

## Consultation 2 'Special Comments'

This file includes comments received during Consultation 2.

It includes letters, documents and emails. These documents have been submitted independently of questionnaires or with them but with too much text to be input to the database fields.

The contents of these comments have been included in the analysis for Consultation 2 along with the data from the questionnaires received. Some replies are included, in due course there will be a response recorded for all comments.

### Special Comment 1

**Re: WAT1. Britwell Road. Watlington**

I refer to previous correspondence in this matter and in particular my letter dated the 17<sup>th</sup> September 2014.

My client has instructed me to comment on several matters raised in the current consultation documents, namely:

1. The site capacity is 30 – 42 dwellings depending upon density and landscaping and NOT 15 as referred to in the “*development sites*” plan in the Maps document dated December 2014
2. Although the Environment Agency maps and SHLAA plan both show the site outside of the flood plain the “*designated areas*” plan in the Maps document dated December 2014 indicates that part of the site is within the flood plain. Our client’s technical experts are looking into this in more detail.

We are concerned that these two issues may prejudice the proper consideration of WAT1 during the consultation process and disadvantage my client. Can you please confirm how you are minded to address this matter?

It is now over a year since we last met and we would welcome the opportunity to meet with the Council early in the New Year and update you on our proposals, before making our formal submission in response to the consultation

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



## Special Comment 1 reply

**RE : WAT1, Britwell Road, Watlington.**


*Thank for your letter of 11th December relating to the Site WAT1. We have noted its content. You may not be aware the Environment Agency has issued a revised flood map for Watlington which includes part of your site with the flood plain. I attach this map for your information. This has been reflected in a recent event of flooding in The Goggs adjacent to your site, you may wish to investigate this.*


*This may explain the cautious number of dwellings that have been put on this site. Perhaps you could consider this and come back to us to indicate if you wish to reconsider the number that you would wish to promote. As a result we consider that neither point that you detail is likely to harm your case in this consultation process. We will put your letter on the consultation file and we will look forward to hearing from you once you have had the chance to consider this information.*


*At this stage of the consultation process we have not been overly exercised by the numbers emerging on any of the sites as we are wishing for a steer from our parishioners as the sites that they wish us to look at and the effects of the sites on the overall vision for the town. When we have completed the second consultation we will be looking to meet with developers to discuss the results and to then examine numbers likely to achieve the objectives given to us, that may be the time to meet up with you.*

## Special Comment 2

*Set aside areas of land for for Community to raise food sustainably & to raise awareness of the environment & provide places for the community to interact and socialise outdoors in a productive manner with Educational activities with nature trails & information boards, Pole lathe, Charcoal making, wormeries, earth toilet*

 *Bike racks, Cycle paths etc. & support a White Bike Scheme initiative and a walk/cycle way from town to outer areas such as the Lewknor bus stop, other villages & Watlington Hill*

 *Renewable energy production for the community*

 *Improve public transport*

### Special Comment 3

I attended the meeting to discuss the findings of the traffic consultants on Monday 24th.

I was dissatisfied at the meeting and by your subsequent communications to see hardly any serious consideration of strategic traffic management, control or calming measures. The immediate recourse to suggestions for relief roads is sadly reminiscent of the debates of some 30 years ago when I was part of the group Watlington Against Traffic which persuaded the County Council to introduce the current weight restriction.

The key problem with relief roads, in conditions of rising traffic demand, is that they encourage yet more through traffic into the area and not less. In addition, the planning gain required to pay for them can only be extracted from very significantly more housing development than has been imagined for Watlington so far, which itself will lead to more traffic. 30 years ago the housing numbers required to pay for the same Western relief road as found on the current maps was in excess of 300.

I urge you to explore in much greater depth and detail alternative proposals for strategic traffic management.

These could include controlling the flows of traffic into the Town using smart traffic lights, chicanes, alternate one way systems, and automatic enforcement of the existing weight restriction.

### Special Comment 4

#### **Re: Watlington Traffic Study**

Thank you for informing me of the recently produced Watlington Traffic Study which I have studied with great interest. My family owns the industrial site at Lys Mill which has been included in the list of sites generating HGV movements (Paragraph 2.10) and I would be grateful if you could please pass on the following comments –

- Re. Local Transport Plan -
  - (a) I note that the report points out that there should be a “focus on attracting and supporting economic investment and growth” (*Paragraph 2.1*), that it is necessary to “improve access for jobs” (*Paragraph 2.11*) and that “a functioning network of roads open to the lorry traffic is considered essential to economic wellbeing” (*Paragraph 2.14*). As the owner of Lys Mill I would certainly agree with these objectives.
  - (b) *Paragraphs 2.26 & 2.27*: I found the statement surprising that 3% of HGVs and 1% of buses cause 44% of pollution. I wonder how this percentage was calculated? It is HGV lorries that continue to be designed to reduce NOx pollution. EU Emission standards since 1992 have reduced NOx in 1992 from 8.0g/K/WH to 0.4 by Euro V1. Surely this is the way forward and hopefully in time similar systems will be enforced for cars.
  - (c) *Paragraph 2.6*: I note my family’s site at Lys Mill has been included in the list of sites generating HGV movements.
  - (d) *Paragraph 3.3*: I also note that the reason for queuing vehicles is the on-street parking and that by reducing the queuing emissions will be reduced.
  - (e) *Paragraph 4.24*: Table 4.8 shows HGVs on Howe Road over 12 hours 07.00 to 19.00 to be only 10. This shows my family’s reduction in H&H Carriers activities at Lys Mill are now very substantially less than when the Parish Council undertook their survey. (Note: the 10 movements may not all be visiting Lys Mill).
  - (f) *Paragraph 7.3*: This accepts that HGVs from Lys Mill will require access through Watlington.
  - (g) *Paragraph 7.10*: Lack of alternative routes prevents restriction of HGV movements through Watlington for existing sites (including Lys Mill).

- More importantly though, Figure 6.1-6.2 in the report shows on the yellow areas sites for possible development. Am I correct in my understanding that this involves possible housing on areas P to V (which includes the main HGV vehicle generating area) and replacement industrial area U? The Highways Report does not consider this option.
- Though Lys Mill is not in the Parish (???) it adjoins the Parish. If this was also included for housing then the HGV movements from this site would cease and for this site the time scale could be months not 5-10 years (see Figure 6.1-6.2, Item U). As part of such a proposal a regular mini bus service could be made available for future residents visiting the shops and other facilities in Watlington town centre.

I hope that you find my comments of interest. As previously mentioned I would still be happy to meet NPCC representatives as a local farmer and land owner who can contribute to the plan if the open countryside is considered important in the plan.

### Special Comment 4 Reply

Thank you for your letter of December 3 regarding the Watlington Traffic Study and your interesting comments on our Neighbourhood Plan. I have some detailed responses to your comments below but with respect to what I believe to be the main the main issue, ie inclusion of Lys Mill as a possible housing development site, I make some observations here:

As you note Lys Mill is outside the Parish of Watlington and therefore outside our "designated plan area" as Such, it we would have exceeded our mandate to have included Lys Mill at this stage, We did, as you may well be aware, go through a period of protracted negotiations with communities neighbouring Wallington with the aim of producing a more cohesive joint plan but the discussions were not successful.

Having said the above we are now formally in "Consultation 2" during which anyone is free to raise comments on the documents produced and request changes. Your observation that Lys Mill has housing development potential has been noted and it is likely to be included as an option in our Draft Plan next spring which will then go through another consultation before formal examination and referendum. Given the previous discussion with Britwell Salome it does seem quite possible however that an objection will be raised which we will be duty bound to address.

Regarding your Local Plan items:

(b) HGV and bus pollution - we will note and investigate

(e) H & H Carrier activities - again noted and we will look into

(a) and (d) Supporting economic growth and on-street parking are themes which have been frequently highlighted during our consultation to date and need to be addressed in the Draft Plan

Ref: the principle of developing housing on the industrial estate and moving that facility to the northern border of the Parish this is again another comment we are encountering frequently. (Your reference to sites P V and secondly to U, do not seem quite consistent without documents, eg there in site "V" - can I ask you to check the Vision, Objectives and Options and the WNP Maps documents and the Traffic Survey Report. all are listed on the home page of \_ \_

Again, thank you for your observations.

### Special Comment 5

I would like to make a "Special Comment" regarding the Plan - I am concerned that 400 people live in the Parish. but outside the town and their views are not represented as yet. They depend on the town as their "service centres" and the growth and prosperity of the town is important and this applies to many aspects including broadband and housing. I fear that the Plan may not reflect the views of the whole Parish.

An example is housing - land is scarce in and around the town but small **sites** might be made available in other areas of the Parish with an accumulation over 17 years of quite a number towards totals and allaying the fears of many people that the town will be swamped!

Please can you add the outreach comment to the list.

### Special Comment 6

- Changing the date in 'Defining the NP Area' document from January 2013 to October 2013
- Update comments in the TPP report to remove any reference to any involvement of a lorry in the caravan collision photos.

### Special Comment 7

#### Reference: Watlington Neighbourhood Plan: Vision, Objectives and Options document

Firstly, I'd like to congratulate the Core Committee for what appears to be a well-researched, thorough and comprehensive draft plan which, together with the supporting documentation, I have read, re-read and carefully considered. And throughout the course of reading and thinking about it, my opinion has changed — indicative, to the breadth of opinions and options considered. It is clear that a lot of work has been put into its drafting which should be applauded. After reading, it feels that there is a real opportunity to link any further development of housing within **the town with the creation** of additional roads to ease the traffic congestion that is endemic and that has considerable side effects on pedestrian safety, wear-and-tear on historic buildings as well as air quality. (As an aside, but one which I feel is important, my belief is that congestion is caused as much by inconsiderate parking along Brook Street, Couching Street and Shirburn Street as it is by the use of the streets by HGVs.) And therefore, I believe that any option that does not support the sensitive creation of relief roads should not be considered **ie WAT6, WAT10, WAT11, Site P, Site Q or Site T.**

Of the options that do support a relief road I believe that the last co-ordinated option (titled 'expand to the west') is the most favourable for the following reasons:

This option joins up with the existing relief road preparations to the north and south of the roundabout adjacent to the industrial estate. This would immediately reroute commercial vehicles to the industrial estate to avoid the town centre as well as traffic towards Benson which is 65.7% of the North/South through traffic using the town (combining AM a PM figures from slide 16 of the TPP traffic presentation).

It would be easy to coordinate a new vehicular access for school buses again removing the necessity for them to access the town centre (I believe few, if any buses from the secondary school travel due east) Please note that whilst all views within this letter are my personal views, I am a school governor at Icknield. I presume that the creation of this road could form a condition of planning for this site, and therefore be achievable in an environment where funds from other sources are unavailable.

However, I believe it would be ludicrous to promote this option without the co-ordination of WAT8 and WAT9 (both in the same ownership) as well as WAT7, enabling a more appropriate link with the B4009 to the north of the town than relying on the existing route via Pyrton Lane, Whilst I acknowledge that this falls outside of the neighbourhood plan from Watlington's perspective, it would be nonsense extend Willow Close (as appears to be the original intent) only for it to join the narrow lanes in Pyrton, With this plan, the triangular plots within WAT7 and WAT8 abutting the town could be developed as housing and to the north (Pyrton side) of

the relief road (if not left as green belt although I recognise the economies of development would determine the viability of this) as small commercial barn-style units where access by foot to the town is less important, It could also accommodate a petrol station, enabling the site in the town to be redeveloped (including the provision of some off-road parking for Couching Street) and ensuring the continued viability of this business. This option would accommodate, according to the figures on page 26 of the document, approximately 200 houses which I accept is in excess, probably, of even the higher number of houses required within the town as well as some commercial units supporting small businesses. However, if this achieved the otherwise unachievable opportunity for a western relief road, I believe this would perhaps be considered a "price worth paying"

It would be clearly necessary, to fully bypass the town, for an additional southern relief road to be created, which could be created separately to any other relief roads (traffic towards Nettlebed could, in the interim, turn east at the roundabout adjacent to the industrial estate and travel along Cuxham Road and Brook Street - as the illustration above - although it is recognised that some adjustment to both parking, rights of way, and pedestrian crossings would be required). Whilst this would pass close to my own home, I have sought to be as objective as possible in recommending it.

However, I do not believe that any of the housing options shown that support the creation of a southern relief road are appropriate and therefore oppose these schemes. The area to the south of West Meadow along the track to the Willow Pond is used extensively by walkers (including those visiting the town), runners and people exercising dogs, representing a considerable leisure asset to the community which would be lost in the event of a southern relief road to be created as parts of the development of either WAT1 or WAT2. Similarly, I believe it would have a significantly detrimental effect on the views of the town from the south.

I strongly believe that a more appropriate route for a southern relief road would be further to the south, joining the B4009 approximately at OS grid reference 680940 and traveling "south east towards the Dame Alicefarm, and joining the B480 in the vicinity of its crossing with Swan's Way Ridgeway. This route could be shielded from the town by the existing tree line along this ridge. Serve the industrial units at Lys Mill - I accept that this route, as shown on the illustration left, and which is clearly more ambitious and costly would require funding from sources other than the development of housing. However, I strongly believe that if "half" of a full bypass (ie the western relief road) could be funded by and as a condition of the development of additional housing, it is as much as we could achieve, specifically when this route accounts for two-thirds of the traffic passing through the town.

### **Special Comment 8**

Re: Watlington Neighbourhood Plan

I appreciate you responding to my e-mail of 5<sup>th</sup> December 2014.

The advantage of replacing the industrial buildings at Lys Mill with housing would have an advantage of reducing HGVs not only in Watlington but also in Britwell Salome. The site is extremely well screened and is on the boundary of both parishes and it is not overlooked by any residential properties or public areas.

The replacement of large industrial buildings with (lower) brick and tile homes would be a major advantage to both parishes. Exactly the same approach was taken at Chinnor on the site of the old cement works and it must have been a major advantage in improving the environment of the village.

I apologise for the typo error in my previous e-mail and I agree there is no site V. I have attached an amended copy of my previous e-mail with corrections in blue to clarify the situation.

### **Special Comment 9**

Cycling and walking in general, and between Watlington and Pyrton specifically. Safe cycling and pedestrian routes are important for the physical and social health of the community. Currently, it is easy to walk out of the town any direction into countryside but a bypass will create a barrier.

