



## Minutes of the 'Remote' Meeting of the Planning and NPAB Committee held on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2020 at 7PM via Zoom

**Present:**

**Planning and NPAB Members:**

Andrew McAuley  
Rob Smith (RS) Vice Chair  
Matt Reid (MR)  
Ian Hill (IH)  
Nicky Smallbone (NS)  
Terry Jackson (TJ)  
Gill Bindoff  
Tony Powell  
Peter Richardson

**Co-opted Member:**

Gill Bindoff, Tony Powell

**Officer:**

Kristina Tynan

**Members of the Public:**

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1 Apologies for absence  
Alex Basden, Tim Horton.

2 South Oxfordshire Local Plan Hearing  
WPC received an email on the 14<sup>th</sup> July 2020 stating that the Inspector has decided to hold a session to consider the issue of a bypass for Watlington and its relationship with the Neighbour Plans of Watlington and Pyrton and has asked a representative of the Parish Council be available to discuss the issues involved. The questions he wants to explore are below and he has asked for a response by the 28<sup>th</sup> July.

**Matter 7b: a bypass for Watlington**

1. TRANS1b and TRANS3 say that this land is safeguarded for a strategic transport scheme, namely a bypass for Watlington. What strategic objective(s) would be achieved or assisted by the provision of this road? Are these strategic transport objectives or something else?
2. How does the road relate to the Local Transport Plan?
3. What work has been carried out to assess the impact on landscape, biodiversity and heritage in the Pyrton area, and what was the outcome?
4. How would the road in its entirety be funded and delivered?
5. How much housing delivery in Watlington, if any, is dependent on the completion of the road as shown on the safeguarded route?

6. What would be the implications of the removal of the safeguarding line from the plan in terms of the Watlington Neighbourhood Development Plan, the Pyrton Neighbourhood Development Plan and the submitted Local Plan?

He has asked for a response in writing by the 28<sup>th</sup> July 2020

These questions were discussed at the NPAB meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> July and it was:

**It was resolved that:**

- WPC will send a written statement. GB will draft by the weekend for submission next week which will be sent to all Members prior to being sent to the Inspector.
- GB will attend as the WPC representative on the 4<sup>th</sup> August 2020

In the light of this resolution there was no further discussion on this issue.

3. P20/S2134/O Chalgrove Airfield – Initial discussion on the application

Outline Planning Application for Residential-led mixed use development comprising the following elements with all Matters reserved, except Access, as shown on the Land Use and Access Parameter Plan, Building Heights Parameter Plan and the floorspace outlined on the Parameter Schedule.

MR advised that there is an opportunity to get our comments on this application heard via a 3<sup>rd</sup> Party. He stated that he ‘met’ with Chalgrove Shield and our objection to development on Chalgrove Airfield.

The following comments received today from Roger Williams who is a member of POETS, and an ex highway engineer who is very interested in making sustainable traffic solutions.

**General** - This is a particularly inappropriate development even more so now with the Government’s adoption of “net zero” emissions by 2050 objective and the recently published “Decarbonising Transport , Setting the Challenge” which states that active travel and public transport should be the first choice. The location and context of Chalgrove means that, however much money is spent on infrastructure, it can never be made sustainable with active travel being the first choice.

Additionally, the exceptional number and scale of the associated highway infrastructure measures raises questions over their likely delivery and if they are all delivered, the enormous costs, disruption and environmental damage they would wreak on the attractive countryside and historic villages of South Oxfordshire.

**Sustainability** - Chalgrove’s position isolated in the centre of South Oxfordshire served by a network of minor country lanes and remote from major employment, shopping, community support and transport nodes, militates against the possibility of sustainable travel.

