

Vale of White Horse

District Councillors' Report

Watchfield and Shrivenham Ward

Cllr Katherine Foxhall katherine.foxhall@whitehorsedc.gov.uk - 07916 285305

Cllr Viral Patel viral.patel@whitehorsedc.gov.uk - 07448 191658

October 2026

Ward Overview

Shrivenham Golf Course Planning Inquiry

We would like to thank the many residents who have taken the opportunity to speak at the planning inquiry, this is especially inspiring given the aggressive cross examination several of the speakers were put under by the KC for Bloors. It is not a small thing to speak in a public meeting and to stand up to scrutiny.

Kat and Viral have both attended multiple days of the planning inquiry into Bloor Homes' application to develop up to 200 homes on Shrivenham Park golf course.

We have both spoken, covering the loss of the vital settlement gap, planning matters such as land supply, affordable housing, the loss of leisure and sport facilities and sewage pollution.

Over the remaining period of the inquiry, the public and representatives are entitled to question witnesses and experts brought into the inquiry and as this proceeds we will continue to look for opportunities to test the evidence basis of the statements made by witnesses.

The public sessions of the inquiry conclude on the 8th October, and then we await the Inspector's decision.

We are also asking urgent questions of planning officers and Cabinet members to understand why Vale's loss at two recent appeals on major speculative applications was not shared with councillors before this inquiry started, and what work is being done to ensure our council's calculations of land supply for housing have been revised in a way that will be defensible.

100 houses at land North of Townsend, Cozens Gr and Buckland Dr, Shrivenham

Kat and Viral responded, strongly objecting to this development. This is the fourth time an application has come forward on this site, having been repeatedly rejected on substantial material grounds - none of which have been meaningfully addressed in this latest proposal.

Any development on this site would not only demolish the existing ecology but also cause severe disruption to residents of Cozens Grove and Buckland Drive, who have only recently been able to settle into their new homes following the completion of all work on the site. In addition, placing houses adjacent to the A420 would leave future residents dealing with relentless traffic noise in perpetuity, with no mitigation to allow for a peaceful day-to-day life.

Watchfield and Shrivenham Scout Group

The Watchfield and Shrivenham Scout Group is a thriving organisation, frequently oversubscribed, running a full schedule of activities across two sections each of Beavers, Cubs, and Scouts. For many years, through the generosity of the Defence Academy, they have been based in a dedicated hut with ample storage for the extensive equipment that makes these fantastic activities possible.

Last week, however, they were informed that due to expanding operational needs on the base, they could no longer use the hut or store their equipment on site.

This is an urgent plea across our parishes: if you have space that could be used for meetings, or secure storage for essential equipment - such as marquees, tents, go-karts, trestle tables, cooking gear, and pioneering poles - we strongly urge you to reach out. With six sections running, meeting space is needed most weekday evenings; however, the most pressing challenge is finding secure, accessible storage within nearby.

If you have any storage or activity space that might be suitable, please contact the team directly at enquiries@wands.org.uk or get in touch with us.

Failure of Historic Planning Conditions

We would like to thank the parish councillors and committee members who pay close attention to the planning conditions attached to approved applications.

We recently came across a historic planning conditions where the intended outcomes have not been delivered. However, upon following this up with council officers, it became apparent that the conditions were drafted without explicit delivery triggers. Because the point at which compliance is required was left undefined, the Vale is unable to take enforcement action.

We understand this is historic from when planning was outsourced and as planning has been brought in-house the Vale has been able to tighten planning conditions to avoid this going forward.

Please do get in touch if you come across unmet planning conditions so we can investigate the cause.

Council News

Local Government Reorganisation

In September, the Secretary of State Angela Rayner announced that all plans for local government reorganisation to make Oxfordshire's District and County Councils into unitary authorities were being reviewed and paused. Whatever our view of the proposal for three unitary councils, this delay is a huge disruption to a process that has already cost a huge amount of money, time and planning, with no indication as to how long a decision will be postponed.

We understand now that next May's elections will go ahead as District Council elections on the current district boundaries.

Land Charges System Implementation Delays

Vale have [acknowledged and apologized](#) for delays to the implementation of a new Land Charges IT system that caused disruption to house purchases and sales earlier this year. The report that looks at what happened and what lessons have been learnt came about as a direct result of the Councils' Joint Scrutiny committee request to discuss the issue, led by Kat and following concern from a number of councillors, including Viral, about the delay's impact.

Delegated Planning Powers

Government reforms to planning committees are set to come into force from 31 October. The stated aim is that a standard rulebook for the whole country will speed up and streamline the planning approval process.

Key changes include:

- Only very large, complex, or highly controversial projects are allowed to be decided by a planning committee.
- A smaller project can only be pushed up to the committee if it passes a strict "gateway test" to demonstrate that the proposal has significant impacts affecting the wider community, and that request will need to be agreed by a nominated officer.
- A cap on committee sizes at a maximum of 13 members and enforcement of strict planning training and certification requirements.

- At last night's Vale District Full Council meeting, we were asked to approve changes to the way our Council deals with planning applications. Most of these changes are compulsory - the government has dictated which types of planning applications must be decided by officers, and removed the possibility in many cases for smaller applications to be "called in" to committee.

These changes are a legal requirement on all planning authorities, but we have some serious concerns including that developments of up to 9 houses cannot be heard at committee. This may not be a significant size of development for a large town, but it could have a huge impact for small villages. We are also extremely concerned about the power of veto that the new powers give to individual senior officers and chair of planning committee.

It is also worth noting:

- The Planning Committee and Constitutional Review Committee (including Kat) have worked hard to make sure that Vale councillors retain every opportunity possible to look at decisions.
- It is vital that residents and parish councils continue to respond to planning applications through the consultation process which remains unchanged. This is the best way to have local voices considered in decisions.
- There is still a route for us, as your councillors, to ask for specific types of applications to be heard by committee. This process is now called a "Gateway Referral Request". Applications that can be considered for referral to committee include applications for:
 - 10+ dwellings
 - listed building consent
 - retrospective approval
 - tree preservation orders
 - advertisements.

Parish councils are being offered briefings by officers to understand the new changes. Going forward, if there is a planning application that you would like us to help you respond to, or that you think should go to committee, please continue to get in touch.