



## Meeting Report

**Organisation / project:** Homes and Communities Agency (HCA), Chalgrove Airfield

**Meeting Date:** 28 November 2017

**Meeting with:** Watlington NDP Group and Parish Council, officers from South Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council, Pyrton Parish Council, and representatives from Archstone/Bloor, Providence Land and Victoria Land

**Location:** The Watlington Club, 20 High St, Watlington OX49 5PY

**Attendees:** Gareth Adam (HCA), Ken Glendinning (HCA), Kate McBride (HCA), Chris Carter (AECOM), Max Goode (Carter Jones), Douglas Johnson (Newgate Communications), Gill Bindoff (WNPDG), Peter Richardson (WNPDG), Cllr Ian Hill (Watlington Parish Council) Cllr Anna Badcock (South Oxfordshire District Council), Jonathan Porter (Archstone/Bloor), Matthew Gough (Archstone/Bloor), David Joseph (Bloor), Max Thurgood (Clarke Bond), Jonathan Harbottle (Providence Land), Robert Wickham (Howard Sharp & Partners), Jeremy Emmerson (Providence Land), Del Tester (Origin Consultants), Sarah Halsey (Origin Consultants), Jakes Coker (James Coker Ltd), Giles Brockbank (Hunter Page Ltd), Jenny Hutchings (Victoria Land), Mike Brain (Glanville), Chris Thompson (Beechcroft Developments Ltd), Cllr John Curtis (Pyrton Parish Council), Jason Sherwood (Oxfordshire County Council), Holly Jones (South Oxfordshire District Council), James Gagg (South Oxfordshire District Council)

### 1. HCA Update/purpose of meeting

Ken Glendinning (KG) welcomed attendees to the meeting, and those present introduced themselves.

KG provided an update on behalf of the HCA:

- In the recent Budget, the Government announced a significant investment in new homes – including an increase of £8 billion in funding for the HCA. It will change its name, and become more interventionist – supporting partners, ensuring projects and developments happen when they need to, unlocking stalled sites and removing barriers to delivery. Regarding South Oxfordshire, there are known challenges in terms of undersupply. This area is identified as very important in Budget as part of the Oxford-Cambridge corridor. However, this needs housing growth. The Neighbourhood Plan is coming at a good time to make the best of this funding.
- At Chalgrove Airfield, the HCA is in ongoing discussions with Martin Baker and therefore cannot comment on these in detail.
- Gareth Adam (GA) noted that the HCA set out its commitment to the Watlington Edge Road predicated on development coming forward at Chalgrove Airfield. This was set out in a letter to South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) in August 2017. It subsequently met with Watlington Parish Council (WPC) and Watlington Neighbourhood Plan Development Group (WNPDG) on 10/10/17.



There was discussion around the HCA's proposals for Chalgrove Airfield:

- David Joseph (DJ) asked about the HCA's application timescales. KG set out that the HCA needs clarity on its discussions with Martin Baker and the level of infrastructure required before moving forward. He anticipates preparing an application in early 2018.
- Chris Thompson (CT) asked whether the HCA needed the edge road to deliver development at Chalgrove Airfield. Chris Carter (CC) said the HCA sees the edge road as a strategic priority for the whole area and the Local Plan, and that everyone at the table needed or would benefit from the edge road to one degree or another.

There was discussion around the need for the edge road:

- Jason Sherwood (JS) noted that Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) believes that the edge road is only required in the Local Plan because of proposed development at Chalgrove Airfield.
- It was agreed that the meeting would work on the basis that the edge road would be required to mitigate development at Chalgrove Airfield; this is why the HCA has made a funding commitment.
- Cllr Anna Badcock (AB) argued that for local people, the delivery of the edge road is required because of all of the development coming forward in Watlington and the surrounding area. Gill Bindoff (GB) underlined this, saying that the edge road was fundamental to local people's confidence in the Neighbourhood Plan.

KG set out that the purpose of meeting is to discuss in detail the provision of the edge road, how it can be delivered, and how those present could support the Watlington Neighbourhood Plan Delivery Group (WNPDG) to deliver this.

## **2. Specification of Edge Road**

JS introduced the specification of the edge road. He highlighted the need for consistency between each section, and that the road meets OCC's standards if it is to be part of its network. He noted the specification on the table was a starting point for discussion.

Del Tester (DT) set out that one of the key issues was degree of DMRB compliance, and how strict OCC was minded to be. JS noted that OCC would use DMRB, potentially with relaxations and/or departures, if it was delivering the road itself, and that the degree of compliance required depends on the purpose of the edge road. He asked whether it was to take traffic out of Watlington, to send traffic around Watlington, or to have a series of linked estate roads. AB reiterated that the road must be one which takes traffic out of the centre of Watlington, and therefore it cannot be difficult to navigate.

DT asked if the way forward would be for developers to put something to JS for comment. JS agreed, but noted he did not want to see numerous separate plans. For this reason, the process



would need someone leading it. He also noted the need to talk about functionality as well as standards. DJ noted that Archstone/Bloor has already made significant progress, and proposed that technical leads from the landowners and HCA come together to come up with a set of parameters to put to OCC.

