

Vale of White Horse

District Councillors' Report

Watchfield and Shrivenham Ward

Cllr Katherine Foxhall katherine.foxhall@whitehorsedc.gov.uk

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November 2025

Ward Overview

Secretary of State response to our letter requesting clarity on the future use of Shrivenham Defence Academy housing.

On 30 September, with Cllr Markham, we wrote to Charlie Maynard MP and relevant Secretaries of State to request clarity on the future use of MOD housing at Shrivenham. We have now received a reply from Luke Pollard MP, Minister for Defence Readiness & Industry. In summary, we were told:

- The intent is to finish using Defence Academy housing for ARP transitional accommodation by December 2025;
- Where local authorities continue to support ARP Afghans, funding will continue to be available to support this work;
- There are currently no plans to use MOD accommodation at Shrivenham to house asylum seekers being moved from hotels;
- The minister is “incredibly grateful for the continued support and kindness your local community has shown new Afghan families”;
- That while there is no additional funding to offer for new facilities in recognition of the role our communities have played supporting the ARP scheme, the support funding can be used to support a wide range of activities that also benefit the wider community.

The full letter we received is here:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZkE9YEI1OIJmVrtMRnnMOEB97GKdWYT/view?usp=drive_link

Swindon Local Plan

Council officers responded formally to the recent Swindon Local Plan Reg 18 consultation, incorporating many of the comments that Kat made as ward member. The full council response is available publicly on the Vale website: <https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/planning-and-development/local-plan-and-planning-policies/external-planning-consultations-our-response/>

Bloor Homes Plans for the Shrivenham Golf Club

Like many residents, we have major concerns about the potential development of Shrivenham golf course for housing, and have worked closely with Watchfield & Shrivenham Parish Councils, as well as many residents, to ensure that local comments and concerns are registered. The first stage of the development process was a Screening Opinion request for an Environmental Impact Assessment. Following a great deal of local response, including from Kat, we are pleased to report that council officers will require an Environmental Impact Assessment with a future application. The application, decision notice and all the responses are available on the Vale Planning Portal for application [P25/V2171/SCR](#).

Continual Flooding on the A420

Kat continues to ask OCC officers (through my role on the FATAAC committee) to address the flooding on the A420 at the low point between Cross Trees roundabout and the Westmill junction. Cllr Markham has asked for a site meeting. We will keep on this issue until this clearly dangerous situation is resolved.

Council News

Local Government Reo-organisation

The Council officers and Cabinet are making final changes to the proposal for a new unitary to bring together Vale of White Horse, South Oxfordshire and West Berkshire under a working title of "Ridgeway Council". This is a joint proposal with West Oxfordshire, Cherwell and Oxford City who would become "Oxford and Shires". At a Full Council meeting on 5 November our group raised concerns about the extent to which the proposals acquiesce to the government's growth agenda. Our motion asking Cabinet to consider returning an emphasis on climate and nature recovery to the proposal was accepted. There will be a further Joint Scrutiny Meeting with South Oxfordshire on 10 November. The set of final proposals (including the competing proposals from OCC and Oxford City) are due to be sent to government by 28 November. A government decision as to the final form of new unitary authorities expected in the spring.

We will continue to emphasise the importance of cross border dialogue with Swindon to ensure that our residents are not disadvantaged by council boundary and organisational changes. We will always raise the vital point that our area's health services (as well as a whole range of other services and connections) come from Swindon.

Appointment of new Chief Executive

The process for finding and appointing a new chief executive officer for Vale of White Horse and South Oxfordshire continues. The staff committee will meet middle of November, date TBC.

Abingdon Reservoir

Our Green group is calling on the government and regulators to rethink their decision to approve Thames Water's plans for a huge reservoir outside Abingdon after Thames Water admitted just weeks after gaining approval for their plans that the actual costs would be as much as £7.5 billion, not the £2.2bn previously claimed. At the October Council meeting a joint motion called on the Government and regulators to stop and take another look at the reservoir proposal given the new costs and was passed unanimously.

Thames Water are running a statutory consultation on their plans for the reservoir until 13 January 2026. Consultation information is available at www.thames-sro.co.uk/sesro/statcon2025.

Winter Council Support for Residents

The council's website details support for residents during the winter months:

<https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/winter-in-the-vale/>

Rough Sleeping and Homelessness

The council has a new Rough Sleeping and Homelessness Strategy taking effect this week:

<https://www.southandvale.gov.uk/app/uploads/sites/3/2025/11/Joint-Homelessness-and-Rough-Sleeping-Strategy-2025-2028.pdf>

Practical information for residents who are homeless or concerned that they may be at risk of homelessness is here: <https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/vale-of-white-horse-district-council/housing/are-you-homeless/>