Also, if there is a bypass, the location, design and material of the road should be one that creates minimal noise impact on the town. This might sound like NIMBY but it is currently delightfully tranquil in our corner of the town and we didn't move from London to live next to a noisy bypass!

We should bear in mind that if we have a bypass, not only will local and existing traffic use it, but it will also suck in additional traffic that currently uses different routes to avoid the Watlington bottleneck and weight restrictions. Create a bypass and we will have more and heavier traffic than currently struggles through Watlington town centre. This will impact on the countryside and on the town with noise and pollution.

Of course we have to look at the impact on a bypass at Watlington on neighbouring towns as we don't want to simply pass on our traffic problems on to them. The issue then becomes that the more the bypass is linked up to other fast roads to avoid bottlenecks in the next village, the more traffic will be sucked in and the pressure will then be to increase a small single lane bypass around Watlington to a major dual carriageway.

Equally the large lorries going through Watlington town centre is not acceptable, damaging buildings, creating a safety hazard and creating an unpleasant environment in the centre of town, and congestion is bound to get worse with more houses bringing more traffic with them.

### **Special Comment 10**

I wish to express my support for the expansion of Watlington to the West.

In my opinion this has the least impact as it is not in AONB and it has better road links for HGV's and school buses.

Negatives for expanding to the South would be concerns about flooding. This would also impact on a beautiful walking area used by locals.

Negatives for Pepperpot: does not alleviate existing traffic issues!

Negatives for the East: Watlington Hill is AONB and greatly valued by all, in particular Watlington residents. It would be a shame to spoil the view from this wonderful asset that sets Watlington apart from other towns. I strongly object to this option.

### **Special Comment 11**

The detail and findings of the traffic survey are interesting and quite thorough. I think most people's key concern is around the Couching Street/Brook Street junction, the pinch point by the Town Hall and Shirburn Street in general. While Pyrton Lane residents dislike its current use as a rat-run (and the speeds of some traffic on the lane) to avoid the hold-ups in these areas, I acknowledge up front that this is a symptom of the other problems. What I would highlight since the Plan/survey was

conducted is that the recent diversions onto Pyrton Lane triggered by the electricity works on Brook Street only serve to emphasise the issue that is Pyrton Lane, and its unsuitability for traffic volume – it has been a testing couple of weeks, and I would like this to be recognised more as the Plan is developed

To the main issues of the village centre though, while there could be specific targeted changes to things like parking on Shirburn/Couching/Brook streets, traffic volume is key and I see three ways of addressing this, each which will reduce the overall flow through this central route:

- (1) To re-establish Spring Lane as two way traffic for vehicles wishing to access Hill Road and the car park from a right turn off the B480 rather than venturing up Couching Street
- (2) To signpost that car traffic and light goods coming from Shirburn Street and bound for the Wallingford/Oxford direction can travel down the High Street and Gorwell rather than Couching Street, thereby spreading the load more equitably

To explore whether the M40 J7 Northbound could be reestablished as an entry point to the motorway. I'm not sure if it ever was and was decommissioned or the background to it not being open, but if it was to be open, this would suck some M40 bound traffic from the Wallingford/Cuxham/Chalgrove side away from having to come via Watlington

### **Special Comment 12**

At the moment it is impossible to have an informed discussion about the plan as there are no credible numbers on many of the key issues in the document itself or in the supporting information. These include

- The current and future housing needs of the local population.
- The numbers of dwellings needed to meet these needs.
- The types of dwellings required.
- The tenure type and costs of dwellings required.
- The costs of alternative strategic traffic management and calming measures.
- The impacts of traffic management and calming measures on future traffic flows and growth in Watlington and the surrounding area.
- The costs of the relief road proposals.
- How many private sector dwellings would be required to generate enough
- Community Infrastructure Levy to pay for the relief roads?
- How many additional non-CIL generating affordable dwellings would have to be added to the number of market cost dwellings?
- What would be the impacts of these numbers of additional dwellings on traffic growth and flows in and around the town?
- What would be the impacts of the relief road proposals on the future rates of traffic growth in the Watlington area and surrounding villages?

What would be the impacts of the supply of these numbers of additional dwellings on the demand for existing properties in the town?



### Special Comment 13

Re: Watlington Neighbourhood Plan - 2<sup>nd</sup> Consultation Jan 2015

I refer to the recent consultation exercise in respect of the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) and in particular the "Vision, objectives and options" document dated December 2014. I also attended the "drop in" sessions on the 17<sup>th</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2015.

My client recognises and understands the need to provide some additional housing in Watlington. We would support the most sustainable solution for modestly scaled growth. Given the characteristics of Watlington and its wider context larger scale housing on the north and western edges of the town cannot reasonably be considered to be sustainable in place making, environmental, traffic, landscape, heritage and visual impact terms.

We are also obliged to highlight the procedural and legal difficulties of making commitments beyond the boundary, which might have significantly detrimental consequences for areas and communities immediately beyond the NP. If the plan flounders because it is unlawful the Town will lose control over the shaping of its own future and run the risk of either "planning by Appeal" or a plan drawn up by SODC. I have been instructed to comment, in the strongest possible terms, on matters raised in the current consultation documents, namely:

1. That the "pepper - pot" expansion of Watlington is the preferred option as this will allow limited growth in a controlled, yet organic, way without major expansion at the edge of the Town. This approach will protect the setting of the town in the wider countryside and prevent coalescence with Pyrton, both of which are in the public interest and spring from longstanding national and local policy.
2. There is no evidence to suggest that Watlington is an appropriately sustainable location, has the capacity or indeed the "appetite" for a larger housing allocation beyond the "pepper-pot" option. The larger housing growth option (WAT9/WAT8) would be profoundly harmful to the setting of the Town, to Pyrton and to the sensitive countryside gap between the two.
3. That the Options contain proposals, namely the upgrading of Pyrton Lane to form a relief road, which fall outside of the NP area. Not only would there appear to be no legal basis for including such proposals in the NP, but also no feasibility study has been undertaken for such works.
4. The Options for western expansion make no reference to either the Pyrton or Shirburn Conservation Areas and wrongly conclude that there will be only limited impact in views from Watlington Hill. Indeed the analysis of WAT7, 8

and 9 all wrongly conclude that these sites are not prominent from Watlington Hill. A landscape appraisal will demonstrate that these sites are prominent.

5. That the amount of development required to fund the relief road (probably up to 300 dwellings) is completely out of scale with Watlington, representing a 33 increase in the number of households. In any event such scale of development is a strategic allocation that should have been properly considered through the Core Strategy and not the WNP. It does not appear that the residents of Watlington have been openly invited to consider the "cost" of a relief road and that it will require massive housing growth, which will bring its own problems.
6. That the option to allocate WAT9 and upgrade Pyrton Lane to form a Relief Road and provide access to the school is fundamentally flawed. There is no technical evidence that (i) this is supported by the Highway Authority, (ii) it will alleviate the problems of HGV's and "through traffic" in the Town Centre, (iii) it will not generate its own traffic problems by adding more traffic to the road network and creating an unacceptable "knock-on" effect at Cuxham, Britwell, Shirburn and Pyrton (something that Watlington PC has always maintained it would avoid when looking to solve its own traffic problems], (iv) it does not involve third party land to carry out the required improvements to Pyrton Lane and the B4009 and (v) any landscape and highway safety impacts can be successfully mitigated.
7. That upgrading Pyrton Lane (width, alignment, signage, lighting, road markings etc) and its junction with the B4009 to form a relief road will unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the Lane, the setting of both Pyrton and Shirburn Conservation Areas, the setting of Pyrton in the wider countryside and the amenity of the residents who live nearby.
8. WAT9 is too far from local facilities and future residents will drive and not walk to access shops and services. This will result in increased traffic movements converging in the centre of Watlington.

9. That the upgrading of Pyrton Lane and the potential development of WAT8 and WAT9 will severely harm the setting of Pyrton Manor, which is a grade 11\* Listed Building. The Manor is a high quality example of its type and its setting, including the immediate pleasure ground/parkland and the wider open countryside, contributes to the legibility of the historic estate layout and the sense of remoteness and tranquillity that enhances the special interest of the listed building. Furthermore the sense of openness and strong visual relationship with the dramatic landscape of the Chilterns escarpment has been protected by successive generations over the last 400 years. This is all reflected in the detailed Heritage Assessment that was prepared for my client in the Summer of 2014.

Clearly it is right that Watlington should receive some growth but that such growth should be appropriately proportionate to the scale, role and capacity of the settlement. The proposals for WAT8, WAT9 and associated 'relief' road are not well made. It cannot be the role of the NP to bring forward proposals that will cause such profound physical interventions and impacts beyond the NP boundary. Besides these proposals will inevitably lead to the loss of an important green gap between settlements causing coalescence and detrimental impact upon the setting of important and fragile heritage assets.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with the Council and discuss our concerns prior to the publication of the Draft Plan.

#### **Special Comment 14**

My suggestion was that in the important document titled Vision Objectives and Options, page 6, under the heading Business Survey, two points, parking and traffic, are mentioned in the current draft. Businesses were concerned about housing too from the responses to the survey. I am not sure if people will read everything. Can business concerns about housing be noted in the main Aims document, as well as parking and traffic?

#### **Special Comment 15**

There is in my opinion little structure to the Vision and little comprehension of the consequences of some of the proposals. I also perceive in an attempt to give something for everybody a number of inherent conflicts in several of the possible proposals/objectives.

The most obvious case is that of a by-pass. It is of course superficially attractive but there is little evidence of what consideration has been given to the general consequences of a by-pass apart from the immediate traffic effect. Historical experience in other towns has led to a contraction in the shops within a town. In the case of Watlington it is doubtful if, for example, the petrol station would survive the loss of business.

As with the experience of widening the M25 consideration needs to be given as to whether building a by-pass would create more traffic flow. It is not a solution to Watlington's problems merely to create more traffic through Shirburn or indeed through a roundabout at each end of a by pass. Such increased traffic flow would have consequences for Britwell Salome and for Benson. The latter already has traffic difficulties of its own without any increase in traffic. Access to the M40 from the B4009

requires traffic to cross the path of traffic on the other side of the road half of the time. An increase in traffic flow is likely to require the building of a roundabout (or 2) to prevent congestion/accidents. Such roundabouts would most likely eliminate the already scant parking for the users of the Oxford Tube.

Apart from identifying some possible sites there are no proposals about the housing expansion. A plan would specify broadly the mix of additional housing and the typical land space that would be allocated to each property. The decision not to obtain a Housing Needs Survey is highly detrimental to efficient planning. Any such plan would generate, based on the housing mix, an estimate of the likely increase in children and the requirements on the local schools. There is no indication given as to the current ability of the schools to accommodate an increase in the number of pupils. Similarly to what extent can the local GP practice cope with an expansion in the number of local residents and would such expansion require an enlarged surgery facility and another GP?

In the absence of a Housing Needs Survey is there any analysis of what the marketplace is indicating about the sort of people who would be attracted to live in a significantly expanded Watlington? If WAT 8 was adopted as a location to build 200 houses that would mean the creation of a large housing estate with, it would appear, small individual plots. Such an estate would be out of character with the rest of Watlington. There may also be difficulties in creating an estate with a large mix in size of properties. A preponderance of 2 bedroom dwellings might well make 4 bedroom properties less attractive to purchasers. The comment that such a large estate would not be prominent from Watlington Hill is preposterous.

In so far as there are no proposals for an expansion of employment facilities new residents would necessarily be working elsewhere creating additional traffic demands within the immediate vicinity of the town regardless of whether a by pass was built or not. The document recognises that at present a large proportion of the residents use their car to go to work that is only likely to increase. The document also includes a statement to the effect that there is an easy commute to Princes Risborough. That can only be the opinion of somebody who does not drive frequently in peak times. The drive through Chinnor is no easier than through Watlington, particularly on the Prince Risborough Road. I am less familiar with driving to Didcot but my experience is that it is a slow drive either through Benson or taking a 'short cut' through Ewelme to by pass Benson and then to access the Wallingford by pass. The expansion of home based cottage industries is not likely to create any meaningful amount of employment.

It is inappropriate to claim there has been significant consultation and then include two significant areas for possible housing development which lie outside of the Watlington parish boundaries [WAT 7 and WAT 8]. The unilateral annexation of such land in the Vision is wholly inappropriate. Furthermore if the favoured direction of any by pass is to be at the West of Watlington then it will necessarily have to absorb a large amount of the land which is in both WAT7 and WAT 8.

### **Special Comment 16**

I support the requirement for additional housing in Watlington and understand the national requirement for investment in infrastructure and housing, particularly in rural areas. Nonetheless I believe the Watlington NP vision for increasing the boundaries of their parish and encroaching to the north and west of the town is ill conceived and will have unforeseen consequences on the villages of Cuxham and Pyrton.

☒ There are better options available – maintaining the boundary of Watlington and developing within this boundary. The area to the east of the town already has housing meaning the belt of countryside to the north and west that separates Pyrton/Cuxham from Watlington can be maintained. Developing to the north and west will mean Pyrton and Cuxham could easily be consumed by Watlington – not in the interest of the inhabitants of the two villages.

☒ The level of housing proposed to fund a road will mean a significant increase in the Watlington population, an increase that cannot be sustained by Watlington. A new population to the north and west will add to traffic as they cannot access Watlington except by car and put added stress on existing services designed for the existing population.

☒ Changing Pyrton Lane, not in the NP area, to create a widened and lit bypass road is further evidence of the creeping urbanisation of our green spaces, impacting the views from National Trust Watlington Hill as well as prejudicing the Grade II listed Pyrton Manor which neighbours the lane. The funding for this road would mean significant housing development which would exacerbate the issues highlighted above.

☒ Pyrton and Shirburn are conservation areas– any such development of a bypass road will not be in keeping with the character or appearance of the wider countryside and these villages in particular.

The proposals seem out of context and out of scale for the needs of Watlington and the surrounding countryside. Watlington NP appears to be operating outside its jurisdiction, proposing a significant change that will have a substantial impact beyond its boundary.

Pyrton and Cuxham will arguably merge into Watlington - irreparably damaging the history and heritage of these two Oxfordshire villages.

Please don't let this be your legacy to our beautiful part of the county.

### **Special Comment 17**

I am not sure what is happening about the second consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan so my husband and I thought we would email a few comments on the "Vision, Objectives and Options" document which we have read with interest; a lot of work has clearly been put into it.

