

**Notes of the meeting with the Homes and Communities Agency held on Monday 3rd July 2017 at Watlington Town Hall**

This meeting had been postponed from 19th May because of the announcement of the General Election which took place on Thursday 8th June.

**Present:**

Homes and Communities Agency: Gareth Adam and Kate McBride

Carter Jonas: Kieron Gregson

Aecom: Chris Carter

Newgate: Ben Lowndes

Watlington Parish Council: Tom Bindoff, Ian Hill and Tony Williamson

Watlington NDP Forum: Gill Bindoff, Norman Perry, Tony Powell,

Peter Richardson

The meeting was held at the request of the Watlington NDP team in order to update the HCA team on the progress towards the Neighbourhood Development Plan, to meet the new HCA team and to have an update on proposed development at Chalgrove Airfield. HCA provided an agenda.

1. **HCA update/progress to date/next steps**
   1. HCA has changed the management structure for development of sites of over 3000 new homes. The new Strategic Land Team has responsibility if a number of sites nationally, including the proposed development at Chalgrove Airfield. This is a change from the previous structure when the HCA team had been involved in wider developments and infrastructure provision in South Oxfordshire, including Didcot. The Chalgrove team leader is Louise Wyman .The project team now comprises Carter Jonas as the new planning consultancy which also includes Max Goode, Aecom which is retained from the previous structure and Montagu Evans which has been commissioned to provide property and commercial advice. Newgate provides communications support.
   2. The HCA Board has given approval for moving forward with the Chalgrove development together with funding approval to progress a planning application for the site. The new structure has been put in place to facilitate this. There is a strong commitment to development of the airfield site and it is expected that the planning application will be made later this year.
   3. A new website for Chalgrove Airfield is now live.(www.chalgroveairfield.com)
   4. The Enquiry by Design process in January produced a masterplan which is a starting point for feeding into the preparations for a planning application on the site. Pre-application meetings will be taking place shortly.
   5. The project team are working closely with SODC and OCC. There is currently an intensive series of weekly meetings with OCC which focus on transport, education and health provision.
   6. Discussions are ongoing with Martin Baker in relation to their landholding and future needs regarding the airfield site.
   7. There has been a thorough handover of information from the previous team. Information provided and priorities expressed by Watlington have been carried forward.
   8. The HCA team are still relatively new to the Chalgrove Airfield project and are not yet able to give any indications about detailed proposals. It is expected that details of infrastructure requirements will firm up over the coming months and some information may be available by the end of July.
   9. Meetings with other communities affected by the Chalgrove airfield development proposals are ongoing. A meeting with Benson was held in the morning of July 3rd. Meetings with the smaller parishes are yet to be arranged.
2. **Watlington NDP Update:**
   1. The Regulation 14 consultation ended on 02.06.17. Over 500 questionnaires were completed and there was over 80% support for the Plan and each of the individual policies.
   2. This strong result gives the parish council a mandate to move forward to the next stage and submit the Plan to SODC. Changes to the Plan as a result of the consultation are relatively minor. Statutory consultees raised a number of points which the team are addressing.
   3. OCC raised a number of points about the proposal in the Plan to allocate land on the proposed development sites for a safeguarded route for a re-aligned B4009. This route has been discussed at length in meetings with the previous HCA team and is included in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan (Second Preferred Options) proposals. The re-aligned route is fundamental to the WNDP.
   4. The WNDP team has had several meetings with the developers of the sites allocated in the Plan. The aim has been to try to achieve a strategic plan for the growth of the town rather than a series of unconnected development sites. A full planning application is expected soon on Site A on land between Britwell Road and Cuxham Road which makes provision for a re-aligned route for the B4009. It is understood that an agreement is in the process of being made between landowners and developers for development proposals on Sites B and C. This would enable co-ordinated proposals to be put forward including the continuation of the re-aligned route of the B4009.
   5. The route of the re-aligned B4009 is not contained within the WNDP boundary but links with the existing road through land in the parish of Pyrton. Pyrton is strongly opposed to this and has made objections to the draft WNDP on this basis. The village is producing its own NDP and is at a very similar stage in the process. Its Regulation 14 consultation ended on 16th June, a couple of weeks after the consultation closed on the WNDP.
