

Minutes



Listening Learning Leading

OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE Council

**Held on Tuesday 29 August 2023 at 6.00 pm
Didcot Civic Hall, Britwell Road, Didcot, OX11 7JN**

Present:

Councillors: David Turner (Chair), Ken Arlett, Pieter-Paul Barker, James Barlow, Robin Bennett, David Bretherton, Sam Casey-Rerhaye, Sue Cooper, Peter Dragonetti, Maggie Filipova-Rivers, Mike Giles, Ali Gordon-Creed, Georgina Heritage, Alexandrine Kantor, Katharine Keats-Rohan, Mocky Khan, Axel Macdonald, Denise Macdonald, Ben Manning, Zia Mohammed, James Norman, Andrea Powell, Leigh Rawlins, Jo Robb, David Rouane, Anne-Marie Simpson, Ed Sadler, Ian Snowdon, Freddie van Mierlo and Tony Worgan

Officers: Patrick Arran, Head of Legal and Democratic and Monitoring Officer, Steven Corrigan, Democratic Services Manager, Ore Idowu, Trainee Solicitor and Mark Stone, Chief Executive

Also present: Bill Cotton, Corporate Director Environment and Place at Oxfordshire County Council.

26 Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Bearder, Gawrysiak, Gregory, James-Lawrie, Hinton and Tinsley.

27 Declarations of interest

None.

Members were advised that, whilst members who are Oxfordshire County Councillors will have registered their interests as Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPI) under employment, the matter before Council did not directly relate to the DPI and they were therefore entitled to take part.

In addition, due to the matter for debate, there was no issue with members taking part if they were involved in the Planning and Regulatory Committee decision or had made their views about HIF1 known in either a positive or negative way. Whilst this could be an issue for future decisions relating to the Joint Local Plan, this did not prevent any member from taking part at this meeting.

28 Public participation

The following members of the public addressed Council in opposition to the HIF1 application:

- Robert Harding representing the Campaign for Rural England.
- Greg O’Broin, Chair of Appleford-on-Thames Parish Council and the Neighbouring Parish Council Joint Committed (NPC-JC) which comprises the Parish Councils of Appleford, Sutton Courtenay, Culham, Burcot and Clifton Hampden and Nuneham Courtenay.
- Chris Hancock, member of the Appleford Parish Council Working Group.
- Robert Parker, Chair of Shirburn Parish Council.
- Sarah Nohre, a Green Party Didcot Town Councillor (representing her own views).
- Caroline Baird, representing Culham Parish Council.

They made the following points in respect of the proposed schemes:

- would provide an out-of-date solution which would increase car dependency and car traffic undermining climate change strategies;
- inadequate traffic modelling which did not include induced traffic and assumed traffic would be the same whether or not a new road is built;
- would provide for a road corridor between the A34 and M40 and attract a greater use by HGVs;
- lack of adequate and safe provision for cyclists and pedestrians and shift to public transport;
- fails to address the climate emergency and need to reduce carbon emissions;
- lack of local support for the schemes;
- lack of local decision making following the call in of the application by the Secretary of State;
- schemes will unlock further development and increase congestion;
- detrimental impact on the countryside and farmland.

Ryan Padgett, a Didcot resident, spoke in support of HIF1. He expressed the view that the infrastructure would support the provision of much needed homes to meet current and future demand and would provide for different modes of transport.

29 Impact of the Housing and Infrastructure Fund (HIF1) Schemes Position

The Chair, Councillor Turner, invited Mr Bill Cotton, Corporate Director Environment and Place at Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), to provide Council with an update on the situation from the perspective of Oxfordshire County Council as the applicant. Mr Cotton responded to questions from members. Mr Cotton confirmed that it remained the County Council’s policy to deliver the HIF1 schemes in support of both South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district council local plans. In response to a question, he replied that any decision to withdraw the planning application would be a matter for politicians. The HIF1 funding was time limited and therefore any significant reworking of the planning

application would impact on the availability of funding from Homes England which remained time limited. Oxfordshire County Council did not have the funds to meet the costs of the identified infrastructure if the funding was no longer available.

Council considered the report of the head of policy and programmes which explained the background to the Housing and Infrastructure Fund (HIF1) in relation to South Oxfordshire District Council and invited Council to consider the implications of the recent Oxfordshire County Council planning application process and its consequences for the HIF1 schemes.

Council noted that the county council's Planning and Regulatory Committee had voted against the granting of permission for the HIF1 planning application. The decision notice had not been published. Council also noted that the application had since been 'called-in' by the Secretary of State for the application to be determined by the Planning Inspectorate. Council noted that a public inquiry was scheduled to commence on 5 December 2023

Councillor Rouane moved, and Councillor Bennett seconded the amendment as set out below.

