



# Watlington Parish Council

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## **Appeal by Archstone Projects Ltd and Bloor Homes Ltd**

Reference: APP/Q3115/W/19/3222822

Application reference: P17/S3231/O: Land at Britwell Road, Watlington



## **Statement of Case by Watlington Parish Council**

August 2019



Watlington Parish Council (WPC) has no objection in principle to the proposed development at Britwell Road for housing and employment. The site is allocated for development in the Watlington Neighbourhood Development Plan (WNDP) and the provision of new homes and employment opportunities are welcomed. However, the plan for the growth of Watlington in the WNDP is for an integrated scheme for housing together with essential new highways infrastructure provided by the realignment of the B4009 to the north and west of the town. WPC has consistently made its view known that it does not regard the appeal site as a 'stand-alone' development but as part of the wider scheme which depends on the full delivery of the re-aligned B4009 known as the Watlington edge road.

As there is no planning permission at this stage for the agreed edge road and no legal agreements between the parties to deliver it, the Parish Council is arguing in favour of rejecting the appeal. The Watlington community has suffered from air pollution for many years and this will not improve unless new development is accompanied by the necessary highway infrastructure.

The Parish Council will provide evidence that the proposed development at Britwell Road, without the edge road, will have a severe damaging impact on Watlington with regard to traffic and air quality. The development needs to be seen in the context of its strategic role in the WNDP. Damage can be mitigated by the delivery of the whole length of the planned edge road but not just by the section of the edge road within the site. The development without the certainty of the parallel construction of the whole length of the edge road would not be environmentally, economically or socially sustainable.

The Parish Council will put forward evidence to support its case on the following issues:



1. The impact of the development on the local road network, highway safety and the need for the Watlington edge road:
  - The strategic need for the edge road to meet planned development in Watlington and housing growth in the wider area
  - The impact of the development on local roads, including Pyrton Lane, without the full delivery of the edge road
  - Pedestrian safety issues
  - Impact of traffic on the historic environment of Watlington
  - Economic impact of current and future traffic management in the town centre
  
2. The impact of the development on air quality in the Watlington AQMA
  - The health implications of the air pollution recorded in the town
  - The lack of effective schemes to reduce air pollution in the town centre where pollution exceeds the levels set by European and UK regulations.
  - The need for the full delivery of the edge road to reduce air pollution levels in the town centre

Watlington is a small parish with a population of approximately 2700. The town is at the foot of the Chilterns escarpment on the boundary of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. A large part of the town is designated as a Conservation Area because of its historic and architectural importance and it has an iconic Grade 2\* building at its heart – the C17 Town Hall. The pattern of streets is unsuited to modern traffic and congestion often leads to gridlock. The town lies at the crossing of the B480 and the B4009. The B4009 is one of a very small number of 'B' classified roads in the country which link directly to a motorway junction – Junction 6 M40 is 5km away. Average Annual Daily Traffic figures recorded by Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) between the M40 and the town are consistently between 9500 and 9800. Over 80% of the daily traffic flow is estimated to be through traffic. Traffic emissions



are the main contributor to air pollution in the town centre and the area was designated by South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) as an Air Quality Management Area in 2009. It retains the designation in 2019 and has some of the worst air pollution in South Oxfordshire.

The Watlington Neighbourhood Development Plan (WNDP) was made on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2018 and is now part of the SODC Development Plan. The WNDP is an integrated plan for housing growth in Watlington which meets all basic conditions and is in accordance with European, national and local planning policies. It makes provision for housing growth on three allocated sites together with essential infrastructure. Land for the edge road is safeguarded in the Plan in order to reduce the volume of traffic in the town centre which will lead to an improvement in air quality. The new road is supported by SODC, OCC and the Oxfordshire Growth Board because it provides essential infrastructure for housing growth not only in Watlington but also along the B4009 corridor and surrounding area. OCC has an active programme for delivery of the edge road that includes surveys and technical assessment which is ongoing and fully funded. Oxfordshire Growth Board will determine recommendations from OCC on the implementation of the work and holds a budget that will match the financial needs of the scheme in conjunction with S106 Agreements. However, at this stage, there is no certainty that the edge road will be delivered alongside housing development and no assessment of the threats which may prevent its full delivery.

The parish council has had good opportunities to engage with Archstone Projects Ltd and Bloor Homes Ltd on the layout and design of the development. It has also been part of constructive discussions with developers of the other sites along the edge road route, including the sites in Pyrton Parish. Planning applications are now submitted to SODC on all the other sites and SODC has already granted a resolution to approve permission on one of these sites, which lies at the junction of the B4009 and the road to Pyrton village. The Parish Council has



been pro-active in progressing the overall WNDP scheme for growth in the town but uncertainties persist about the successful delivery of the whole plan for development.

Should the outcome of the appeal be that planning permission is granted, the Parish Council would like to suggest the following conditions:

- A 'Grampian' type condition to limit the scale of the housing development on the site until the full length of the edge road is constructed and in use.
- A scheme for routing construction traffic away from Watlington town centre
- A lighting scheme which identifies the area as E1 in view of the site's proximity to the Chilterns AONB, and is compatible with the dark skies around Watlington.
- A landscaping scheme which includes green spaces, trees, hedges and boundary fencing, which reflects the character of Watlington and uses species native to the local area.
- A scheme for creating good connectivity of the site with the town and surrounding area by providing cycleways and footpaths which would contribute to new networks to be created as part of the wider development plan for Watlington to meet healthy communities' objectives.