

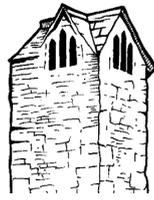
The Friends of Abingdon
Civic Society

Re application for planning consent:

P12/V2266/FUL Land East of Drayton Road, Abingdon

The Friends of Abingdon Civic Society have looked at this application for the erection of 160 residential dwellings carefully and taken note of the comments already posted by others. Although we are aware that there is a shortage of housing in the Vale of White Horse, this development is not appropriate for the reasons detailed below.

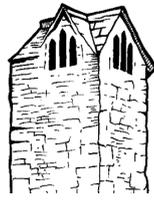
- 1. Increased traffic along Drayton Road** Development on land both east and west of Drayton Road was considered in the document *Core Strategy Preferred Options*, published by Vale of White Horse District Council in January 2009. In Section 4.34 on p. 37 of this document it was reported that both the Highways Agency and Oxfordshire County Council were concerned that any development in this area would lead to serious difficulties with traffic flow on Drayton Road and in the approaches to the A34, and would have to be accompanied by a new road across the River Ock and its floodplain linking Drayton Road with Marcham Road. More specifically, in a summary of the advantages and disadvantages of a housing development to the east of Drayton Road (as proposed in this application) in Appendix 2a (p. 94), it is stated that 'Development would increase traffic on Drayton Road, Saxton Road, and St Helens Street. While the site could make some financial contribution to improving transport in the town, on its own it would not be sufficient to overcome the traffic problems caused by the development of the site'. Further, in the Conclusions (p. 94), it is stated that the land to the east of Drayton Road should not be developed without a new road linking Drayton Road with Marcham Road near the Marcham Interchange. These conclusions were taken into account in the Interim Housing Supply Policy (IHSP) published in 2011 in which the only area in Abingdon identified as a possible development site was a small piece of land located between Twelve Acre Drive and Radley Road in North Abingdon. Both the *Core Strategy* and the IHSP are now dead letters, as a result of the recent changes in planning law. However, the facts remain the same, and the facts, as stated by the Highways Agency, the Vale of White Horse DC, and Oxfordshire County Council, are incontrovertible: **any development to the east of Drayton Road will exacerbate the already serious traffic congestion in South Abingdon and cannot be allowed to go ahead.**



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IF a Southern relief road and second bridge was ever built it would be likely to go very close to this site, perhaps not quite through it but certainly close enough to impact on the quality of life for those living there (see Figure 5.1 on p.48 of *Core Strategy*). It would be unfortunate indeed if the building of a relatively small development now were to create further difficulties for a future project which has been widely recognized as desirable for the town as a whole.

2. **Flood risk** During periods of heavy rainfall, such as have been experienced recently and may become a regular event as a result of changes in the North Atlantic weather pattern, surface water collects on the land on which the development will be built. This raises the question of flooding in the new development, and also in adjoining areas (Virginia Way, Metcalfe Close, Overmead, etc.) as the 'safety valve' currently provided by the field will no longer be present. This threat may also result in substantial increases in insurance premiums for these houses.
3. **Lack of public transport** In their consultation document the applicants stated that there were good public transport links to the proposed site. This is incorrect. Although there are many buses between Abingdon and Oxford, the vast majority of them do not go beyond the town centre – North Abingdon is well served by buses, but South Abingdon is not. Therefore residents of the proposed development who do not drive or do not have access to a car will be virtually marooned unless they are prepared to take a long walk into the town centre. The lack of public transport is already an issue in South Abingdon, and the addition of another 160 households will further exacerbate the traffic problems in Drayton Road.
4. **Lack of facilities** South Abingdon is relatively deprived in terms of facilities. There is no doctor's surgery and no dentist. The small and rather unprepossessing shopping centre in Gainsborough Green contains a convenience store and a pharmacy, but very little else. The nearest leisure centre is two miles away in North Abingdon and is inaccessible to those who do not have their own transport as it is not on a bus route. There is no secondary school in South Abingdon. There appears to be no provision in the plans submitted by the applicants for any additional facilities which would benefit both the residents of the new development and the current residents of South Abingdon. The proposed development is not integrated at all into the current housing, with only one access to it (from Drayton Road). This means that access to the existing facilities, such as they are, is very poor.



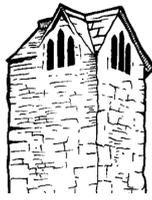
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5. Sustainability The developers have to demonstrate that the proposal is sustainable. The absence of safe and direct pedestrian/cycle routes to such local facilities as do exist means that it is hard to see how this can be demonstrated. Young children going to primary school, pre-school, etc. and parents going to the local shops will all have to go via the already busy main road – this will not be a pleasant or a short walk so it is easy to envisage that many households will decide to go by car, adding to the well-documented congestion and possibly meaning that most households will need two cars. Similarly those wanting to use the leisure facilities in Lambrick Way and on the river will all have to go a long way round to reach them.

7. Natural environment

The Local Plan 2011, which, although now expired, can reasonably be assumed to be pretty similar to what the new LDF will look like, states that the area to the east of Drayton Road is regarded as in the 'lowland vale' and is defined as an area 'for landscape enhancement'. It is shown on the Local Plan map as being subject to the following two policies.

- Policy NE9
'Development in the lowland vale will not be permitted if it would have an adverse effect on the landscape, particularly on the long open views within or across the area.'
- Policy NE11
'Proposals for development within or affecting areas of damaged or compromised landscape, in particular those areas defined for landscape enhancement on the proposals map, must provide a landscaping scheme which enhances the appearance of the area. Development which would further erode or damage the character of the landscape will not be permitted.'



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The Friends of Abingdon Civic Society contends that, for the above reasons, the proposed development is unsustainable, and that it will exacerbate a number of problems that already exist in South Abingdon. We note that the applicants have not had any prior consultations with the officers of the Vale of White Horse District Council, Oxfordshire County Council, or Abingdon Town Council which, although not mandatory, would be expected with an application of this type. They appear to be taking advantage of the absence of a current local plan to push through an ill thought out scheme which will benefit no one. Therefore we recommend that planning permission is refused.

Mrs Roberta Nichols
Executive Council Member
Friends of Abingdon Civic Society

3 December 2012

Please address any correspondence to:

38 Mattock Way
Abingdon OX14 2PQ