1. The first point is regarding the possibility of a relief road; I can find no direct reference to this in the text of the document (unless it's implied under Traffic - vision). However the map on page 9 suggests that this is perhaps on the list of possible outcomes. Although we appreciate that concerns about air quality and traffic were some of the main issues that came out of consultation 1, we feel that the inclusion of the possibility of a relief road without putting it in context is misleading. There is no indication in the document of what the costs or other implications of a relief road might be. We understand that a relief road could only be funded by development as it is not on a key or strategic route, and we believe that it would take something like 1,000 houses to create enough CIL funds to pay for it. We do not believe that the community would support 1,000 houses in any way at all and we believe the document as it stands is incomplete because it should include reference to the following:

- Information on how a relief road would be paid for, including estimates of the levels of CIL likely to be associated with the scales of development that might be proposed in the Plan as it progresses
- Information on possible negative effects it might have on the town and traffic levels on the B4009 generally

- What is the likelihood of Pyrton Parish Council agreeing to it?
2. There is no alternative to a relief road offered, yet well planned traffic management could do a lot to improve traffic flows through the town and to improve air quality. The current roadworks seem to be doing this rather effectively - where have the HGVs gone?
  3. Wouldn't a Housing Needs Survey provide useful data to ensure that the NP meets the needs of all of the population of the town? I see that affordable housing was raised as an issue in Consultation 1 but is not developed in the current document.
  4. What are your plans for carrying out a Sustainability Appraisal? We attended a very interesting meeting organised by Gill Bindoff and attended by about 10 people where we discussed a range of issues but I am not sure if there has been any follow up to this. I see there is a reference on page 41 to a "Sustainability Assessment Scoping Report" but I can't see this on the website.
  5. In the site assessment tables, how has the ecological value of each site been assessed? Have ecological surveys been carried out at all?
  6. Would it be helpful to include a map clearly showing those areas that are susceptible to flooding from surface runoff, streams and springs?
  7. The Business Survey produced 29 responses but on page 12 it states there are around 400 businesses in Watlington; it's a shame there was not a higher response to the survey.
  8. The objectives on page 16 - I wonder if there should be some mention of the environment here as "Countryside" scored most highly in Consultation 1, which I think perhaps implies that people feel strongly about Watlington's rural setting and surroundings. "Attractiveness" is mentioned in the last bullet point but I am not sure if that encompasses this point.
  9. Environment - Vision;
    - Bullet point 2 - SSSIs are Sites of Special Scientific Interest (not "importance")- this point should be filled out if included; most people don't know what SSSIs are or where they are, and how might the PC contribute to their protection.
    - Should there be a reference to the AONB in this section? It might be helpful also to have a map showing how the boundary of the AONB relates to the Parish boundary and how the designation is addressed in National Planning Policy terms. Should there be a mention somewhere that any development needs to take this boundary in to consideration, and that we should also consider the visual impact of potential development on the setting of Watlington so close to the escarpment (I now see that this is included in the Housing Sites Assessment).
    - Should there be a mention of the Watlington Environment Group in this section?

### **Special Comment 18**

1. Any objectives for Watlington Plan should take into account of the effects to neighbouring satellite villages. I live in Pyrton which is a conservation village. This means to truly conserve the village you must also protect its setting. Any plans which erode the boundary between Pyrton and Watlington should be avoided.
2. Housing – There should be no more new houses aloud in the plan than the 79 already compulsory development. These houses should not be built on one big site but dotted amongst the town on small developments. This will help preserve the heart and character of Watlington

3. Traffic – HGV's through Watlington need to be discouraged and more active traffic calming put into place. Either Traffic lights or other traffic calming measures. A relief road round Watlington should not be considered as this would change Watlington for the worse on many different levels. It would open it up for more development which would destroy Watlington's small community spirit, it could lead to less people driving through Watlington and therefore reduce business to all the high street. It would split satellite villages and effect their conservation settings.

4. Other development – No more light industrial development as this puts pressure of HGV's, small local business promoted. More playing fields, sports facilities and protected green spaces.

### **Special Comment 19**

I wanted to point out the fact that WNP designated area maps in one or more recent documents refer to Howe Combe in addition to Howe Hill. This issue was raised by Robert Barber in 2014 and as a result of a second survey of residents, the name of Howe Hill was agreed by the Parish Council, as it was the wish of Howe Hill residents to have one identity relating to the current and future position and opposed to historic names. This situation was fully discussed and agreed.

For some reason, the agreement has been ignored by the production of a map that does not reflect what has been agreed and implemented for the benefit of all concerned.

On behalf of the residents of Howe Hill, I would appreciate an explanation and assurances that the WNP will be looking to the future rather than the past in respect of this example of how one or more individuals can make use of "mistakes".

### **Special Comment 19 Reply**

*I can assure you that the reason the designation of Howe Hill is incorrect in the WNP maps was not as a consequence of deliberate intent, simply, I believe, an error as a result of using out-of-date OS maps. As part of the Consultation 2 follow up we will respond formally.*

### **Special Comment 20**

I support the requirement for additional housing in Watlington and understand the national requirement for investment in infrastructure and housing, particularly in rural areas. Nonetheless believe the Watlington NP vision for increasing the boundaries of their parish and encroaching to the north and west of the town is ill conceived and will have unforeseen consequences on the villages of Cuxham and Pyrton.

- There are better options available – maintaining the boundary of Watlington and developing within this boundary. The area to the east of the town already has housing meaning the belt of countryside to the north and west that separates Pyrton/Cuxham from Watlington can be maintained. Developing to the north and west will mean Pyrton and Cuxham could easily be consumed by Watlington – not in the interest of the inhabitants of the two villages.
- The level of housing proposed will mean a significant increase in the Watlington population, an increase that cannot be sustained by Watlington. A new population to the north and west will add to traffic as they cannot access Watlington except by car and put added stress on existing services designed for the existing population.
- Changing Pyrton Lane, not in the NP area, to create a widened and lit bypass road is further evidence of the creeping urbanisation of our green spaces, impacting the views from National Trust Watlington Hill as well as prejudicing the Grade II listed Pyrton Manor which neighbours the lane.

The funding for this road would mean significant housing development which would exacerbate the issues highlighted above.

- Pyrton and Shirburn are conservation areas— any such development of a bypass road will not be in keeping with the character or appearance of the wider countryside and these villages in particular.

The proposals seem out of context and out of scale for the needs of Watlington and the surrounding countryside. Watlington NP appears to be operating outside its jurisdiction, proposing a significant change that will impact beyond its boundary. Pyrton and Cuxham will eventually merge into Watlington irreparably damaging the history and heritage of these two Oxfordshire villages.

Please don't let this be your legacy to our beautiful part of the county.

### **Special Comment 21**

Your comments. Having read through most of the development and traffic reports I strongly believe that a mainly eastern expansion delivers the best result for Watlington. The vast majority of the traffic from that direction is heading to the M40 with no benefit to the town or its businesses. Linking the Howe Road to Hill Road and then the Shirburn Road would take that traffic out of Watlington. The resulting land left within the ring road as shown in the eastern expansion option, could be partly developed for housing as much of it is in easy walking reach of the centre of town. I am surprised by how much through traffic comes from the Britwell side of Watlington towards the motorway and now feel that a Western relief road linking the Britwell road to the Cuxham road roundabout would reduce that hugely. Pyrton lane could easily be upgraded a bit and linked to that roundabout. A small amount of additional housing could be added there, or perhaps some business units as more and more are lost to housing and despite what many respondents have indicated, there is a demand for small, high quality, attractive work spaces set within an inspiring and beautiful environment. I would love to see a business development that encouraged cycling, growing local businesses, start ups and wildlife into a sort of "country eco-business park". I am strongly against the Southern relief option as that section would not relieve significant traffic from the town centre and would ruin the beauty and tranquillity of the Willow Ponds and those paths in that area. I think this might be the only countryside walk from Watlington that does not involve leaving the town along busy roads.

I also believe cycling needs to be encouraged and enhanced in and around the town. Many of the local villages could be cycled to more but most of the routes are pretty hairy. Cuxham is probably the safest route but could be improved by perhaps creating some cycle paths on the narrow, wooded part near Babylon Plants. The road is narrow there and bendy. Much of the rest of the route has good visibility and width so only sections would need to be built. Horses could also use that section of path if created. Having walked back from Lewknor once when we ran out of petrol I know that it is as terrifying and unpleasant to walk as it looks. Cycling looks insane on that route. What paths there are, are covered with debris so any attempt to create a safe walking/cycling route to the bus stop should also include a maintenance schedule (blowing once or twice a year, possibly extra after storms or floods?) to keep the path clear of debris. Living on Gorwell I often cycle the wrong way up Gorwell and the High Street up the Co-op. Whilst I know this is a bad example to my children and against the law, it is so much safer than cycling along Brook Street and up Couching (Coughing?) Street. I did that once with the children to try be law abiding and it was much more dangerous than cycling the wrong way up a largely deserted street. It would be very encouraging for cyclists from the Western side of Watlington if they were allowed up that route, either as a small cycle lane where



space allows and cyclists giving way if they were coming up the wrong way. Despite being quite compact and relatively flat, there is little cycling as a mode of transport in Watlington. If it is to grow, I believe that incorporating cycle friendly measures to allow more residents to move around the town (hopefully one day devoid of through traffic) will reduce pollution and emissions, improve the health of the population and even improve the lives of the car drivers having to share the roads with fewer cars. By the way, I do not cycle recreationally and do not own any Lycra or cycling gear, I only offer all this input as I have always used bikes to get around when I was at School, abroad in Canada, and at University in Norwich. I would like to cycle more here and see more people cycling to place as you do in parts of London and in Oxford.

Finally, like the Watlington Environment Group, I strongly believe that the spring fed springs, ponds and ditches around the town are a truly special feature of the area which support a breeding brown trout population and enhance some otherwise quite dull, flat bits of countryside. Any developments proposed in areas where these features exist should respect and enhance these features and preferably designate them as common lands/open space with footpaths alongside so that they become more part of the town. Creating paths along enhanced streams, springs and ponds, especially if these are part of new foot and cycle routes will not only improve people's lives but further encourage sustainable transport behaviour.

### **Special Comment 22**

I'd like to air my views as I feel quite strongly about some of the proposals and I know my views may be shared by people in a similar position to myself. We are very active in the community and care a great deal about the town and its future.

#### **ROADS/ TRAFFIC & HOUSING**

The traffic situation is a source of genuine frustration since I believe a lot of the current traffic problems and pollution are entirely avoidable and could be eased significantly straight away with or without a new housing plan. The main problem is on-street parking which is restricting traffic flows, and this could and should be changed very quickly. The 3 parking spaces by the garage on Couching Street should be removed immediately, they are far too near the junction anyway. Having heavy traffic needlessly sat idle or with stop-start movement in the town's main thoroughfare will be the main cause of the pollution and the chicane system unfortunately does nothing to help this. It goes further than traffic 'calming' by actually stopping it altogether !

I have read in full the Traffic Survey and feel it got it spot on in terms of the problems and solutions they found.

The idea of 'shared space' could work very well although I think many residents would prefer a pedestrianised high street if possible. The town doesn't have that yet but it would be a major asset and would encourage more use of the town centre by residents if there was a safe and pleasant place to walk around and feel at ease and keep some distance away from the road.

The shared space idea would calm traffic while adding to the town's attractiveness and could be used on Couching St, Shirburn St as suggested.

Car parking provision is a major problem and one of the mooted development sites situated closest to the town centre could be used to provide additional parking. If the garage ever goes and isn't replaced, that would be a prime town centre location for this. Existing car parks should also be expanded and are needed to replace any on-street parking that is removed.

These solutions would not prevent HGVs coming through Watlington however, so an alternative route is still needed for through traffic if we want to greatly reduce traffic and pollution levels in the town centre itself and reclaim the historic centre back from the vehicles.

The Western route seems popular and logical but as a resident of the Marlbrook estate I can see that any suggestion of running the main part of a proposed Western relief road along the existing Willow Close will be met with fierce local opposition. The green there is used as a playground and there are about 80 houses in the area I believe, many of which are occupied by families with children who appreciate the relatively safe and serene environment the estate offers and the open space on the green.

The idea of using that route as the relief road seems very lazy and thoughtless to me and clearly hasn't been suggested by anyone who knows what it is like to live there at present. It is a quiet, pleasant residential area so it would be completely inappropriate to turn Willow Close into some kind of trunk road that would be used by potentially high volumes of traffic using the road to skirt past Watlington and onto the motorway, while making the lives of those who currently live along that road completely miserable, not to mention its impact on the rest of the estate as well. How is that in the spirit of the kind of things the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to address? It's not much of a neighbourhood plan if the views of the town's westernmost residents end up getting ignored. There is a large population in this area and I think it would be a really bad move to pursue use of Willow Close as part of the relief road plan, it would threaten the entire estate as we know it.

A compromise solution that Marlbrook residents may not object to is the placing of the relief road one whole field further over, thereby ensuring that no part of the town is too adversely affected by the new plans. It could still adjoin Pyrton Lane much further up, but it would need to be kept at a reasonable distance from existing dwellings to ensure that it is not too detrimental as to pose a serious problem for residents.

I don't believe any new housing developments should be placed any further out than this, Marlbrook is at the furthest extent at which one would wish to walk into town, any further and people would be tempted to use their cars to get into town because it is simply too far. One way to improve this is to make footpaths/cycle paths take a more direct route into town and cut the time it takes to get there. Marlbrook was designed with lots of curly closes but no way of exiting the estate except the long way round. Why make it so difficult to get into town? It only encourages use of cars. So footpaths could ideally be added somehow between the primary school and St. Leonards Close, and round the back of the churchyard.

The current road configuration in the town in general means that Marlbrook residents needing to drive to school for whatever reason (it happens!) are having to drive a long way past it, over to Couching Street, then virtually double-back on themselves in the narrow roads of Chapel Street and Love Lane, all in the shape of an enormous 'U'. I think some residents might welcome a nearby relief road if it means that quicker routes to school and round to the north of the town are now opened up. Currently, aside from the very narrow and frankly dangerous Pyrton Lane, the only route north (eg. up to the Recreation Ground) is all the way through the congested town centre, while conversely there are no less than 3 routes going the other way (south) from the same place (via Couching Street, Spring Lane, and Gorwell) ! Add to this the pinch point which currently gives priority to southbound traffic, and it seems that the tide really is against anyone trying to drive north through the town.

