

**Monday 10th April 2023****Annual Report****Vale of White Horse District Councillors****Cllr Hayleigh Gascoigne and Cllr Sarah Medley
Blewbury, Harwell, Chilton and Upton**

Hello from Hayleigh and Sarah

Hello! It has been a real privilege to be your district councillors for almost four years now. Local elections take place on Thursday 4th May, where you will have the opportunity to vote for the district councillors representing Blewbury and Harwell ward for the next four years. If you normally vote in person (as opposed to a postal vote) you will need photo ID to vote. Please see the [Vale website](#) for more information on the elections.

We would like to thank residents for choosing us to represent you on the Vale of White Horse District Council since 2019. We have particularly enjoyed getting to know the numerous organisations and individuals who give so much of their time to support the community. We send our best wishes to the incoming district councillors for the parishes of Blewbury, Harwell, Chilton, Upton and Western Valley.

Thank you for taking the time to read our annual report. We provide monthly parish updates to keep you updated on our activities and general council news. We also post regularly on our councillor Facebook Page: [Cllrs Hayleigh & Sarah - Blewbury & Harwell](#). Please get in touch with any issues or concerns, either via Facebook message or email:

hayleigh.gascoigne@whitehorsedc.gov.uk and sarah.medley@whitehorsedc.gov.uk.

Local Issues

Didcot & Villages Healthcare

The Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board, with the support of officers from Vale of White Horse District Council and South Oxfordshire District Council, has been considering options to provide more GP consulting space in Didcot while longer term plans are made for delivery of new GP premises at Great Western Park.

Options reviewed included the conversion of some rooms in the Great Western Park District (community) Centre to be used temporarily for primary care or creating temporary space or a permanent extension on the existing Woodlands Medical Centre site to provide more space for patient care.

All options present some challenges. However, a decision has been made by the ICB to seek to increase the space in the short term on the current Woodlands Medical Centre site. Work is underway to assess the viability of this. For more information please see this [dedicated microsite](#).

Valley Park

Valley Park is a proposed new housing development of 4254 homes, situated on land to the west of Great Western Park and east of the A34. It received outline planning permission in 2021. For more background information, please refer to our previous annual reports. Since receiving outline planning permission, no individual parcels of housing have received their subsequent planning approval. This means that the developers have not yet begun to build any houses on the site.

In our monthly parish reports we provide an overview of the current live planning applications for Valley Park. There are often several live applications relating to the development, however those labelled 'RM' i.e. 'Reserved Matters' are typically the most noteworthy as they request planning permission for specific parcels of housing on the development. Residents can provide comments on these applications. Applications labelled as 'DIS' i.e. 'Discharge' relate to specific conditions from the outline planning permission and are not usually open for public consultation.

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The current Reserved Matters planning applications for Valley Park are listed below along with an update on the status of each provided by the Vale planning officers:

P22/V2744/RM – 246 dwellings

This application hasn't progressed further since the last update. Following officer's review of the application, Taylor Wimpey has been given an opportunity to provide more information, clarify issues, address consultee comments and revise the scheme. Amended plans are expected and reconsultation is likely on receipt. Unless the Parish Council withdraws its objections on review of an amended scheme, this application is likely to be taken to planning committee for a decision.

P22/V0604/RM – infrastructure for Persimmon and Taylor Wimpey first phases

This application remains in abeyance awaiting the submission of amended plans following which reconsultation will occur.

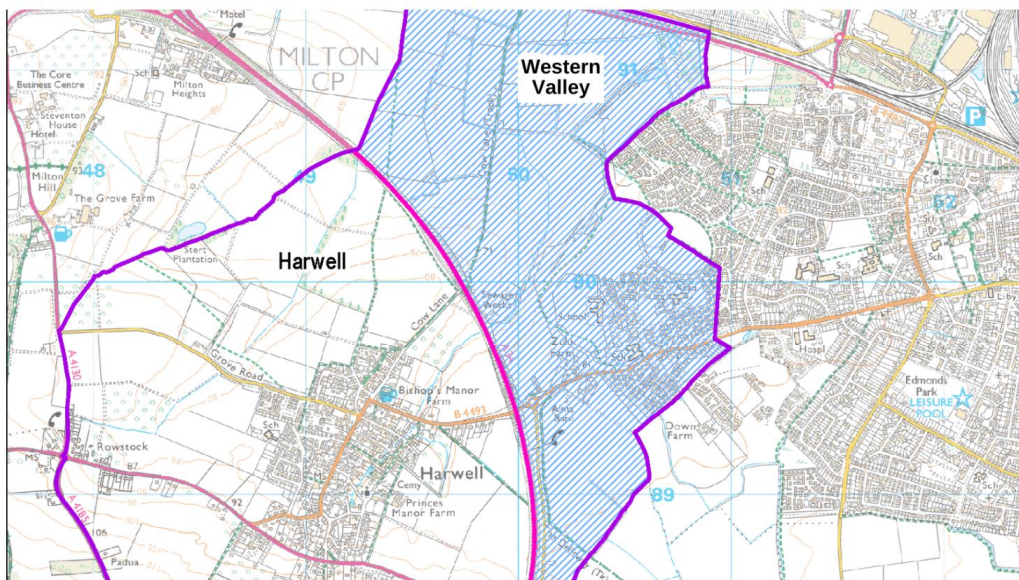
P23/V0667/RM – 179 dwellings – Persimmon Phase 1

This application is at consultation stage

As the development of Valley Park progresses over the coming years, there will be an increasing number of planning applications relating to the development. We have always endeavoured to keep you updated with the key news relating to Valley Park, including highlighting opportunities to comment on the applications. In the meantime, valleypark.uk is an excellent informal resource, listing all of the information and planning applications relating to the development. Thank you to David Marsh from Harwell village for putting together such a useful website!