**ACTION: Technical representatives from the landowner teams and the HCA to agree a date to meet with JS to discuss what needs to be done and technical delivery. The output should be parameter plans for the full route.**

There was discussion about local priorities for the edge road:

- AB highlighted the importance of knowing whether the road would be built as houses were delivered, or beforehand. KG noted this would be discussed as part of delivery.
- GB noted that Watlington is in a rural area, and that the edge road should not differ entirely from what it joins. KG agreed that it was important to be mindful of sensitive areas on either side of the road. JS stated that it was important that the design of the road did not result in future capacity problems, citing issues at Cuxham, and therefore there was a need to design to accommodate traffic flows.
- John Curtis (JC1) highlighted the potential impact that exists on historical sites and the integrity of the parish of Pyrton. He shared plans showing this with those attending.

**ACTION: to consider the plans circulated by JC as part of the next stage of work, and for any similar issues to be raised with OCC.?**

DT asked whether OCC would like to see footways set back from the edge of the road or adjacent to the carriageway. JS did not express a strong preference, but AB stated it would be preferable to support walking and cycling through design, which was agreed around the table. GB noted that it would be good to see verges and trees. Robert Wickham (RW) cited Camborne as a good example.

### **3. Delivery arrangements**

KG set out that there was an opportunity for the three landowner representatives present to provide an update.

Archstone/Bloor provided the following update:

- Jonathan Porter (JP) set out that Archstone/Bloor submitted a planning application in December. This has been informed by extensive pre-application discussions with WNPDG, SODC, OCC and the HCA. The layout submitted reflects those discussions.
- It is a hybrid application (183 homes and 650m<sup>2</sup> employment), although only the employment element is in outline. The detail includes about three quarters of the length of the alternative route from Britwell Road to Cuxham Road. The remainder is safeguarded through a legal agreement. This would be made available when the proposals to the north are known in more detail.



- DJ confirmed that Archstone/Bloor would make land available on demand for OCC or its nominee to bring forward that section. It is a large piece of land which would accommodate a range of solutions. There is a firm commitment not to prejudice what comes further on, and the detailed layout and specification of the future alternative route has been designed with that in mind.
- JP highlighted that Archstone/Bloor are aware of the need for the edge road to be sympathetic to Watlington.
- In terms of timescales, Archstone/Bloor are hoping for the application to be determined in early 2018, start on site in 2019, and be finished construction by 2022. They anticipate delivering the infrastructure from Britwell Road up.
- AB noted that local people would want to know what would happen to new traffic in the meantime. Ian Hall (IH) said he thought it was likely to go along Pyrton Road. DJ said this was a subject for discussion, and that there was potential for an intermediate link solution.
- JS undertook that OCC would respond to the application by the end of the week, and said it would want to understand how the road would come out of the site and the timeframe for that. JP said that Archstone/Bloor has shown as much detail as possible at this stage in the application.
- Max Thurgood (MT) noted that this includes a case for the site working as a standalone development as well as one which facilitates the edge road.

Providence Land provided the following update:

- RW set out that Providence Land promotes rather than builds sites, and wants to see them come forward as soon as possible. He noted that it controls PYR2 and Sites B and C in the Watlington Neighbourhood Plan.
- At PYR2, there is an application for 100 homes, plus the necessary roads. Providence Land anticipates reserving and making available the next stretch to link up to sites B and C. It hopes to get consent early in 2018, with a view to moving the site on by the end of 2018.
- It has promotion agreements for sites B and C, and will bring forward applications for a total of around 120 new homes shortly.
- RW set out that he felt that a high-standard edge road was essential, and that Providence Land was committed to bringing it forward as soon as possible so that it was in place before the majority of occupations. Providence Land is open to suggestions on the best way to achieve this.
- Jonathan Harbottle (JH) noted there was clearly a funding point around the stub parts, as developers can only fund elements relating to their scheme under S106. Providence Land has designed its scheme in line with this principle.
- JH also highlighted a desire to avoid over-engineering. JS responded that OCC wanted to ensure that the design of the road was adequate and would not cause problems further down the line. There is a certain quantum of development around Watlington which can be gotten away with as present. However, none of those parcels can work in isolation; they need each other. However, it will be about who comes forward first and uses the



spare capacity first. KG agreed and noted this point would require close working in the next few weeks.

- KG asked whether the promotion agreements would provide the opportunity to recover early expenditure. RW said that in practical terms, the cost of that part of the road which is directly related to Providence Land's developments would be shared between the builder, the landowner and the promoter.
- KG asked about delivery timescales, and whether these would match Archstone/Bloor's. RW said that generally Providence Land needed to add 3-6 months to its timescales to find a development partner, when compared with a housebuilder. This would mean construction finished around 2023.
- AB said it would be helpful to accelerate the process of finding a delivery partner to help provide certainty to local people. JH undertook to look at this.
- James Coker (JC) said it was worth noting that different sites in this control can come forward at different times. Site B is only 60 homes and could be finished by 2020, including that section of the road. B&C can both bring forward roads in their parts quickly.
- DT said that the easiest way for this to happen would be a forward funding agreement which developers then paid back. JH said that Providence Land would be willing to transfer the land for the corridor for a pound if this provided reassurance.
- JS felt this was paring the issue down too much. It is not just about funding or design – there is no certainty that any one site will come forward. JC responded that the WNDP has identified sites which will help deliver a much needed road. If OCC argues this is not necessary, it is being obstructive.
- JS noted that OCC's role was to manage risk. If one of the sites did not come forward, there would be a gap in delivery. OCC's role is to ensure that there is a mitigation strategy that can actually be delivered.
- JC1 provided Pyrton Parish Council's view that new homes would have an impact on the AONB and historical sites. JH did not accept this view, but argued it was not the proper forum to discuss them.