   6. There is an outstanding planning application for development on land in Pyrton (PYR2 previously identified as WAT 8). The developer, Providence Land, is also the developer for Watlington Site C.
   7. HCA has contributed to discussions between Watlington and Pyrton NDP teams with a view to reaching agreement on the route of the re-aligned B4009. This was the focus of two afternoon sessions in meetings at Watlington Town Hall. At those sessions it had appeared that compromises may be able to be reached. At this stage, however, the two NDPs are not in agreement.
   8. One aim of the proposal to re-align the B4009 is to remove some through traffic from Watlington town centre. This is likely to result in a significant improvement in air quality. Traffic management proposals for the town centre are currently being investigated by Mode Transport Planning. Their report is expected by the end of July. It will be sent to HCA for information as soon as it is available.
3. **Watlington issues specific to Chalgrove Airfield:**
   1. The infrastructure requirements for Chalgrove to proceed are of major importance to Watlington. Analysis of traffic data by Aecom has demonstrated that increases from existing planned development along the B4009 Corridor would need new solutions for Watlington. Traffic generated from the development of Chalgrove Airfield would increase this need. All the discussions held with the HCA have focussed on the proposal to remove through traffic from the town centre by re-aligning the route of the B4009 to the north and west. It is now essential for Watlington that the commitment to this route is confirmed by HCA. The WNDP is based on development which provides an alternative route for through traffic and this is the Plan which has received such strong public support.
   2. In addition to confirmation of the re-aligned route for the B4009, support is needed for the design and layout of the new section of highway. OCC has indicated that this is not currently on its list of priorities.
   3. Education: the uncertainty about future provision of secondary education in the area is very unsettling. Icknield Community College has a very strong presence in the town and is a very valuable resource, not just for education and sports facilities but also as a major employer in the town. The possible re-location of the school to Chalgrove would be a major loss to Watlington.
   4. Watlington has not had investment in sports facilities by local authorities and is not very well provided for. Part of the WNDP proposals are for improvements in facilities, especially with regard to the needs of a growing community. High standard, new facilities at Chalgrove would be likely to draw funding away from Watlington and concentrate provision away from the town. The Watlington economy depends on people coming into the town for activities and then spending money in local shops, and food outlets etc.
   5. The future of the Watlington economy is also a concern if a new commercial centre is located in Chalgrove. At present, Watlington serves as the local centre for services and facilities and depends on visitors to spend money in the town. The majority of customers for the shops are ‘out of town’. A survey of the use of the public car park found that people come into Watlington from over 90 different locations. High Street shops and businesses are working hard to attract increased numbers of customers. Competition from a larger, new centre at Chalgrove is likely to have a very damaging impact.
   6. Health provision: the Chiltern Surgery has indicated that, at the current level of proposed development, the surgery has the capacity to meet the forecast need.
   7. Summary: Watlington could be very adversely affected by the development at Chalgrove Airfield. It could face the loss of valued institutions like the Icknield Commnity College together with the loss of employment opportunities at the school. New shops and sports facilities at Chalgrove could draw people to the new town with the consequent loss of business to Watlington. Chalgrove could replace Watlington as a local centre for services and facilities which currently enable Watlington and surrounding communities to be socially and economically sustainable.
4. **Moving forward:**
   1. Watlington needs to be able to submit the WNDP to SODC as soon as possible. The Plan will only carry weight when it gets to the Examination stage. Planning applications on sites which are not in the Plan could undermine the integrity of the Plan. One such application has already been lodged with SODC.
   2. HCA proposals for infrastructure are fundamental to the WNDP. Intensive discussions are ongoing between HCA and OCC and outcomes are expected in the coming months..
   3. Another meeting will be scheduled with Watlington as soon as further information is available. This could be as early as the end of July.

Notes taken by T. Bindoff