New Western Valley Parish

Western Valley is the name of the new parish on land previously within Harwell parish, east of the A34, which will come into existence just after the local elections in May 2023. It will have an unwarded parish council known as Western Valley Parish Council and have 8 councillors. See also [the news article on the Vale website](#).



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Map showing the location of the new "Western Valley" parish highlighted in blue.

Parish Council

Only one nomination was received for the new parish council, meaning that Simon Richard Peacock has been elected uncontested as the first and only parish councillor for Western Valley; see p53 of [the Notice of Uncontested Elections on the Vale website](#). There will be further opportunities for other residents to join the

new parish council, so if you would like to get more involved in the community and have your say on local issues such as healthcare availability and Valley Park, then please do consider joining. Please contact the council's Democratic Services team for more information: democratic.services@southandvale.gov.uk.

Naming

The new name and other matters relating to the creation of the parish were decided at a [meeting of the Vale of White Horse District Council Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee](#) in December 2022 (the item on the new parish starts at 7 minutes 5 seconds into the video). The committee meeting followed a public consultation. The final name of 'Western Valley', originally suggested by [Harwell Parish Council at their meeting in August 2022](#), was agreed by the committee as a suitable name which references the 'Western' of Great Western Park and the 'Valley' of Valley Park, whilst giving the area its own identity separate from both Harwell and Didcot. It is important to note that the new parish council will be able to request further name changes in four years' time, when the next Community Governance Review takes place.

Background

The district council undertakes a Community Governance Review every four years. After the 2014 Community Governance Review, the council resolved to create a new parish with the working title of 'Harwell East', comprising the part of Harwell Parish that lies to the east of the A34. All of Harwell village will remain within the existing Harwell Parish, however the section of Great Western Park which is currently in Harwell Parish will become part of the new parish, as will the entirety of the new Valley Park development. At its meeting in [June 2018](#) the Community Governance and Electoral Issues Committee agreed to defer the creation of the new parish until after the 2019 elections. The district council's Democratic Services are now working on the creation of the new parish for implementation at the next local elections in May 2023.

Climate & Environment

[Climate Action Fund 2022/2023](#)

The funding was aimed at projects that help to tackle climate change and increase people's awareness and knowledge of the climate emergency. The work could focus on areas such as the natural environment, energy, waste and consumption, or transport and travel.

Groups in Blewbury and Harwell applied and were successful on receiving grant funding. [Click here](#) to learn which projects received funding.

Agreed during the 2023/24 Vale full Council budget meeting, the scheme will be extended and run again. Watch this space.

The Climate Action Fund is part of the Vale's 2022-2024 Climate Action Plan which outlines the steps the Vale will take to become a carbon neutral council by 2030, alongside how we will support local efforts to reduce emissions.

For more information, see our [climate action pages](#).

Council News

Cost of Living Support

If you or someone you know is in need of support, a reminder that the council has put together a [Cost of Living Help](#) webpage for more information about financial and housing support, and local community food services. You can also contact the council's Community Support Hub for practical support and advice: call 01235 422 600 (Mon to Thurs 8.30-5pm and Fridays 8.30-4.30pm) or visit www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/communityhub. [Citizens Advice Oxfordshire South and Vale](#) can provide you with free, confidential advice via 0808 278 7907. [Vale Community Impact](#) can provide free advice too, call them on 01235 765348

Support for Ukraine

It is now over a year since the devastating war in Ukraine started. Thank you to all of the residents who have been hosting families in the Homes for Ukraine scheme. The council's [support for Ukraine](#) webpage continues to provide information and guidance for Ukrainian nationals and their hosts.

Corporate Plan

The Corporate Plan highlights the council's priorities and strategic themes for the next few years. Every quarter, the council reviews progress against the projects in the plan – the work the council is doing to make improvements to the way it works and ultimately affecting the lives of the communities it serves. This is all the public domain for you to view [here](#).

Council Budget 2022/2023

Careful financial management means Vale of White Horse District Council can continue providing support for local people affected by the cost-of-living crisis and can secure investment in reducing the carbon impact of council-owned buildings like leisure centres. Councillors voted unanimously to approve a budget for 2023/4 that shows a financial position that continues to improve considerably.

Continuing its commitment to help people as much as possible with the rising cost-of-living, the council's budget also includes funding to run its Community Hub for a further two years. Originally set up in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Community Hub now provides ongoing practical support, advice and funding to the district's most vulnerable residents. It plays an important role supporting the council's ongoing response work for refugees and asylum seekers in the district and works with partners to lead and deliver programmes to address inequalities. The Community Hub delivers cost-of-living help for those in most financial need, such as the household support fund.

From April 1,400 households in the Vale who need financial help will benefit from a more generous council tax support scheme.

For more information, see the [council press release](#).

Our Motions and Questions at Council

As your district councillors, we have taken the opportunity to ask questions of cabinet members at Full Council Meetings, as well as propose motions to get the council to do something differently – such as improving a policy that affects the people living in our district. Hayleigh and Sarah's motions and questions are summarised below:

- July 2022:
 - Question: [Progress on GP surgery on Great Western Park](#)
- October 2022
 - Motion: [Motion 2. Support for Struggling Local Businesses](#)
- December 2022
 - Question: [Progress on handover of land on Great Western Park](#)
- February 2023
 - Question: [Progress on healthcare facility on Great Western Park](#)