Victoria Land provided the following update:

- Giles Brockbank (GB) set out that the site in question was what is known as the MOD site (PYR1). Victoria Land is working towards submission by the end of 2017. It has consulted with Pyrton Neighbourhood Plan Development Group (PNPDG) and WNPDG, and with local people.
- It would be an assisted care living application, led by Beechcroft but with Sanctuary looking to run the care home. Sanctuary currently operates in Watlington and has identified a need for more bed space.
- In terms of delivery, Victoria Land feels there is potential for a safeguarded route to allow the road to come through its land. It does not want to be prescriptive in terms of detail, and would look to work with other's timescales, subject to consent.
- CT noted that Victoria Land was not proposing a road at this time. The land it thinks will be needed is outside of the planning application, as it does not rely on it for its proposals – it



would make the land available. This means there would be no need for a recovery mechanism, as the road will not come across the site.

- DJ questioned what CT meant by making the land available. CT noted that this would depend on what happened with other landowners, and that it could be a separate planning application.
- KG asked whether it would be made available for a pound, as with Providence Land's commitments. CT said he could not commit to this at that time.
- CC asked whether Victoria Land's assessment of whether it needed the edge road for the site to come forward included traffic impacts on Watlington Town Centre when combined with the other sites. MB stated that it would generate a low number of car trips. Jenny Hutchings (JH1) noted there is a path, and that there would also be a minibus service.

#### 4. Delivery next steps

KG summarised that there are a number of sites with different characteristics, but the important discussion was about the delivery of the edge road. There are a number of parties that can come together to agree what needs to be done in terms of a coordinated approach.

There was discussion around options to give WNPDG certainty:

- One of these would be to make the land available for the road and gift it to councils. Archstone/Bloor and Providence Land felt this was worth further discussion, but Victoria Land was not able to commit on the same basis. DJ noted that one of the parties behaving commercially in this regard would change the nature of the discussion.
- CT explained that Victoria Land does not oppose outright this approach, but that landowners needed to satisfy themselves about the commerciality of the approach. He would rather have this discussion before moving through an expensive design exercise.
- KG highlighted a need for this to happen quickly to allow design work to take place in the required timeframe, and asked how soon it could be done.

**ACTION: landowners to meet to discuss commercials. There is no need for the HCA to attend this. This will be followed by a technical meeting once unity of purpose on how land coming forward is achieved with a view towards moving towards a Memorandum of Understanding.**

Holly Jones (HJ) said that South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) sees this discussion as an opportunity for Watlington. There is a finite capacity for traffic without this road, and that will lead to planning permissions being refused if it does not come forward. It is fortunate that the HCA's involvement means there is more opportunity for the road than not. There was a need to find a solution which works to deliver the road which everyone around the table could agree to.

There was discussion around the desired outcome from the proposed meeting on technical issues:



- DJ set out that he thought the outcome of the technical discussion should be parameters. DT thought this should go further. JS stated that he felt that a parameter plan would go a long way to ensuring that OCC can provide in principal agreement.
- MT confirmed that once technical discussions had taken place, the parties involved would need to consult their clients on the outcome.
- KG noted that the HCA would contribute to this by coordinating and bring the plans together to allow the county to respond in a coordinated way.

**ACTION: to meet early in the New year to recap on these actions**

GB welcomed this, and said it would be especially helpful if this discussion could coincide with the six week consultation on the Watlington Neighbourhood Plan. IH felt it would help provide certainty to local people about the deliverability of the Neighbourhood Plan.

**5. AOB**

GB drew attention to Watlington Traffic Management Plan leaflet on the table. WNPDG will be holding a session on this on 3/2/18 and it would be good to be able to report back on progress at that point.

GB asked whether, given the HCA's wider role outlined by Government recently, it would be able to fund the edge road if development did not come forward at Chalgrove Airfield. KG set out that if the scheme failed, the Government has released funding for growth in Oxfordshire, but it is for OCC to allocate that funding. JS stated that OCC will indeed have access to such money, anticipated to include £150m of infrastructure, £60m AH and £5m capacity funding and is working on a delivery plan. The delivery plan is targeted for January..

GB asked about timescales for development at Chalgrove Airfield. KG said the HCA was preparing to submit a planning application early in 2018, pending discussions with Martin Baker.

Peter Richardson (PR) asked whether it was realistic to say whether the road could come first and the houses afterwards. This is a key point given the potential impact of construction traffic. KG did not think discussions had reached that level of phasing scrutiny yet.