Planners need to look at this seriously and redress the balance in this regard. High Street and Gorwell are not needed too much from the point of view of accessibility because Couching Street and Spring Lane go in the same direction, so pedestrianisation would be a good option for High Street as long as shoppers could park very nearby.

#### RECREATIONAL SPACE

I am vice-chairman of the football club which has over 200 members now and we are now using the Recreation Ground to its full capacity, by sharing the field with the Cricket Club and trying to make the most of the space we currently have. As the club grows and as the town expands, however, the field is clearly insufficient in size for the needs of a place of Watlington's size. It is also a shared space used by others including dog walkers, and the well-documented problems that has brought demonstrate that such shared usage is no longer appropriate if the town is to provide a suitable and safe environment for youngsters to do active outdoor sport. The town needs an area of designated 'playing fields' solely used for that purpose, while retaining a separate area close to the town centre where people can walk their dogs too. But the two cannot be mixed. It simply causes too many problems and it's been a debate that has been ongoing for years and will only be properly resolved through the creation of extra open space via the Neighbourhood Plan.

If the Western relief road were to happen or the large Plot H was to undergo development, its location between the Recreation Ground and Icknield College make it the perfect location for development of extra recreational space as well as for housing/roads development. I believe this would be the most logical solution to the current lack of recreational space. There should be space for at least one full-size rugby pitch to ensure that particular sport can be played in Watlington in the future. It is a very large plot, so developing it would give the town the potential to satisfy a number of its needs all in one go.

The football club is preparing a signed petition for more playing fields space in the town, so I would appreciate it if this can be taken very seriously, given the large number of users the football club represents. An alternative to that plot in terms of pitch use is the smaller one between the B4009 and the Recreation Ground car park, which is currently undeveloped.

The town lacks an all-weather floodlit sports facility for playing things like football, hockey, netball after dark, so again this could be incorporated in plans for new sporting facilities or space. It is over 10 miles to the nearest suitable facility such as at Thame or Henley, so there is a big 'gap' to be filled in that regard.

Please get back to me if you would like to discuss any of the comments made in this message, or if you require any further input for the benefit of the current Consultation, I am keen for the points raised to be taken into consideration when it comes to decision-making.

### **Special Comment 23**

Comments:

- I'm concerned that the western expansion option sites are the least well related to Town centre.
- I believe it would be unviable to build a relief road with 250 houses. It's likely additional sites would be required along the road to make it viable.
- the new houses would be on the wrong side of the relief road- they could be annexed from the town.
- I think sites that are well related to the town centre would be the most appropriate option to support local businesses and community activity.

### **Special Comment 24**

In your WNP you should find out where to put 79 houses and then sound out where any more might go if an increase is forced upon your team from outside or sought internally by the WPC. If the target stays at 79 houses, the answers should be simple. If lots more are called for, many other issues must be introduced and addressed like extra resident vehicles, more school places, more parking, residents access to shopping in Watlington, extra sewage and water disposal, etc. That done, you will then have to consider how the community (or developers) might find the considerable extra cost of any relief road/bypass.

For these reasons, I feel that your WNP must look first at how to reduce traffic and pollution in the centre of town, rather than look for a bypass - that should only be introduced as a byproduct rather than prime mover.

### **Special Comment 25**

I am appalled at the supposed suggestion to use the field at the end of Station Road for 'alternative purposes' which I presume would be for industrial rather than residential use as this is an AONB area and would destroy the views of the Chilterns. This view is very important to Watlington as it acts as its gateway, and is one of its jewels which needs to be preserved as part of this process. It would also have very negative effects in terms of noise, pollution and traffic disruption at an extremely dangerous junction.

### **Special Comment 26**

(a) Parking through the centre of the town should be prohibited and (b) more light industries should be encouraged. If point (a) was carried out then traffic should flow more easily and hopefully there should be less pollution.

We definitely agree that the expansion of Watlington into Pyrton parish should be avoided at all costs.

### **Special Comment 27**

Planning consultation: Watlington Neighbourhood Plan Consultation 2.

Location: South Oxfordshire.

Thank you for your consultation on the above dated 04 December 2014.

Natural England is a non-departmental public body. Our statutory purpose is to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced, and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development.

WILDLIFE AND COUNTRYSIDE ACT 1981 (AS AMENDED)

Neighbourhood Plan Consultation 2:

Having taken a look at the plan as submitted and taking into account the area in which this plan is being carried out, Natural England would wish to make the following comments at this stage. The plan area itself contains a number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), as identified in the "Landscape and natural environment – Objectives" section of the plan, which would need to be taken in account when deciding on any development which might come forward nearby. The plan itself does acknowledge this and states that protection of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) would also come into play when considering all new allocations and other development. This will need to happen in order to ensure the plan is in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 115 in particular.

The plan for a possible relief road as part of new development would ideally be on existing roads that could be improved to allow better traffic flow along them ahead of the construction of a new road which could well potentially have more serious visual impacts over and above those of the new housing development upon the AONB. The options which are put forward for the relief road and new development would appear to be predominantly suggesting development should take place in the north west which would make sense given this is away from the AONB so avoids being directly adjacent to the boundary. Visual impact assessments would need to be carried out as part of any possible planning applications for such development and these could then be used to determine the potential impacts and how they could best be avoided or mitigated for.

Otherwise new development would need to ensure that good levels of green infrastructure were accessible to new residents and also were in place to help enhance biodiversity in that area generally. Provided that new homes were constructed using the latest methods and best materials to blend in well with the general character of the area as well as including Sustainable Drainage systems (SUDS) within these new developments this would ensure impacts were kept to a minimum.

### **Special Comment 28**

a. The NP relates to Watlington parish as the designated area yet the greatest impact is to be felt by Pyrton parish which lies outside this area. The objectives (e.g. 3 and 5) do not mention the quality of life in Pyrton or other neighbouring villages, nor include the objective of preventing Watlington's proposed suburban sprawl enveloping those villages. An objective should be to minimise the impact of housing development or traffic management on those villages and to ensure that Watlington and a conservation area such as Pyrton do not coalesce. In principle Watlington should, if possible, look to solve its problems within its own designated area.

b. A traffic objective should be to minimise the impact of road building outside the NP designated area and in particular to so route any new roads that they do not damage conservation areas outside Watlington centre, especially neighbouring villages, such as Pyrton. We prefer the eastern relief option on p. 38, and least like the western relief option since most of the heavy traffic is not heading towards Cuxham.

c. On housing we consider there should be 100 3-bed houses on sites E, D and C on the map on p.38. We do not consider providing alternative traffic routes to be an appropriate housing objective. The housing should not create coalescence with neighbouring villages and the objectives should be amended to incorporate this.

d. On the housing siting criteria, it is not clear why the view from Watlington Hill should be a relevant factor but not other views, eg those of conservation areas.

e. The environment objectives on p. 22 should include objectives to preserve the special character of neighbouring villages, as well as of Watlington.

### **Special Comment 29**

Your comments

Icknield Community College supports the option of expanding to the West of Watlington and looks forward to the opportunities that this may provide for our school.

### **Special Comment 30**

“We have concerns regarding Water Supply Capability in relation to this site. Specifically, the water supply network in this area is unlikely to be able to support the demand anticipated from this development. Water supply infrastructure is likely to be required to ensure sufficient capacity is brought forward ahead of the development. In the first instance a water supply strategy would be required from the developer to determine the exact impact on our infrastructure and the significance of the infrastructure to support the development. It should be noted that in the likely event of an upgrade to our assets being required, there could be a period of upto 3 years required for the delivery of the infrastructure, alternatively the developer may wish to requisition the infrastructure to deliver it sooner. We are also likely to request a Grampian style planning condition to ensure the infrastructure is in place ahead of occupation of the development”

Thames Water are the statutory water and sewerage undertaker for the Watlington Neighbourhood Plan area and the whole of the South Oxfordshire. As such we have the following comments.

### **General Comments on Sewerage/Wastewater Infrastructure capacity:**

New development should be co-ordinated with the infrastructure it demands and to take into account the capacity of existing infrastructure. Paragraph 156 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), March 2012, states:

“Local planning authorities should set out strategic policies for the area in the Local Plan. This should include strategic policies to deliver:.....the provision of infrastructure for water supply and wastewater....”

Paragraph 162 of the NPPF relates to infrastructure and states:

“Local planning authorities should work with other authorities to: assess the quality and capacity of infrastructure for water supply and wastewater and its treatment.....take account of the need for strategic infrastructure including nationally significant infrastructure within their areas.”

The web based National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) published in March 2014 includes a section on ‘water supply, wastewater and water quality’ and sets out that Local Plans should be the focus for ensuring that investment plans of water and sewerage/wastewater companies align with development needs. The introduction to this section also sets out that “Adequate water and wastewater infrastructure is needed to support sustainable development” (Paragraph: 001, Reference ID: 34-001-20140306).

### **Specific Comments**

#### Omission of a ‘Infrastructure and Utilities’ Policy

With the above points in mind it is important that developers demonstrate that at their development location adequate capacity exists both on and off the site to serve the development and that it would not lead to problems for existing users.

In some circumstances this may make it necessary for developers to carry out appropriate studies to ascertain whether the proposed development will lead to overloading of existing water & sewerage infrastructure. Where there is a capacity problem and no improvements are programmed, then the developer needs to contact the water company to agree what improvements are required and how they will be funded prior to any occupation of the development.

Thames Water would therefore recommend that developers engage with us at the earliest opportunity to establish the following:

- the developments demand for water supply and network infrastructure both on and off site and can it be met;
- the developments demand for sewage treatment and sewerage network infrastructure both on and off site and can it be met; and
- the surface water drainage requirements and flood risk of the area and down stream and can it be met.

We therefore consider that there should be a section on ‘Infrastructure and Utilities’ in the Watlington Neighbourhood Plan which states:

“In line with Core Strategy Policy CS11, it is essential that developers demonstrate that adequate water supply and sewerage infrastructure capacity exists both on and off the site to serve the development and that it would not lead to problems for existing users. In some circumstances this may make it necessary for developers to carry out appropriate studies to ascertain whether the proposed development will lead to overloading of existing water & sewerage infrastructure. Where there is a capacity problem and no improvements are programmed by the water company, then the developer needs to contact the water company to agree what improvements are required and how they will be funded prior to any occupation of the development.

Example Policy, By way of an example of a strong policy, the Thame Neighbourhood Plan Section 12 on Delivery and Policy D1 is the type of policy as a minimum Thames Water would like to see adopted.

## **Extract from the Thame Neighbourhood Plan**

### **Specific Sewerage/Wastewater Comments:**

The attached table provides site specific comments from a desktop assessment on sewerage/wastewater infrastructure, but more detailed modelling may be required to refine the requirements. These sites have been assessed on an individual base with only limited opportunity to consider cumulative impacts.. Therefore, the impact of multiple sites in the same area coming forward may have a greater impact. The scale, location and time to deliver any required upgrades will be determined after receiving a clearer picture of the location, type and scale of development together with its phasing. Thames Water welcomes the opportunity to work closely with the neighbourhood forum to identify the net increase in wastewater and water supply demand on our infrastructure.

### **Special Comments 31**

Your comments

Section A Vision: Objective 6 should be expanded to prevent coalescence with neighbouring villages and their conservation areas.

Section B Traffic: Objectives 2 and 3 should be to explore the feasibility of better routes.

Most appropriate road development: pepperpot

Least appropriate road development: West

Section C Housing: Objective one should be deleted and Objective 7 should include the principle of avoiding coalescence and protecting the setting of neighbouring villages.

On the housing criteria, 5 should also refer to the setting of a conservation area. Criteria 9 should not be limited to Watlington Mill only.

Section E Environment : Objectives should include protecting the setting of Watlington in the wider countryside and preventing coalescence with surrounding villages.

### **Special Comment 32**

Consultation 2 Watlington Neighbourhood plan

#### ***Traffic***

It is clear that the biggest issue concerning Watlington Residents is the volume of traffic, especially HGVs coming through Wallington and one's immediate reaction is, 'we need a relief road' however the residents are, I believe, being misled into thinking this can be provided with the 79 houses that need to be built in the coming period which is wholly unrealistic.

I have thought long and hard on this problem including talking it through with other residents more knowledgeable in these things and clearly it is not an easy problem to solve but a relief road is NOT the solution. It is well known that building roads increases traffic. To build a relief road it will need to be funded & this will mean hundreds of houses meaning immediately hundreds more cars. Additionally if there is an easy route through this will attract more traffic especially lorries as Watlington is a gateway Town to South Oxfordshire and Berkshire, I have come to the conclusion that Watlington needs to keep the numbers of new homes to a minimum, just building the quantity and mix of type that are needed and trying not to lose our status as one of the smallest towns in the country.



Remove lorries from the town by removing or relocating the industrial estate on Cuxham Road and having a width restriction not just a weight restriction to the town.

Aim towards the Dorset model by de classification of the B 4009 so that it ceases to be THE route through to the M 40 and make the High Street, initially, pedestrianized extending this to the Town Hall area. Make it harder and slower for the lorries especially but also for the cars with the width restriction tightly enforced Introduce a 20 mph speed restriction and especially initially enforce it rigorously Initially, hopefully temporarily, introduce traffic lights effectively meaning there is only ever one stream of traffic going through Shirburn Street, Couching Street and Brook Street thus making it safer, quieter, and improving air quality, health and retaining the rural and attractive nature of the town which attracts people to visit.

### ***Business***

To further improve the traffic situation revert to our historical roots as a market town & encourage local artisan producers and upgrade the quality of the co-op to encourage people to 'buy local' and not get in their cars to shop and making it a more attractive place for people to visit

To further attract people to stop in Watlington we need to have a centre of information promoting our History & our Natural History.

Small business units & or a minor distribution area for local businesses only as lorries will be kept out of the centre should be sited, with Pyrtons' agreement, at Site G. Should cooperation with Pyrton prove elusive then Site U

### ***Parking***

Residents, Businesses and visitors all need parking.' would suggest as follows:

Site F:- Residents & local businesses parking

Site D:- extend Carriers Car Park for visitors as this is close to existing car park and the shops

### ***Housing***

As mentioned above this needs to be minimal in quantity and according to what is really needed. Watlington has an unusually high level of small one & two bed room houses & flats & although affordable housing is needed larger 3 & 4 bedroom houses are also needed. At the moment the small affordable housing is often extended because of a dearth of larger family homes thus taking it out of the 'affordable' range. Housing needs to be integrated into the town. If it takes the form of one development then it needs to be carefully designed so that residents are not detached from the wider community

In order of preference:-

Site N (Industrial Estate.) ensuring good access paths to town

Site M but access to town & integration given special attention & improving these aspects for Windmill Piece

Site L

Site E (and part of D not used for parking ) with careful consideration of entry & exit points guiding traffic out of town centre i.e. entering at end near to site F and exiting on Hill Road but directed to turn left - up Hill Road.

