



The Friends of Abingdon
Civic Society

Friends of Abingdon Comments on Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2031, Housing Delivery Update

The Friends of Abingdon Civic Society is fully aware of the difficulties that the Vale of White Horse District council (VWHDC) is facing with respect to finding suitable sites for the delivery of an additional 7,430 houses in the Vale by 2031, and we accept that Abingdon must play its part. We are also aware that if the VWHDC does not identify sites, then developers will have free rein with only flood risk acceptable as a reason for refusing an application.

In view of this, the proposals for an additional 610 houses in two sites in north and northwest Abingdon are acceptable to the Friends, although it is unfortunate that an incursion into the Green Belt is necessary. However, we are unable to suggest alternative sites that are not part of the Green Belt. The loss of Green Belt could be alleviated to some degree by taking steps to preserve the best of the natural spaces and amenity value, at least at the edges of the development.

We have serious concerns about the likely severe increase in traffic in North Abingdon once these houses are occupied. Traffic will be generated not only from the two Abingdon developments, but also from the 700 houses planned for Radley and Kennington. Many, if not most, of the residents are likely to need to access the A34 which means that upgrading the Lodge Hill junction to a proper interchange with southern as well as northern slip roads will be essential **before the new sites are occupied**. Also, the residents in the new and existing estates will need to get to the upgraded junction, and so local roads (Radley Road, White's Lane, Audlett Drive, Twelve Acre Drive, Dunmore Road, Copenhagen Drive) will also need significant improvement, probably including mini-roundabouts and/or lights to enable people to exit not only the new developments but also the Dunmore and Peachcroft Estates. The 'improvements' to accommodate the cycle path at Wootton Road roundabout are already causing tailbacks at busy times, so the addition of many more cars is very likely to produce the sort of gridlock that already exists in South Abingdon. And, with respect to South Abingdon, if the Lodge Hill junction is not upgraded, traffic flow in the Drayton Road – Ock Street – Marcham Road area will also be severely affected. Gridlock in the centre of Abingdon will have a deleterious effect on the economic prosperity of the town and this must also be taken into consideration.

The VWHDC proposals note that S 106 money may be available for improving the Lodge Hill junction, but there is nothing about local access roads. S.106 money is also required for other necessary infrastructure (schools, leisure facilities, shopping centres, etc.). The Friends of Abingdon are concerned that S.106 money alone will not be sufficient. Other sources of funding should and must be sought. Therefore, we urge the VWHDC to press for a contribution from the Oxford City Deal funds for upgrading of the Lodge Hill junction. Other A34 junctions (Milton, Chilton) are being upgraded, and it seems unreasonable that there appear to be no plans for Lodge Hill. After all, many of the residents of these new houses are likely to be working in either the Science Vale industries or in Oxford.

Both the proposed sites are close to the A34. Therefore it is essential that suitable noise mitigation measures are put in place both on the A34 and in the houses themselves, particularly those nearest to this main highway.

In summary, Friends of Abingdon accept the arguments for the proposed development sites in north and northwest Abingdon, but they **must** be accompanied by substantial highway improvements and other infrastructure.

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