this revealed an error in their current CMP, which has been corrected. Working hours include Saturday 8-1pm.
3. **Flats construction:** we've all seen the increasing tendency to planning applications for permission to tear down one or two single family homes and build large numbers of flats.

98-100 West Way, 35-37 Yarnells Hill, 54-56 Hurst Rise Road, 13 Cumnor Hill, and recently, 34 North Hinksey Lane and a new application for 102 West Way.

The success of many of this sort of application is an unintended and unfortunate consequence of having no Local Plan in place (it's been delayed at the Vale for years) and no Neighbourhood Plan either (the creation of which is due for consideration by NHPC this month). Without these policies, decisions rely on the National Planning Policy Framework, which has a bias in favour of sustainable housing. (Our public transport seems to make this area 'sustainable'.) Vale planning officers have successfully refused some of these applications, when there are just too many units crammed into a space. But inspectors, on appeal, have overturned some refusals.

We need the Neighbourhood Plan so local people can decide where housing should go and ensure it fits our community. The Vale's Local Plan is expected maybe in 2014.

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4. **Community Capital Grants.** The round of grants just completed didn't include any applications from North Hinksey parish organisations. There were none last round either. Why not? Is the process too onerous? Are we doing enough to get the word out to local community groups? Is information available on the PC website? Newsletter? How can we let people know about these grants schemes? Grants of up to £5,000 are available for a wide variety of community projects. The fund helps with capital expenditure, such as spending on buildings, extensions or equipment (that can be listed as a capital asset).
5. **Decision to close all local recycling centres (bring banks)** – anecdotal evidence points to a reduction in illegal fly-tipping since these bring banks were removed. It does look rather like some people didn't understand what the bring banks were for, and didn't read the posted signs, so they just dumped stuff there. Personally, I think an education programme could have helped make it work, but the Vale Cabinet thought that was too much trouble.
6. **Community Governance Review.** The working party was formed and work has begun. The comments from North Hinksey Parish Council were about including the west side of HRR and CRR, and all of Hutchcombe Farm Close in the parish, so this will be considered. As it turns out, the recent changes to the district boundaries would not be affected. So those residents being included in NH Parish, would still be in Cumnor district ward. Some communications to those residents about who their elected councillors are would be needed.
7. **Tilsley Park, Sunningwell:** As I reported previously, the Vale is to lease the popular athletics and sports facility to Abingdon School on a long-term basis with effect from September 2014. Under the terms of the 125 year lease the School will take on the responsibility for managing and developing the site on the Vale's behalf. More details in a press release: <http://bit.ly/13CZB97>. Details are still not known and the grounds haven't been transferred yet, as far as I know.
8. **Consultations:** To participate, register: <https://consult.southandvale.gov.uk/portal/vale/>
 - Drafting a parish charter; whether to do this to enable Vale and parishes to work more closely together to provide services. Through 6 Jan 2014
9. **My portfolio responsibilities are Legal & Democratic Services, and IT, HR, and Customer Services.** Regular meetings with Heads of Services in these departments keep me aware of what's going on. If I can ever help the council or residents in any of these areas, I'm happy to do it. Please contact me.
10. **Facebook – see my page.** I post lots of local news on my public-facing Facebook page: www.facebook.com/DebbyHallettLD (you don't need to be a registered Facebook user to see this page). I used to put all planning applications there too, so they were easy to see. But planning applications are, apparently 'uninteresting content'; in Facebook terms, that's content no one bothers to read. So Facebook 'vanishes' them. I'll soon resume posting them on my website: <http://debbyhallett.mycouncillor.org.uk/> so I know they'll always be there (until I take them down).