### ***Environment***

The importance of the environment to Watlington's future cannot in my view be overstated. Increasingly local food production is already becoming a priority to people. Out of town supermarkets & monthly food shopping are losing popularity already. Thus our existing allotments need to be protected and other areas set aside for future food production. An element of housing dedicated to these is worth considering within the housing allocation-

South Oxfordshire Sustainability can be consulted for further information about this. Additionally, green areas such as Masons Wood need to be protected as vital green corridors for wildlife and new wildlife areas developed as natural recreational spaces encouraging people to spend time outside with

the inherent health benefits. As well as protecting SSSI there should also be an objective to protect the AONB - Green sites in order of preference:-

Site A

Site B

site P

Site C

Site K

Given the recent developments with the Solar cable works the NP could seek to exploit this by considering possible sites such as The Fleet and Sewage works for additional Solar Farms which could be connected to the Grid by the new cable.

### **Transport**

Cycle & pedestrian paths need to be given priority over roads. Access to the Lewknor Turn could be a feature project to help reduce traffic and the parking problem at Lewknor. I would propose utilising the old railway track in some way. I believe this is owned by Beechwood Estates so would probably need to be made attractive as a proposition to them. Perhaps a tramway link for which they would have an interest with foot & cycle routes & white bike scheme

Public Transport needs to be protected & if possible improved & extended. There should be a good service to Henley.

### **Special Comment 33**

#### **Section A**

- 1) Are the objectives listed correct? NO
- 2) Objective 6 should also prevent the encroachment into neighbouring villages and their conservation areas to prevent loss of identity or small rural villages.

#### **Section B Traffic & Environment**

- 3) Are the objectives on page 17 correct : NO
- 4) Objs 2 and 3. The plan should try to find better routes.
- 5) Watlington development:  
Most appropriate is linking east and south.  
Least appropriate is West.
- 7) There should be an alternative route for through traffic. Pollution levels are already above danger limit.
- 8) An alternate route for HGV's: Yes. A route from the top of Howe Hill along through Christmas Common would take traffic to Stokenchurch for access to M40 and keep pollution away from the town at the foot of the hills. Traffic from Benson and Wallingford should take more major routes.
- 9) On-street parking on main routes to be removed? NO. It helps to control speeding traffic.
- 10) Town car parking spaces to be increased? YES. Existing car park already full of cars owned by people working in the town therefore very few available for shoppers. Alternative park by church is far too far away for people to walk with shopping, especially older shoppers.

11) More pedestrian routes needed? YES. Especially from Pyrton. the verges along Pyrton Lane and Knightsbridge Lane are often overgrown by trees and have been damaged by traffic which is heavy during peak periods thanks to drivers being diverted down these lanes during roadworks and having become unofficial Watlington by-passes from Chalgrove and Benson directions towards the M40.

12) More cycle routes - Yes if this is possible.

### **Section C: Housing**

13) Amount of acceptable housing : 100. This is more than enough.

14) Most urgent need is 3-bed houses.

15) Are objectives on pgs 18 and 19 correct? NO

16) Delete objective 1. Objective 7 : re-write to prevent the coalescence, and protect the setting and identity, of neighbouring villages.

17) Housing sites assessment criteria on page 25 correct? No

The air quality in the town is already poor - above the danger level. Therefore any new housing at all will probably mean at least 2 cars per house - more if children in the house are of driving age. Infra structure of schools, dental practice and doctors' surgery will not be able to cope.

18) Criteria 5 should also refer to the setting of a conservation area. Criteria 9 should not be limited to Watlington Hill.

### **Section E Environment, page 21**

33) Are objectives on page 21 correct? NO

34) Built environment should refer to protecting the setting of the town in the wider countryside and to preventing coalescence with surrounding villages.

### **Special Comment 34**

We would like to support the Neighbourhood Plan which was published for consultation in December 2014. We were particularly impressed with the vision statements which preceded the overall vision and the specific visions for the plan and agree with the sentiments expressed in those statements. These statements reflect the essence of what makes Watlington a great place to live and hopefully by bearing these messages in mind any future development will not erode Watlington's unique atmosphere.

We would like to emphasise the following points with regard to future housing:

- We agree with the specification for high quality building, whether that be for one bedroom flats or four bedroomed homes. Quality developments with generous amenity spaces such as the developments at Lilacs Place and Stonor Green encourage the development of "community" which will ensure that the expansion of Watlington does not result in loss of community spirit.
- As there appears to be a plentiful supply of potential sites we feel that consideration should also be given to avoiding negative effects that any development might have on the amenity and views of existing houses.

- As people who regularly walk in the surrounding countryside we agree with the sentiments expressed which acknowledge the negative impact that some potential development sites will have on views from Watlington Hill and other strategic views experienced by walkers approaching Watlington.
- Mention has been made about improved pedestrian access from potential development sites to the town centre and we think this is particularly important. We think that not only improved surfaces on existing footpaths but also improved lighting should also be considered. Should sites to the west of Watlington be considered then the footpath between Pyrton Lane and the Recreation Ground/Icknield School could be transformed making it safe for bikes, prams and walkers.
- The effect of developments on overall traffic movements will of course be considered. One aspect of driver behaviour which is significant with families is the need to drive to drop children at school, even if living locally, because many jobs require staff to be at work by 9.00/9.30am. It is often just not possible to walk young children to school and get to work on time.

With regard to traffic we would like to make the following comments:

- A lot of discussion is included in the plan about alternative routes for through-traffic. Whilst this potential must be borne in mind, in the shorter term other possibilities should also be considered.
- Before any possible traffic improvements are committed to, would it be possible to do a trial? For example, the TPP Traffic Study suggested removal of parking spaces in Couching Street to improve traffic flows. We are not convinced this will result in an improvement as there is still the bottleneck in the centre of town. In such a situation, a trial suspension of the parking spaces concerned would reveal the true effect of such action before committing to the full expense of such a plan.
- Over the 21 years that we have been living in Watlington there has been a gradual erosion in the number of unrestricted parking spaces in Couching Street and High Street and if this trend continues serious consideration needs to be made about the availability of alternative parking for residents in these streets. At the same time restrictions on the use of the Hill Road carpark have increased which have further exacerbating this problem. Though parking is mentioned in the traffic objectives the problem of residents' parking problems has not been specifically addressed in the plan. We notice that Petrol Station site is suggested as a potential development site and perhaps such a site could include parking for the residents of these streets. We do not believe that an "edge of town" parking solution is satisfactory for residents of central streets.
- The recent diversions created by the closing of various roads to enable the solar farm electricity cable to be routed through Watlington has highlight some interesting alternatives for managing traffic. The use of traffic lights at Pyrton Lane/Station Road junction with Shirburn Road had a drastic effect on congestion and presumably also pollution in the town centre. The traffic calming measures introduced when entering Benson from the Watlington direction have been effective in reducing queuing traffic in the centre of Benson and we believe either lights /chicanes at the outskirts of Watlington should also be considered. Again these could be trialled with temporary set ups.

We would like to thank the Neighbourhood Plan Committee for their work in producing this consultation.

### Special Comment 35

On behalf of Pyrton Parish Council I wish to register our agreement with the comments contained in the letter sent by Jeff Lowe, Associate Partner at Jeffrey Charles Emmett, Planning & Development Consultants on behalf of their client, the owner of Pyrton Manor dated 27th January 2015.

Additionally I would add the following points:

1. Over the past 15 years Watlington has assimilated some 75 new build houses into the fabric of the town, therefore the current allocation of 79 over the next 15 years should be able to be accomplished by the same "pepperpot" approach, without destroying the essential ambiance of Watlington and the surrounding Parishes.
2. We recognise the issue of Air Pollution and suggest that as a low cost, low environmental, social and financial impact objective, the suggestions put forward by the Traffic Survey of better signage, better policing and better traffic flow management should be implemented. Some HGVs are servicing Watlington and its immediate environs, these are essential, the others should be actively discouraged and prosecuted where appropriate.

### Special Comment 36

1. The Character and Surroundings section on page 11 should include a specific reference to the importance of the watercourses. Suggested wording to be added: "The watercourses, which emerge both just above and within the town, and flow through it are essentially spring-fed chalk streams, which are a rare habitat internationally. Although heavily engineered in places, they support a population of brown trout, which come up as far as the main Brook alongside the Cuxham Road within the town, and the aquatic invertebrates on which they feed.
2. The Vision for Watlington on p16 should include a much more forceful reference to protecting and enhancing the natural environment, and its contribution to Watlington's attractiveness. Suggest the last Objective should be replaced with: "All development governed by the Plan will look to preserve and enhance the natural features which contribute to Watlington's attractiveness, with special attention to the AONB and its setting, and the watercourses." And this Objective be placed third in the list.
3. A slight adjustment to the 5th Objective of the landscape and natural environment section is suggested. New version to read:  
  
"To protect and improve the existing water courses and their margins; to prevent any further building over of open watercourses and to encourage the re-opening of buried watercourses; to identify, retain and protect areas known to absorb flood water as part of a flood protection strategy which works with nature rather than against it."
4. The Housing sites assessment section (p25ff) forms the basic framework of what could become an essential tool for assessing the merits of various sites. However, it needs considerable enhancement and refinement.

Specifically in relation to water-related matters: Point 6 needs to be expanded to read "is the Site within the Flood Zone or an area susceptible to groundwater flooding?"; Point 7 needs somehow to be broadened to consider separately a) existing ecological value which needs to be protected; and,

b), ecological potential, viz opportunities for ecological enhancement that development might provide. Assessment has to be much more nuanced than "yes / no", maybe high / medium / low or similar.

5. With respect to this section as a whole, it is not at all clear how the raw scoring of these sites, is to be translated into a judgement or ranking on the sites' suitability. If the next consultation draft is to contain conclusions or recommendations about preferred sites, the rationale must be clearly set out.

6. At some point in the evolution of the Plan, a section explicitly and prominently setting out "design principles" for all development should be included. This should cover architectural design and character, sustainability requirements, maximising biodiversity opportunities, and so on, drawn from the various sections of the document.

7. The Sustainability Assessment Scoping Report is not available at the time of writing. This is a vitally important element in Plan development, so we would like the opportunity to comment on it when it is available.

### **Special Comment 37**

We understand that local residents have been asked to put forward comments and ideas for the proposed development of 200+ new homes in the small market town of Watlington in Oxfordshire; and we will be very grateful if you will consider the following thoughts and ideas when you deliberate on this matter.

- We understand that the current proposal is to develop 1 or 2 large plots of land in the centre or edge of Watlington and use some of the money raised from the development to fund a bypass for Watlington: Given that most families have two vehicles and with 200 new homes this could potentially increase the daily traffic by 400 vehicles! This seems like giving with one hand only to take away with the other.
- A bypass may encourage drivers (Lorries, coaches and cars) from other areas to route their journey through Watlington rather than taking alternative routes; so we believe that when planning the bypass an allowance be made for a potential increase in traffic through the region, and perhaps width and/or weight restrictions be considered as potential traffic calming measures.
- We feel that many of the homes should be built on smaller plots away from the town of Watlington; as this will reduce the stress on the infrastructure of the town. This also has the benefit of the potential development of luxury executive homes in the outlying villages.
- We have noticed on our walks in the area that there are a number of derelict buildings in the countryside and villages surrounding Watlington which would be ideal locations for modest development/s.
- We strongly believe that the new homes should be a good mix of affordable homes - for local families and people with local jobs etc, as well as medium and luxury homes.
- When discussing the Watlington plan with some locals we have heard the comment "It's fine so long as I don't have to look at the new houses". It seems to us that new homes do not have to be ugly, there are plenty of development companies that build new homes that look like period homes (See attached photograph examples).

- We hope that when considering tenders from potential developers that their portfolio of previous developments and images of their proposals are published to local residents so that they may have a vote in the choice of developer/s.
- We feel that some small plots of land should be made available/set aside for self builders; as this will give more variety to the builds in the area and because the cost of self build homes can be up to 40% cheaper than standard homes; this may form part of the affordable homes strategy.
- There are a number of companies that specialise in quality kit homes for self builders, that are in keeping with local architecture and include period home styles.

### Special Comment 38

1. The Vision, Objectives and Options document seems carefully thought-out, with problems and possible solutions clearly presented. Additional housing is inevitable and increased commercial/industrial activity likely; both will exacerbate the current major issue, ie traffic. It would be sensible to seize this opportunity to create a plan that resolves all the issues, ie ensure insofar as we can that no element proceeds without the others.

2. To that end the western option seems the most appropriate, with areas J and K designated for housing (it is unclear whether we would have any standing to designate area H for housing, given that it is outside the NP area) and L as commercial. M should be left as farmland. If this is done there must be a relief road from the B4009 (approximately at the junction with Knightsbridge Lane) to the B480 (close to the present roundabout at the industrial estate) and possibly beyond, back to the B4009 south of the town. That relief road should also serve as the outer boundary of future development. Within it, car access to areas J and K should be from the relief road only but there should be extensive pedestrian/cycle access from areas J and K to the town centre. (The Marlbrook estate is not ideal in that it has only one single point of access that faces away from the town.) To that end, Pyrton Lane should become a cul-de-sac, closed at St Leonard's Close, with pedestrian access to the Marlbrook estate and areas J and K provided, including footpaths created in Pyrton Lane. The relief road should also be the designated route for school buses, to reduce the congestion in Love Lane.

3. An eastern relief road to take traffic from the M40 to Henley would be a bonus but given the relatively small amount of traffic is unlikely to be funded; it would seem sensible therefore to concentrate efforts on what is achievable. Would it be legally/practically possible to ban traffic over a certain size except for access to designated destinations only, eg Lys Mill, and to enforce that by permanent cameras rather than by occasional police presence?

4. Other factors that might be considered are:

a) The number of additional houses should be as small as is reasonably practicable; a very large increase such as that on the Chalgrove bypass would seriously alter the character of Watlington; that should be avoided.

b) The housing mix needs to be carefully thought-out. The report comments that there is a preponderance of small houses and insufficient larger ones, and that this imbalance needs to be addressed. That seems sensible. There was a suggestion that mixing large and small houses on one site does not work, but that view seems contrary to modern policy; deliberately creating ghettos and "nob hills" smacks of the nineteenth century and doesn't seem the best route to social cohesion..