- (a) Council notes the content of this report,
- (b) Council notes the importance of local decision making,
- (c) Council resolves to request that the Leader write to the Secretary of State to raise the importance of the swift determination of the HIF1 planning application made by Oxfordshire County Council,
- (d) Council welcomes that officers will formally request that South Oxfordshire District Council is made party to the inquiry and that the council's views are properly represented, in particular:
 - i The importance of infrastructure funded by HIF1 to the delivery of housing and economic sites allocated in the adopted Local Plan 2035
 - ii South Oxfordshire's target of becoming a net zero district by 2030
 - iii The need for high quality design throughout, as set out in the Design Guide and the Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan
 - iv Minimising harmful impact of any scheme on our natural and historic landscape, including the River Thames, and maximising biodiversity
 - v Respecting the views of affected communities including both Didcot and the surrounding villages

The majority of members supported the view that Didcot and the surrounding areas required major infrastructure to support the existing housing and the delivery of future housing and economic growth sites identified in the district council's Local Plan 2035. A number of members expressed a personal view that OCC's Planning and Regulation Committee had good reasons to refuse the planning application on the grounds of design and impact on the environment. It was their view that alternative options existed in terms of the design of the schemes, their environmental impact and provision of alternative transport options to the car.

Members supported the view that it was important that the council had the opportunity to be a party to the inquiry to reinforce its policies and articulate the views of local people from Didcot and the surrounding villages. It was noted that the district council had made submissions in respect of the planning application to balance the need for infrastructure with the council's priorities on climate and biodiversity and its own design guide. It was felt important that these issues are known to the inquiry, namely the council's policies to

become net zero by 2030, to minimise the harmful impact of any scheme on the district's natural and historic landscape and maximise biodiversity.

Some members expressed concern regarding the refusal of planning permission which risked the loss of substantial infrastructure funding to meet the needs of residents and business and a return to speculative planning applications over many years.

Following debate, and being put to the vote, the amendment was declared carried and became the substantive motion.

Councillor Khan moved and Councillor A Macdonald seconded an amendment, set out below, with additional words shown in bold.

- (a) Council notes the content of this report,
- (b) Council notes the importance of local decision making,
- (c) Council resolves to request that the Leader write to the Secretary of State to raise the importance of the swift **positive** determination of the HIF1 planning application made by Oxfordshire County Council,
- (d) This Council explicitly supports HIF1 and requests it is delivered.**
- (e) Council welcomes that officers will formally request that South Oxfordshire District Council is made party to the inquiry and that the council's views are properly represented, in particular:
 - i The importance of infrastructure funded by HIF1 to the delivery of housing and economic sites allocated in the adopted Local Plan 2035
 - ii South Oxfordshire's target of becoming a net zero district by 2030
 - iii The need for high quality design throughout, as set out in the Design Guide and the Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan
 - iv. Minimising harmful impact of any scheme on our natural and historic landscape, including the River Thames, and maximising biodiversity
 - v. Respecting the views of affected communities including both Didcot and the surrounding villages

Those members in support of the amendment expressed the view that the additional words emphasised the importance of HIF1 to secure the required infrastructure for Didcot. However, the majority of members opposed the amendment supporting the view that the proposed inclusion of the word positive in (c) was a step too far as it was not within the council's gift to tell the Secretary of State how to deal with the call in. It was also the case that the substantive motion already referenced the council's clear support for HIF1 and also identified other matters that should be brought to the attention of the inquiry.

In accordance with Council Procedure Rule 68, which provides for a recorded vote if three members request one, the chair called for a recorded vote on the amendment which was declared lost with the voting as follows:

For	Against	Abstain
Members	Members	Members
Ken Arlett	Pieter-Paul Barker	
Mocky Khan	James Barlow	

For	Against	Abstain
Axel Macdonald	Robin Bennett	
Denise Macdonald	David Bretherton	
Ian Snowdon	Sam Casey-Rerhaye	
	Sue Cooper	
	Peter Dragonetti	
	Maggie Filipova-Rivers	
	Mike Giles	
	Ali Gordon-Creed	
	Georgina Heritage	
	Alexandrine Kantor	
	Katharine Keats-Rohan	
	Ben Manning	
	Freddie Van Mierlo	
	Zia Mohammed	
	James Norman	
	Andrea Powell	
	Leigh Rawlins	
	Jo Robb	
	David Rouane	
	Ed Sadler	
	Anne-Marie Simpson	
	David Turner	
	Tony Worgan	
5	25	0

On being put the substantive motion was approved.

RESOLVED: To

- (a) note the content of the report of the head of policy and programmes to the Extraordinary Council meeting held on 29 August 2023,
- (b) note the importance of local decision making,
- (c) request that the Leader write to the Secretary of State to raise the importance of the swift determination of the HIF1 planning application made by Oxfordshire County Council,
- (d) welcome that officers will formally request that South Oxfordshire District Council is made party to the inquiry and that the council's views are properly represented, in particular:
 - i The importance of infrastructure funded by HIF1 to the delivery of housing and economic sites allocated in the adopted Local Plan 2035.
 - ii South Oxfordshire's target of becoming a net zero district by 2030.
 - iii The need for high quality design throughout, as set out in the Design Guide and the Didcot Garden Town Delivery Plan.
 - iv Minimising harmful impact of any scheme on our natural and historic landscape, including the River Thames, and maximising biodiversity.
 - v Respecting the views of affected communities including both Didcot and the surrounding villages.

The meeting closed at 8:27pm

Chair

Date

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