

**COMMENTS ON DRAFT WATLINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN****1. General comment**

1.1. The document is carefully thought-out and logically presented. The team should be congratulated on an excellent job, notwithstanding the points raised in section 2 below.

**2. Specific points about the document itself rather than the principles**

2.1. Appendix A lists several sources used in the body of the document. It would be an improvement for every statement in the document that relied upon one of these sources to be appropriately footnoted in the text. That way, readers can determine easily the source of any given statement and therefore better assess its value.

2.2. On page 16 reference is made to rare and precious chalk streams; this is not necessarily disputed but we should know whether it is the view of those writing the document or whether it derives from some objective source.

2.3. On page 16 it is stated that the Marlbrook estate was built in the 1980s but map 2 shows it as built since 2000.

2.4. On page 27 reference is made at point 3b in the shaded box to "map x"; should this be Map 8?

2.5. On page 27 reference is made at point 3e in the shaded box to "map x"; should this be Map 6?

2.6. On page 41 references to the hospital site and the park homes site are confused, ie each is identified as site D and site E, whereas fig 12 and map 10 show them as E and D respectively.

2.7. There may be other typos; a careful proof-reading would help.

**3. Substantive matters****3.1. Part A The Plan**

3.1.1. I support the plan in principle, but subject to the essential provisos about the route of the relief road and the links with Pyrton Lane. See para 3.2.2 below.

**3.2. Part B The Policies**

3.2.1. I support policy 1.

3.2.2. I support policy 2 but with the following major caveats:

3.2.2.1. The proposed north west relief road will do nothing to relieve congestion along Brook Street caused by traffic to and from Henley.

3.2.2.2. I appreciate that the route of the relief road is only indicative but it runs through the middle of each of the three sites. That means some of the houses will be on the far side of what will be a very, very busy road. Good roads tend to generate additional traffic even when no additional housing or industry is created. In this case we have approximate 300 extra houses in Watlington alone; the proposed Chalgrove airfield development would generate even more traffic that would use the relief road to get to and from both the M40 and Reading. To oblige residents on the new sites to cross that road would be to expose them

to a major traffic hazard. Given that many of the residents may well be of school age that is unacceptable. Assurances of safe cycle and pedestrian routes and talk of areas outside the bypass being green spaces are simply glib words. The fact remains that accessing any land outside the bypass, whether to get home or to go and play or tend your allotment will be extremely dangerous. **The relief road must be the external limit of all housing and recreational land in sites A, B and C.**

3.2.2.3. The plan states at page 35 that the new housing should not begin until after construction of the relief road has started to the agreed timetable. That is unacceptable. Timetables slip, despite agreements and the house-building process will itself generate additional traffic. **The relief road should be finished and opened before house building starts.**

3.2.2.4. The plan states at page 41 that there should be some link between Pyrton Lane and the new relief road. It is certainly desirable that the new houses should be linked to the existing parts of the town, and not built as ghettos with the only access facing away from the town on a main road (as the Marlbrook estate is). But why is the only access limited to area B? Why do areas A and C have no such direct access? Or is it intended that areas C and B link internally with area B and access Pyrton Lane that way? Whichever is correct, Pyrton Lane is entirely unsuitable as a link road for motor vehicles; it is narrow, without a footpath for part of its length and has two blind right-angles corners. Those defects cannot be rectified without detriment to those houses fronting the lane or to the Marlbrook houses that back on to it or to the Icknield playing fields. This is clear from traffic which was diverted along Pyrton Lane when Brook Street was closed a while ago and which (with the tacit acceptance by Oxfordshire County Council who have recently speeded up traffic by drastically trimming hedges) has gleefully adopted the road as a permanent rat-run to avoid congestion in the town centre. **Pyrton Lane should not be forced to accept extra motor vehicle traffic.**

3.2.2.5. A preferable solution would be to terminate Pyrton Lane at its junction with St Leonard's Close and provide dedicated cycle and pedestrian access from there to areas A, B and C. This would allow people to access the town via St Leonard's Close and the alley north of St Leonard's church. And if the lower (south west) portion of Pyrton Lane could be realigned to allow a continuation of the existing footpath (by using CIL or s106 money) and rectify a defect that was permitted when the Pyrton Lane houses were built, that would be even better.

3.2.3. I support policy 3.

3.2.4. I support policy 4.

3.2.5. I support policy 5, provided that the additional industry provision is small scale, does not impinge upon housing (whether existing or proposed) and is severely restricted as to the size and weight of vehicular access; the Cuxham Road industrial estate has had the unintended, though surely not unforeseen, consequence of allowing large vehicles to congest and pollute the town centre.

3.2.6. I support policy 6, in particular:



- 3.2.6.1. An improved bus service to Oxford
- 3.2.6.2. A proper large-scale car-park and integrated bus station at the M40 junction
- 3.2.6.3. Improved sports facilities – a swimming pool and gym along the line of that at Thame would be ideal (CIL/s106 funding?)

3.3. Part C Environmental Report

3.3.1. I have no comment on the environment report.