- c) Additional housing will mean more children; the impact on the primary and secondary schools must be carefully planned and provided in time. We do not want portakabin classrooms.
- d) Commercial development is a thorny problem. Ideally it should be very limited; vast industrial sites would alter the nature of the town. But jobs are needed and trying to limit development to cottage industries that create many jobs with no increased traffic and no other environmental impact is unfeasible.
- e) The western option is not incompatible with the “pepper pot” approach; the two could proceed hand-in-hand.
- f) The provision of a serious car park at Lewknor should be strongly encouraged, both to remove the current dangerous arrangements and to promote environmental improvements by increased use of the buses. Shuttle buses to and from Watlington are a nice idea but encourage inappropriate use of very limited car-parking, as noted in the report.

### **Special Comment 39**

Section A Vision: Objective 6 should be expanded to prevent coalescence with neighbouring villages and their conservation areas.

Section B Traffic: Objectives 2 and 3 should be to explore the feasibility of better routes. In addition any suggestions need to be realistically attainable. Government spending whether local or national is stringently controlled. Even if a relief road were agreed upon it may not be built for many years because of funding constraints whereas housing development has to happen now. I also feel a neighbourhood plan (certainly in the case of Watlington) is not an ideal way to handle significant road development – this needs to be looked at in the context of Oxfordshire overall and thus consider alternatives that would take through traffic totally away from the area – particularly given that the B4009 abuts the AONB so anything that promotes greater traffic is in my view not desirable – traffic needs to be moved further to the west of the entire area (A329 etc.). I reluctantly conclude that the most appropriate road development is pepperpot and the least appropriate road development is west. I would add that, because traffic comes through Watlington from in effect 4 directions, the only option that is really going to take traffic out of the town centre permanently (other than making other roads such as A329 up to M40 much more desirable to use) would be a total ring road. I do not feel that the plan shows sufficient foresight on the roads issue.

Section C Housing: Objective one should be deleted and Objective 7 should incorporate the principle of avoiding coalescence and protecting the setting of neighbouring villages. I would also like to see (objectives 6 and 9) more of a commitment to housing enabling young families to stay in the area – going further than just saying follow SODC’s policy. I have a daughter and son in law who live in Watlington at present and would like it to be possible for them to buy a house here. Encouraging so called 3 bed step up properties might open the door to the sort of “executive” development which is far too common in the “nicer” areas of the county rather than balanced development making for a balanced demographic.

On the housing criteria, 5 should also refer to the setting of a conservation area.

Section E Environment : Objectives should include protecting the setting of Watlington in the wider countryside and preventing coalescence with surrounding villages. This also takes me back to the point I make above about roads – the road situation needs addressing outside of the narrow issue of the immediate area.



## Special Comment 40

### **Watlington Neighbourhood Plan Vision, Objectives and Options (December 2014) Response on behalf of the Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance and Maria Cook Trust.**

Impact Planning Services Ltd acts for the Maria Cook Trust and the Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance in connection with the above matter.

We are instructed to make representations in response to the draft Watlington Neighbourhood Plan. Should you require further information as a result of any of the following comments then please do not hesitate to contact Impact Planning.

1. The Maria Cook Trust (hereafter the MCT) and the Oxford Diocesan Board of Finance (hereafter the ODBF) support the comments about the character and quality of the Watlington Conservation Area (page 11 paragraph 2) and concur with the statement about the attractive views and the limited amount of inappropriate modern development that spoils those views.

In its present form the St Leonard's Church hall unfortunately does little to contribute to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, and indeed it is felt by many to be a detracting feature.

The planning application submitted in 2014 by the MCT to redevelop the church hall site demonstrated that it was possible to improve the general character and appearance of that part of the Conservation Area as a result of the redevelopment proposals. Notwithstanding the withdrawal of that application, the MCT and the ODBF remain of the opinion that the redevelopment of the church hall site for a small number of dwellings will result in a general improvement to the character and appearance of this part of the Conservation Area. The MCT will therefore shortly

submit a revised planning application that addresses the issues raised in objections to the withdrawn application.

2. The ODBF welcomes the recognition of the role that the faith organisations play in contributing to the town's sense of community (page 14). Proposals by the Maria Cook Trust to redevelop the church hall site and improve the facilities at St Leonard's Church itself will lead to the enhancement of the facilities that are available to the local community and will thus support this on-going role.
3. The MCT and the ODBF welcome the recognition of the role that home-working facilities can play in helping to reduce traffic movements and bringing businesses and employment opportunities into the town (page 19).  
By locating a new vicarage close to St Leonard's Church, this will increase the likelihood of linked vehicle trips being made by those wishing to visit the town centre and / or Church and Vicarage.
4. The MCT and the ODBF welcome the recognition that the town has a shortage of larger family-sized houses (page 19). This bears out the work carried out to support the recent planning application to redevelop the church hall site. The redevelopment of the church hall site will provide space for one larger family dwelling to be built there in addition to the Vicarage. This will go some way towards helping to address this recognised shortage.
5. The MCT and the ODBF agree with the stated objective (page 21) to protect and provide green spaces within and around the town. The open land associated with the church hall will be largely retained intact as a result of the redevelopment of the church hall site itself. The proposals will therefore contribute to meeting this important local objective.
6. The 'Services' objectives (page 24) include encouraging other agencies to allow their facilities to be accessed by local residents and encouraging the use of communal buildings for the provision of life-long education initiatives. The MCT and the ODBF generally welcome these objectives and indeed this is the basis upon which the proposals to improve facilities at St Leonard's Church have been instigated. By creating a church that incorporates flexible space, the building will be able to continue to meet the needs of the community in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, thereby complying with these objectives.
7. Whilst the MCT and the ODBF acknowledges that the South Oxfordshire District Council search areas plan ('Land Ownership' document, page 6) details the various constraints around the village and identifies the church hall site as an area of open space, it should be noted the land is not 'public' open space. The area is not accessible to the public other than in association with the use of the Church or the church hall itself, and therefore it may be sensible to differentiate between public and private open space on this plan or any subsequent plans with this notation.
8. The 'Maps' document (December 2014) and in particular the Designated Areas / Development Sites maps appear to show Environment Agency flood risk areas 1 & 2 washing over the corner of the church hall building itself. For the sake of clarity, the MCT confirms that the hall has not flooded to their knowledge, and it was not affected in the 2013/2014 winter floods.

### **Special Comment 41**

Section A Vision: Objective 6 should be expanded to prevent coalescence with neighbouring villages and their conservation areas

Section B Traffic: Objectives 2 and 3 should be to explore the feasibility of better routes.

Most appropriate road development : Pepperpot

Least appropriate road development: West

Section C Housing: Objective 1 should be deleted and Objective 7 should include the principle of avoiding the coalescence and protecting the setting of neighbouring villages

On the housing criteria, 5 should also refer to the setting of a conservation area. Criteria 9 should not be limited to Watlington Mill only

Section C Environment: Objectives should include protecting the setting of Watlington in the wider countryside and preventing coalescence with surrounding villages.

### **Special Comment 42**

Following your email of 8th January, and our telephone conversation of 22nd January with regard to Lys Mill , the proposal by the Watlington Neighbourhood Planning Core Committee (NPCC) to include the Lys Mill site as a possible location for new housing for Watlington was discussed at a

Britwell Salome Planning meeting on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> January.

The considered opinion of the meeting was that Lys Mill site should not be included as an external site to the Watlington Neighbourhood Plan Area. It was noted that the number of possible houses illustrated on the Watlington Development Sites map within the designated NP area appears to be sufficient to satisfy the housing allocation set for Watlington by SODC. Lys Mill lies within Britwell Salome parish which has no housing allocation placed upon it by SODC. It is also outside the Watlington NP area and is significantly remote from Watlington.

Therefore, it was concluded that the NPCC should not nominate Lys Mill as a possible location to accommodate some of the Watlington housing requirement.

### **Special Comment 43**

#### **The proposal**

I propose that it would be advantageous for the Watlington Community and surrounding areas for a 25m swimming pool that functions as a centre for excellence for swimming teaching to be created in Watlington. The centre would be set up to offer quality swimming lessons and quality swimming space for swimmers of all ages and ability levels, along with teacher training / mentorship opportunities.

I run a private swim school in the South Oxfordshire area [www.onetooneswimming.co.uk](http://www.onetooneswimming.co.uk) with the aim of providing swimming support for people who find that their options for support with learning / improving their swimming skills are currently limited.

I have discovered that quality swimming lessons are dependent on two things:

Passionate, dedicated and experienced teachers

Pool space that allows for small class sizes

I am consistently inundated by comments from the public regarding the limited availability of both of the above in the south Oxfordshire area. This is a real shame as there is big demand for quality swimming lessons and the public are generally willing to pay a bit extra per lesson in the interests of achieving higher value for money and time.

I am also inundated by comments regarding the very limited availability of appropriate lane swimming space in which to practise stroke technique, swim for fitness / rehabilitation or to train for competitive sports.

I am unable to satisfy the demand for the lessons that I offer – which include one to one adult lessons (all abilities), one to one children's lessons (all abilities), adult triathlon stroke technique and coaching club sessions, children's triathlon stroke technique lessons and under water video analysis.

A successful project would create increased opportunities for participation in swimming classes for all ages and abilities, including:

- Nervous beginners (small class sizes and teachers who specialise in teaching anxious learners)
- Adult learners (small class sizes and teachers who specialise in teaching adults)
- Children (small class sizes and engaging lessons)
- Advanced swimming for children (opportunities outside of commitment to competitive clubs)
- Teenagers (opportunities to improve swim skills and to swim for fitness or multisport events)
- Triathletes, aquathletes, pentathletes, (specialist stroke technique support and training)
- Disabled swimmers (classes that cater for special needs)
- School lessons (pool hire and teaching for local school swimming classes)
- Competitive club swimming (hire to swimming clubs - children's clubs and triathlon clubs)

A successful project would create improved opportunities for public participation in swimming, including quality space for; stroke technique practise, swim for fitness / rehabilitation and swim training. All non-lesson / non-teacher training time would be dedicated to bookable quality lane swimming space – i.e lane space which is limited in numbers and graded by ability.

I believe that the residents of Watlington would benefit hugely from having a swimming centre of excellence on their doorstep as it would offer both opportunities for swimming participation not available elsewhere in the surrounding area and opportunities to participate in swimming without the need to travel 20mins to access them.

The centre would also bring job opportunities and inspirational opportunities to become involved with a leading UK centre of excellence.

### **The opportunity**

I discovered recently that the ASA (Amateur Swimming Association) are developing a new initiative called 'ASA in a box' and are currently looking for an opportunity to run a pilot project. The ASA are keen to run their pilot project in this area and have strong links with Oxfordshire. They hope to meet with myself in a couple of weeks, along with other representatives from the local swimming community.

The ASA's vision is to develop centres of excellence for swimming teaching – with the fundamental aim of improving UK swimming development opportunities for swimmers of all ability levels.

The swimming pool in a box would consist of an industrial type unit with an above ground pool structure (the cheapest, quickest and easiest construction method). The poolside is built up to pool side level and so it looks exactly the same as a normal pool.

The cost of a 25m pool build would normally be around £1.5m. However, costs for an above ground pool structure are around £0.8m and costs would be shared through the pilot project. This, of course, makes a huge difference to the viability of such a project due to the minimisation of fund raising requirements. The ASA brand would also be of huge assistance.

The ongoing viability / sustainability of the project would depend on the consistent demand for use of the centre from; the public for small group swimming lessons, the public for lane swimming, the ASA for teacher training courses, local schools for school lessons and local competitive clubs for training space.

### **The help required:**

The project will require funding – from grants and possibly also matched private investment. Possible grant funding that I am currently looking in to includes Sport England community sport fund (awards up to £250k) and Millenium funding grants. I have a growing team of volunteers helping out with this.

In order to formally apply for any grants I will need to identify a proposed / agreed area of land for development. Through discussions to date it would seem like 'The Rec' area may be a possibility due to the size and the specific location of the land.

I will also need to build a formal project team of people who, at least initially, will be prepared to dedicate their time voluntarily.

### **In Summary**

There is currently a potential opportunity to bring a 25m swimming pool facility to Watlington, which would benefit the local community and surrounding areas. If prompt action to earmark appropriate land is possible, then an ambitious project which would normally be unviable may come to fruition.

### **Special Comment 44**

Watlington Neighbourhood Plan Vision, Objectives and Options Consultation  
Thank you for consulting English Heritage on the Vision, Objectives and Options Document for the Watlington Neighbourhood Plan. As the government's adviser on the historic environment English Heritage is keen to ensure that the protection of the historic environment is fully taken into account at all stages and levels of the local planning process and welcomes the opportunity to comment upon this key planning document. Neighbourhood Planning is an opportunity for local communities to determine for themselves how future development will affect their area, albeit in conformance with National planning Policy and the strategic policies of the Local Plan. At this stage of plan preparation (prior to the statutory Regulation 14 and 16 consultations), our response is intended to provide advice on how communities can provide a robust and positive strategy for the historic environment. English Heritage has produced a range of guidance to support communities in analysing and describing the features that make their neighbourhood distinctive and to ensure the

Neighbourhood Plan provides a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the area's heritage assets. These can be found at :- <http://www.englishheritage.org.uk/caring/get-involved/improve-your-neighbourhood/>

We note that the vision and objectives include a positive focus on the importance of the character of Watlington as a small market town, including a large conservation area and focus of listed buildings, amongst which the Grade II\* listed Town Hall stands out as a particular focus. It is also evident that the rural surroundings are recognised as an important element of the area's character, not least the foothills and escarpment of the Chilterns AONB experienced through the identified key views, which demonstrate an important relationship between the conservation area and Chilterns that contributes to the significance of both areas.

The local plan provides policy to ensure development in conservation areas is given special consideration. However, it is possible for the neighbourhood plan to specifically identify features of the conservation area that make a particular contribution to its character and appearance, or its special historic or architectural interest, that future development should be guided to preserve or enhance and provide policy to ensure this. We note the narrow central streets, urban character and focal role of the town hall as features already highlighted in the visions and objectives that might be identified as deserving a particular focus in planning policies.