In responding to the Local Plan inspector’s question the Council have suggested that the development will “provide an opportunity to deliver a highly sustainable development”. The only possible explanation for this comment is a belief that Chalgrove would become self sufficient. But even fully developed it will be little more than a large village and would not compete with the Country Towns and Oxford and would not contain a rail station or major public transport interchange. Similarly, the Council’s suggestion in their Local Plan evidence, that the improved highway connections would *encourage sustainable travel* seems perverse when road improvements would have the opposite effect; encouraging greater motor vehicle use. Certainly, the developers believe that this will be the case as they now include the improvement of M40 junctions in their schedule of infrastructure measures!

**Highway Impact Mitigation Measures**

(a) The Devastating Environmental Impact

The seemingly ever growing list of highway schemes listed in the updated SODC Infrastructure Development Plan now includes, either directly or indirectly related: 4 village bypasses, 3 highway route improvements, 2 village improvements and 4 possible M40 junction improvements. These schemes would have a transformational effect on the gentle attractive countryside and historic villages of South Oxfordshire.

(b) Doubts About Delivery

The total costs of these measures is not available but the scale and costs will be totally out of proportion

especially when the proposed contributions for public transport support (for which exceptionally a figure is quoted (£7.92m)) is added. There must be doubts about the viability of the development and the likelihood of all these transport schemes being delivered, especially given the dire state of public finances and the practice of developers challenging “onerous” planning requirements post permission. It is perhaps significant that the infrastructure delivery scheme attached to this application doesn’t include all the schemes in the SODC Infrastructure Development Plan e.g. B4015 Improvements, B480 Corridor Improvements and A4075 Junction Improvement?

Given the importance of the transport impact mitigation measures, these omissions and doubts about the delivery, it would be only prudent to impose Grampian Planning Conditions to ensure that the development would not proceed out of step with the infrastructure provision.

### **Provision for Active Travel from Chalgrove**

#### **(a) Distances Too Great**

The distances involved in accessing the neighbouring centres, Oxford, Didcot and Thame are beyond reasonable utility cycling distances. Also, none of the roads to those destinations have safe cycling provisions.

#### **(b) Proposed Strategic Cycling Routes Unrealistic**

The Transport Assessment Figure 8.2 shows “strategic” cycle routes to nearby towns, using byways and minor roads. However, these are indirect and are unlikely to be attractive for regular commuting by bike. The suggested route to Oxford is particularly bizarre as it is longer and hillier than the direct route via B480 and involves unmade paths and a river crossing.

## **CONCLUSION**

### **This development should be refused because:**

1. Development of the site would be contrary to national and local sustainable travel policies. The importance of which, especially in fostering active travel, has recently been further endorsed by Government statements and decisions.
2. The distances to local centres transport nodes, major employment and shopping are too great for active travel. The direct routes involved are unsuitable and the suggested alternative “strategic” cycle routes indirect and certainly in the Oxford case unrealistic.
3. The scale and costs of the highway measures for this development are enormous and would have a destructive effect on the attractive countryside and historic villages.
4. These road “improvements” would increase motor vehicle use and dependency, as confirmed by the inclusion of proposals to improve a number of M40 junctions. This is again contrary to national and local sustainability policies,
5. There are discrepancies between transport measures in the Application Scheme Schedule and those in the Council’s Infrastructure Delivery Plan, with a number of “missing” schemes. This and the number and scale of the transport schemes reinforces doubts about the likelihood of the all the transport schemes being delivered in step with the development or indeed, at all.
6. Whatever amount of money is spent on infrastructure and whatever is provided, the Chalgrove development cannot be made sustainable.

**Grampian Conditions - If despite all the fundamental objections, it is resolved to approve the development, Planning Conditions should be imposed backed up with a Legal Agreement, which links phases of the development to the offsite highways.**

The committee had a detailed discussion about views from Watlington, Mitigation Measure, The Icknield Community College and potential move to Chalgrove, rural to urban views, Watlington having an established service centre, employment, economic impact on Watlington, traffic, the housing market, impact of construction traffic, change in demographics.

**Resolved:** That MR to draft a paper and if any Councillor has anything else to add to let MR know. This paper will be useful for the Planning Meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> August where this application will be formally

discussed.

**THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS THE MEETING CLOSED AT 8.35PM**