The existing conservation area appraisal, prepared by the District Council in 2009 provides an assessment of the area against which decisions affecting the conservation area, including land allocations, can be judged. We would hope to see this referred to as an evidence base document that has informed the drafting of the plan. Nevertheless, the neighbourhood plan provides an opportunity for the community to review the appraisal, provide supportive mapping and illustration, review the issues identified and consider how the information can be presented in a more accessible format to aid both applicants and decision makers.

This could include consideration of buildings within the conservation area that make a positive contribution to its character and appearance or otherwise contribute to its special historic or architectural interest, in addition to the listed buildings that are already mapped in the vision and objectives document. Mapping these 'positive buildings', including analysing what types of buildings are represented (e.g. houses, cottages, churches, farm buildings, etc.), can be of great value in developing understanding of the area's character and the pressures it is facing. Identifying and

mapping other features, such as historic green space, important trees, or areas of historic paving and boundaries can also provide detail that will help to consider the consequences of new development.

Local plan policy and the vision statement suggest the impact of new development on the character of areas outside conservation areas is an important consideration. Even within a small town the different date of development or historic function of different parts of a settlement can result in strikingly different characteristics, with each area requiring new development to respond differently in order to make a successful contribution to the sense of place. The mapping of areas within Watlington of different historic origin presented in the document provides a useful starting point for considering the different 'character areas' that make up the settlement. We would recommend developing this further to include a brief statement that describes the key positive historic character features of each area, which can then be used to support policy on sustaining the positive characteristics of each area. This might also highlight particular sensitivities to change in each area, or inform design guidelines. English Heritage have supported the development of a number of

toolkits to help communities undertake such assessments which you might find helpful (a list of useful sources is provided as an appendix to this letter). Historic buildings and features outside the conservation areas that make a particularly special contribution to the area's historic character may also be identified within the neighbourhood plan's evidence base as well as potentially receiving a measure of policy protection through the plan as 'locally listed' heritage assets. Please do contact us if you would like more information about either of these processes.

We note the evidence of important views presented and support this as a means of considering the impact of development proposals and potential allocations on the setting of the town and the conservation area in particular, as well as the impact on the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Recent experience, however, has demonstrated that the identification of important views as a policy measure by itself provides uncertainty in development control and that these should be supported by some analysis of the elements of the landscape that are considered to contribute positively to each view and of the extent of the area from which each view is seen. The recent Oxford View Cones Study provides a useful example of such analysis including a methodology that could be readily adapted to the local context. The Chilterns AONB Management Plan may provide a useful source of analysis to draw upon, particular its Landscape chapter.

The vision and objectives document provides for consideration of the historic environment as it is experienced as buildings, places and landscape. However, it remains silent on the archaeological resource of the area. We would recommend contacting the County's Historic Environment Record to access records of historical finds of archaeological remains, or reports of investigations that might provide an indication of the sensitivity of the potential allocation sites. Neighbourhood plans elsewhere have also used this as an opportunity to develop a small community archaeology project, including working with local schools and developing a heritage trail that can also support local businesses (see the recent Wing Neighbourhood Plan in Buckinghamshire as a useful example). I hope these comments provide some useful suggestions to help you consider how the Neighbourhood Plan can promote a positive strategy for Watlington's heritage. If we can provide any further assistance please feel free to contact us.

## Special Comment 45

### NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN CONSULTATION RESPONSE BY ALLOTMENT HOLDERS.

A meeting of the allotments sub-committee was held on 15th January 2015 and it was agreed that the following response to the consultation would be made:  
"As a committee representing seventy families in Watlington we are concerned that our allotments should be protected by the Neighbourhood Plan"

#### **Proposed vision**

To protect and value allotments and make further provision in line with a growing community

Objectives:

- Ensure that allotments have the most secure legal protection  
Ensure that allotments are recognized for the important contribution they make to the long term sustainability of Watlington in social, economic and environmental respects
- Maximise the potential for the community to grow its own vegetables and fruit in order to make the local food supply more secure, to reduce food miles and to reduce food waste.
- Maximise the potential for biodiversity by creating wildlife corridors using allotments as a link

## Special Comment 46

On looking through various documents on the web site, I have noticed a number of maps which contain the name "Howe Combe". As previously reported there is no such location. Howe Combe is as a house and Howe Hill is the location. I assume the map used in these documents was selected and edited by a member of the Core Committee. The easiest way of rectifying this error is to cover up the name Howe Combe. You will note there are a number of "groups" of houses in Greenfield but it is all called Greenfield and the same applies to Howe Hill. The settlement of Howe Hill has been recognised by Ordnance Survey on all future map re-issues and the naming clearly supersedes any previous references. I would like your assurance that this error will be rectified immediately. The error has confused residents of Howe Hill who clearly expressed their views and the identity established. The error has also been wrongly used by respondents to a current planning application which is highly regrettable

## Special Comment 46 Reply

*I can assure you that the reason the designation of Howe Hill is incorrect in the WNP maps was not as a consequence of deliberate intent, simply, I believe, an error as a result of using out-of-date OS maps. As part of the Consultation 2 follow up we will respond formally.*



## Special Comment 47

### 1. General comments:

1.1 The consultation is undermined by the disproportionate focus on traffic and the strong bias towards the western expansion option. No information is provided for people to be able to make a well informed choice. Details of the cost of the expansion options and the implications for housing development numbers should have been made available. In addition, there is no reference to traffic management options other than the construction of relief roads and these really do need to be fully thought through.

1.2 The main focus of the NP should be housing and this section of the consultation is very thin. Although housing was not the top priority which emerged from Consultation 1, 90% of the community did not respond to the consultation so the NPCC has no evidence of the views of a huge majority of local residents. In my opinion, the Watlington community is being served very badly by the complete lack of interest in its housing needs. The key focus of the consultation is on the location of new housing development in relation to highways and not on the type and spread of homes needed. It is letting Watlington down to simply rely on the district wide SODC housing policies. The NP should give us a fantastic opportunity to meet the current and future housing needs of the community and to develop some far sighted and innovative proposals for new homes which will make a positive contribution to Watlington to 2031.

1.3 There are hardly any references in the consultation document to environmental, social and economic sustainability. There should be a clear link between the Sustainability Appraisal and the vision and objectives in the document. The consultation document says that the SA Scoping Report is available but it is neither online nor in paper copies. I think that it is a serious omission and impacts adversely on the integrity of the consultation.

### 2. Vision and objectives:

2.1.1 Vision for Watlington: I find it hard to identify with the language here. It seems very sterile and remote to me where I hoped it would be imaginative and inclusive and with a focus on the people who make up our community. I would like to have seen some phrases like....' Watlington is a small, historic, rural town in the Chilterns where there is an excellent environment for people to live and work.' 'There is a strong, mutually supportive community which is inclusive and responds well to all people's needs and aspirations.' 'There is a commitment to a sustainable use of resources and to a growing resilience to the impacts of climate change' 'There is a strong sense of wellbeing nurtured by the natural environment which is not just of local, but national importance.'

2.1.2 The objectives are a bit impenetrable - I think they could be much clearer and written in much more accessible language.

2.2.1 Traffic: the 'vision' is not really a vision - rather a statement of the existing situation. Something like....'Watlington is a small market town where traffic is managed effectively and is not a dominant feature.' 'Local residents and visitors enjoy good access for pedestrians and cyclists and feel safe around the town.' would be more suitable.

2.2.2 Traffic: objectives. The whole focus of this is biased towards the construction of a bypass and this skews the objectives for traffic management over the period of the plan. It is absolutely appropriate to include objectives to improve air quality, conserve historic buildings, provide more car parking and encourage better provision of cycle routes etc but the over emphasis on alternative routes for through traffic means that other opportunities for managing traffic are not put forward.

This is a significant weakness in my view. An appropriate objective could be 'the management of through traffic will be thoroughly investigated and all options considered.'

2.3.1 Housing: the vision includes no reference at all to meeting the housing needs of people in our community. This is a major omission because it should be one of the most important aims of the NP. There is also the repeat of the focus on alternative through routes for traffic as a primary factor where the focus should be on meeting the local need and integrating new housing as effectively as possible into the existing community.

2.3.2 Objectives: I support most of the objectives but not the first and last. It is not in the interests of the Watlington community to rely on SODC policies for the provision of affordable and social homes. Our NP needs to make the case for provision to meet our local need. If our NP does not make clear what the needs of our community are we will have no chance of achieving them. There is a real opportunity to put forward several other proposals for housing which are imaginative but not unique as other communities also want them. For example: provision for self-build (which is promoted by the government, Cherwell District Council and SODC in its current 'Refined Options' consultation. There is already an identified local interest which is likely to be much greater on the evidence of the responses to the NP questionnaire in Chalgrove = 100+ ); provision of designs for 'homes for life'; provision of homes designed for older members of the community including sheltered and close care developments; homes which are carbon neutral and have a high specification for energy and water conservation; housing developments which include energy generation schemes; housing developments which include sustainable drainage systems (SuDS). Car parking is always problematic - Woodcote specified that all new homes must have a car parking space for each bedroom - it passed their inspection and is included in their NP. If Woodcote can specify this I think we should as well. Unfortunately, at this stage, we do not have evidence of local support for these proposals simply because people have not been asked for their views on them.

2.4. Retail and Business: I generally support the vision and objectives but think that there are other objectives to include i.e.: support an increase in local employment opportunities in line with the growing community in order to reduce the need to travel to work: retain existing employment sites but encourage a change from businesses which require servicing by HGVs to high tech businesses (which are encouraged by SODC): encourage horticultural businesses which produce local food and allocate land for market gardens.

2.5 Environment: N.B. bullet point 2 - please change to Sites of Special Scientific Interest. The objective about water courses should be strengthened to say: 'to protect and improve existing water courses, ensuring that there is no further culverting or covering'. The objective about the protection of areas known to absorb flood water should include areas known to be subject to ground water flooding as well. I don't think we should limit the plan to 'actively pursue' better air quality - surely over the period of the plan it is reasonable to have an objective to 'achieve' clean air in Watlington.

2.6 Getting Around: objectives: the statistic about 1500m is not really relevant in Watlington and appropriate distance from the town centre depends on who has to walk it. One of the key objectives should be to make sure that there are good pedestrian and cycling links between new developments and facilities in the town. It is important to include a reference to the existing, poor provision for pedestrians, buggies, pavement mobility vehicles etc because of narrow pavements, obstructions and, in some places, no pavements.

2.7 Services: I would delete the objective about encouraging extensive rural leisure facilities in the surrounding area. There are lots of activities which are very intrusive in the countryside, have a bad impact on the local community and put off existing visitors who come to enjoy quiet activities such as walking and cycling. Clay pigeon shooting has caused quite a problem for Watlington in the past and parachuting and motorbike scrambling have also been a nuisance locally. We do not want to imply that any rural activity is acceptable. If new leisure facilities are to be encouraged, for example the swimming pool that lots of people say they want, land needs to be allocated in the plan.

### **3. Housing Sites Assessment:**

3.1 Criterion 6 Within Flood Zone? it is not enough to limit the assessment to the EA flood map. We need to take account of local knowledge and evidence and consider areas which are subject to ground water flooding and areas which are needed to contribute to flood prevention. As it stands, where this judgement is 'No' the implication is that the site has no issue with any flooding and no value for flood prevention and this is very misleading.

3.2 Criterion 7 Ecological Value? It is very important to include the exact criteria which have been used to reach the judgement on ecological value - not just 'trees etc' which could be very superficial. Obviously, full ecological surveys are not carried out at this stage but it is misleading to publish in a public document that some sites have no ecological value where, in fact, they may be important for all kinds of ecological reasons. For example, the water course and springs in Site C are very important and the site is a hunting ground for owls and bats. It is not clear that a consistent approach has been applied to each site.

3.3 Further assessment criteria are needed, for example: how good is access from the site into the town centre and to local facilities? what contribution can the site make to the establishment of wildlife corridors? what opportunities does the site offer for enhancement of the environment?

3.4 It is not clear whether the assessment criteria all have the same weighting. In evaluating the sites it should be possible to demonstrate consistency in the application of the criteria.

### **4. Development Sites:**

Site A: I don't think this site is suitable for development because there are flooding issues, poor vehicular access and lack of good pedestrian access into the town.

Site B: Generally, I do not think this is a suitable site but parts near Watcombe manor may be appropriate for small scale housing development.

Site C: I am opposed to any type of development on this site except use as a market garden. The land is known to flood, the water course is essential to protect with a wide margin and the land is invaluable as a 'sink' for flood water to protect the town. It is also an important source of food for bats and owls.

Sites D and E: These sites are well placed for access into the town and should be considered for small scale development. Developments for older residents would be suitable because of their proximity to the town centre. Development here would keep the built environment relatively tightly knit and this would be an advantage. Development here would have a visual impact on the AONB but good design could mitigate this. There is an issue with ground water flooding which would need detailed investigation - it may be possible to mitigate the problem by keeping development small scale and using permeable materials for all hard surfaces. Part of this site could also be used as additional car parking.

Site F: This is the best site for housing and the best for a development for older residents as access to the town is very convenient and flat. Part of this site should be allocated for additional car parking.

Site G: This site should definitely be kept as an employment site and not allocated for housing. All opportunities to remove B8 use should be taken up. The site has the capacity to provide for small light industrial use, small workshops, hack spaces etc. It is also very suitable for office space for high tech businesses. Any new buildings on the site should have a low ridge height to limit the impact on the AONB as much as possible. It has the potential to make a very significant contribution to employment opportunities for a growing population in Watlington.

Site H: This site should definitely not be developed for housing. It is very prominent in views of and from the AONB and provides a very important space between the settlements of Watlington and Pyrton. The separation of the settlements contributes very significantly to the character of the area.

Site J: This site should not be developed for housing: it is an ideal location for a replacement secondary school and sports centre. I hope that serious consideration will be given to this possibility, especially as I think the Head has indicated to Rhian and Neil B that he is interested in a new build to replace the outdated buildings on the existing site. The school on this site would provide a sensible new boundary for Watlington and has the capacity to provide good outdoor and indoor sports facilities which should be shared with the community. There is also capacity for the swimming pool which Watlington residents have been asking for for many years. **THE CURRENT SITE OF THE ICK-NIELD COMMUNITY COLLEGE SHOULD BE ALLOCATED FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT.** This site is ideal for good access to the town centre and could be designed so that it integrates very successfully with the existing built environment.

Site K: Some development may be possible on this site to link with Marlbrook but access into the town is poor and residents could feel cut off from the rest of Watlington - as they currently do at Marlbrook.

Site L: This site is not suitable for housing development. A wide protective margin would be needed for the brook and the site is known to flood. Access into the town is poor and residents could feel isolated.

Site M: The site should not be developed as a whole - only part of the site along the Britwell Road to extend Windmill Piece. This is not a good site because pedestrian access into the town is difficult and there are no suitable alternatives.

Site N: This should definitely remain as an employment site. It has the capacity to adapt to changing patterns of employment and to meet the local needs of a growing community. Over the period of the plan it should be possible to remove the existing B8 use and change to more high tech businesses. The need to replace this site elsewhere in the parish would be avoided.

Site P: It may be possible to provide a small scale housing development on this site but it is a very sensitive site in the CA and the water courses would have to be properly conserved and protected.

Site Q: This site currently provides employment and this should be continued. Although it has the capacity to provide a good location for a small housing development this should be resisted and the provision of employment maintained.

Site R: This site is a possibility for housing development but pedestrian access into the town along Howe Road is not safe.

Sites S and T: These sites are capable of taking housing development that is very well designed so that impact on the AONB is minimal. They are not suitable for specific housing for older residents because they are too far from the town centre and the footpath is uphill. It is very important to obtain information from residents about the housing provision they need as they get older. There are several different types of provision for older residents and we should have detailed evidence of what the local needs are before allocating land for this purpose.

Site U: This site should remain in agricultural use, and not be developed at all. It is prominent in the AONB and makes a significant contribution to the setting of Watlington - any development here would have a very damaging impact.

## **5. Co-ordinating development to solve Watlington's issues:**

5.1 I do not think that housing development sites should be used to provide alternative routes for through traffic.

5.2 I do not support any of the relief road options

5.3 I do not think that Watlington should accept more new dwellings than necessary. If this is the majority view of Watlington residents SODC should be made aware promptly in order to avoid any misunderstanding about the number of new houses Watlington is prepared to accept.

## **6. Options Strategy:**

6.1 The strong steer in favour of the western expansion plan is not appropriate in this consultation document. What is needed is impartial information and this is not provided. Before any response can be made about a relief road much more detailed information is needed: what is the estimated cost of providing the road and how can this be met? The CIL/S106 money from 250 new homes is unlikely to be able to meet the cost - I don't think this payment is available on new affordable/social homes but may be mistaken. I have heard estimates of the number of new homes needed to finance a relief road from 600 to 1000. Watlington residents are entitled to know the best estimates of the impact of this proposal. The 'cons' are very sketchy. There are very important issues about how much extra through traffic is likely to be generated; could this route be adopted by OCC as a strategic route from M40 J6 through South Oxfordshire? Could the provision of a Watlington bypass encourage SODC to allocate many more new homes to the town? What is the likely economic impact on local retail etc etc..... ( we know from the impact of the current road works that there has been a marked decline in sales at the garage and the undercroft because of the reduction in passing trade).

6.2 The NPCC already has good evidence from the workshops that Watlington residents do not want the town to grow too much and that they think new housing developments should be spread around and kept small in scale. I agree with this principle.

## **Special Comment 48**

1. A summary of the consultation document using 'plain English' and circulated widely is likely to have enabled and encouraged many more people to engage in the consultation process. It really isn't easy to work out who the document is intended for, especially as it relies so heavily on electronic information. It doesn't seem to be easily accessible to the whole range of Watlington residents and is, therefore, not at all inclusive which, of course, it should be.

2. The language obscures the meaning in several places but, for people to be able to respond, it needs to be clear and straightforward. Please will you translate for me a couple of the objectives in the Vision for Watlington - bullet points 1 and 3.

3. I feel that the consultation document reads as a manifesto for a bypass with the clear implication that sites for housing development which could contribute to the costs are preferable to others. This is a thread which runs through the whole document and I think it is a fundamental flaw. In my opinion, the priority for new homes, is that they should be sited where they can be integrated into the town, in the best possible way and give residents the best opportunity to feel integral members of the community. By definition, sites that would finance a bypass are large and on the margins of the Town and are the least desirable in terms of access and easy integration into the community. We already have the poor example of the Marlbrook development where residents are isolated and feel cut off from the town; we should not risk repeating these mistakes.

4. Please will you let me have the details of the calculations about the viability of linking the western relief road with housing development. This information should be in the document but is missing. SODC indicated a year or so ago that at least 500 market houses would be needed to finance an alternative route through the town and recent 'back of the envelope' local calculations indicate 600 to 1000 new homes would be required. From conversations I have had with local people this scale of development is the last thing they want.

5. The absence of the supporting financial information about a bypass/relief road creates a danger that Watlington residents may have false expectations that traffic problems in the town can be solved by the construction of up to 250 new homes.

6. The consultation document indicates clearly that an alternative route for through traffic would be a benefit for Watlington but it ignores the possible down side. Disadvantages include the likely overall increase in traffic; the implications for an increase in traffic on roads in neighbouring communities; the damaging impact on the character of the area; damaging impact on the retail viability of the town; the risk that the B4009, including the new route could be upgraded to a strategic route serving the whole South Oxfordshire area; the likelihood that the new road will need to be financed by large scale development; the risk that even more development would be proposed by SODC if the new route has a strategic role.

7. Please explain the meaning of the 'Options Strategy' map. I understand the graphic representation of the relief options encircling Watlington but am at a total loss to understand what the small blue circles indicate. Am I missing a joke? I strongly support the development of a number of small sites for new homes rather than new housing estates but can't believe that there is a proposal to develop land on the playing field, allotments or Mansle Gardens.

8. Vision for Watlington: the town has not always been vibrant and prosperous - it certainly wasn't when we first came here in the early 1970s. My suggestions for a vision for the town include:

(a) the community to become more sustainable in terms of a secure local food supply, energy generation and efficiency, employment opportunities and public and/or shared transport

(b) the natural environment of the parish to be protected and improved in terms of biodiversity, open spaces and access to the wider countryside

(c) air quality and the risk of flooding to be improved

(d) residents to be more actively involved in local decision making with more opportunities to work together to achieve common goals

(e) sufficient housing to be provided of all types and affordability to allow families to stay in the town and move back if they want to. Keeping families together is important for social cohesion

and strong communities

(f) to achieve a better balance on local roads between traffic and people so that residents can move around freely without being intimidated.

9. My proposals for some principles for development:

(a) accept only the minimum possible number of new homes in order to protect the quality and character of Watlington

(b) ensure that developers do not dilute the SODC requirements for the % of affordable homes per site.

(c) insist on a low carbon specification for all new buildings

(d) insist on the provision of open green space, community gardens, allotments etc on new developments

(e) allocate land for market gardens to secure a local food supply

(f) make a priority of safe and easy access into the town centre for each site developed

(g) fully investigate flooding issues on each site, not just refer to the EA water courses flood map

(h) prioritise development of a range of smaller sites rather than one or two large sites

(j) use CIL/S106 money to finance: (i) an additional town centre car park, (ii) a comprehensive traffic management system which could include improved road signage; 'smart' traffic light controls, chicanes and camera surveillance to monitor unauthorised HGVs and excess speeds.

#### **Special Comment 49**

I'm very keen that we find a solution to the traffic problems in the centre of the town but am concerned at what looks like the preferred plan putting traffic down Pyrton Road down to the industrial estate roundabout. There are lots of children and houses on this proposed route and the danger of having a main road next to those houses must be emphasised. How about making the traffic one way through town, making the Pyrton Lane one way?. It would also require traffic calming measures and should be at 20 miles an hour. Too many children play and ride their bikes here.

## Special Comment 50

### CONSULTATION ON YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN — REPRESENTATIONS BY HSE WATLINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN CONSULTATION DOCUMENTS

Thank you for your request to provide a representation on the **Watlington Neighbourhood Plan** consultation document. When consulted on land-use planning matters, the HSE where possible will make representations to ensure that compatible development within the consultation zones of major hazard installations and major accident hazard pipelines (MAHPs) is achieved'.

We have concluded that we have no representations to make on this occasion. This is because our records show that the **Watlington Neighbourhood Plan** boundary and the land within does not encroach on the consultation zones of major hazard installations or MAHPs. As no encroachment has been detected, the HSE does not need to be informed of the next stages in the adoption of the **Watlington Neighbourhood Plan**.

If you have any questions about the content of this letter, please contact us at the address given.

## Special Comment 51

WNP Consultation 2 Questionnaires

As \*\*\*\*\* is abroad, I was asked to collect and deliver the responses from Pyrton parishioners to your questionnaires. Noting that your forms do not ask compilers to say whether their returns are from individuals or households, or to show postcodes, I cannot assess the full number of responses from this parish – that said, I delivered 36 forms to the Post Office this morning which cover the inputs from at least 54 adults. In addition, we know that some have submitted returns by email and others by hand at your meetings or to your office. In all, we know these responses come from at least 57 Pyrton parishioners and, when John's reply arrives on his return to UK, from all our Parish Councillors.

In this letter, I will try to explain why Pyrton feels so strongly about many aspects of your WNP. On the one hand, we and other parishes enjoy Watlington as a wonderful, friendly, ancient market-town that we use for many routine activities including shopping, medical support, library, public houses and some sports to name a few. On the other, we and surrounding villages and hamlets, all with our own history and aspirations, want to preserve the quality and character of our parishes in this beautiful part of South Oxfordshire.

Pyrton is one of the few Hundreds that was mentioned in the Domesday Book. Its history goes back to Roman and Saxon times and like Shirburn to the north, there are historic listed buildings like Pyrton Manor and Shirburn Castle, which are surrounded by parks and conservation areas that ought to be preserved for all time. I suspect that Cuxham, Britwell Salome, Lewknor and Brightwell Baldwin can make similar claims even though they are more distant from Watlington. Against this historic background, we are conscious that any WNP proposal to create a bypass or relief road could have a major and potentially adverse impact on most surrounding parishes.

As such any WNP decision of this nature should be based on strategic studies conducted at County or National level, rather than on the outcome of one parish's neighbourhood plan.



I must also highlight a few points from some of the Pyrton responses:

- a. We do not want Watlington to expand onto the remaining green fields between your town and our village, as we strongly support Oxford's Core Strategy which has always argued that towns should not be allowed to expand into and/or coalesce with adjacent villages.
- b. If your studies lead you to consider a bypass and/or relief road, you will have to assess how it might be paid for. If, as almost all locals suspect, the money has to come from housing developments on one or more sites, your WNP must assess the number of houses involved and the additional factors they would bring – how many extra cars will be owned by the new residents and what would be the effect on school places, sewage, water and other services?
- c. The road works and traffic diversions of the last few weeks have highlighted the total inadequacy of Pyrton Lane as a relief road – both it and the connecting road between Pyrton and the B4009 are narrow and the Lane has no foundation. To widen one or both would adversely affect the setting of Pyrton's Manor, Shirburn Park and our Conservation Area and Charity Lands.
- d. We have heard that Watlington's traffic controls and diversion measures over the last few weeks have adversely affected traders in the town. If your WNP were to advocate a bypass or relief road, you would be wise to assess the likely economic effect of diverting traffic out of town.
- e. We have also heard that many people believe that the cross roads by the Town Hall have become more user friendly to pedestrians and less polluted by vehicles since traffic lights were installed. As such, we urge you to rewrite Traffic Objective 1 (p.17). At present, it says to "seek alternate routes ..". Although this may become one of your answers (we hope not!), your objective should address the problem and not try to give the solution. Would it not be wiser to use words like "The plan will look at methods of reducing traffic flow and pollution in the AQMA?"
- f. Your study has identified some sites by letter (A-U), some of which are also identified by the prefix "Wat" and a number. Mindful that sites G & H are in our parish, the use of Wat7 and Wat8 appears to be a presumptive annexation by your town. If you have to include G & H, please negotiate with SODC to have them renamed into something like Pyrton 1 & Pyrton 2. We would also urge you not to use the "Wat" prefix to annotate any possible sites that may be put forward at Lys Mill.
- g. Your plan emphasises the views from Watlington Hill and the need to provide green spaces for the public. Nevertheless, when you assess ecological value, you only mention "trees, etc." Under a separate email, I will be submitting photos to show G & H (your Wat 7 & 8) are visible and prominent from Watlington Hill. At page 30, your responses to paras 9 should be changed to "yes" and in the case of H (your Wat 8) and J (your Wat 9), your ecological assessment at paras 7 should be changed to "valuable green and open spaces beside a conservation area."

Although I could highlight more points, we hope that our submitted forms have outlined the concerns felt by this parish. That said, when you analyse the forms and write up your findings, please highlight the statistical risks of trying to derive firm conclusions when you do not know either how many people provided the inputs or where they came from.

At the start of this neighbourhood planning work, our Parish Councils had discussions with SODC trying to decide whether or not to include Pyrton and other parishes in your NP area. Although all sides agreed that the answer should be "no", we were as aware then, as we are now, that a WNP would have some impact on Pyrton. Hence this long letter reiterating some of the key issues that still concern our Parish Council and our parishioners.

## Say No to a bypass through our housing estate

The Neighbourhood Plan distributed to households in the Marie Brook Estate, (Willow Close, Beech Close, Ash Close and Sycamore Close) shows the intention to construct a bypass right through our estate, on Willow Close! At peak times there would be around 50 HGV's (Heavy Goods Vehicles) per hour passing through the estate, plus around 800 cars and LGV's (Light Goods Vehicles), per hour! It will be impossible for the children to walk to school, or to ride bikes and scooters along Willow Close. All the properties will be affected, property values will drop, and it will become a dangerous noisy place with huge trucks thundering through, - no longer a child friendly, family estate.

Something definitely needs to be done about the traffic through Watlington. There already is a 7.5 tonne weight limit for traffic, which is completely ignored, and not enforced. Why not enforce it, even if only for peak times? All those HGV's blocking up the road would not be such a problem, and possibly a bypass would not be required at all.

If a bypass is eventually required, the Neighbourhood Plan proposes alternative bypass routes linking Britwell Road to Howe Road, and then another link to Shirburn Road. This will be far more preferable, because it will link the three roads with the most traffic on them, (not much comes through Cuxham Road), and almost no properties will be adversely affected.

**Say No** to this proposal by signing this letter, and depositing it at the Parish Council Office by 21<sup>st</sup> February 2015. Alternatively make this clear on your Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire, if you received one.

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