

WOKINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL

RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION ON THE DRAFT INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERY AND CONTRIBUTIONS SPD

| Subject | Reference | WTC Comment |
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| General Comment | N/A | <p>Wokingham Town Council broadly agrees with WBC development strategy, where projected housing numbers are no greater than the average of the past 20 years; it notes that control of development will enable developers' contributions to fund infrastructure to a substantially greater degree than has been achieved previously. However, it has concerns on the actual infrastructure proposed, its phasing, and a number of points as contained in the following text.</p> <p>Section 4.11.2 of the Approved Local Development Scheme states that priority will be given to <i>"the identification of sites to meet the housing requirement for the borough after 2006 including the rolling five and fifteen year requirements of PPS3"</i>. In our view there cannot be any purpose to this until there is commitment to an adequate and acceptable infrastructure around Wokingham Town to support and sustain the proposed housing development, particularly in the proposed North and South Wokingham SDLs.</p> <p>Wokingham Town Council supports the principle of the North and South Wokingham SDLs, but believes that it is essential to have an adequately thought out and overarching plan to prevent congestion in the Town, not just until 2026, but for a further 15 years beyond. With a further forecast 1.35 cars per household in this area, it is essential that the Highways infrastructure is planned by WBC and the projected road layouts concreted into the SDLs and not left to the developers to negotiate or indeed to finance totally. This needs forward vision which can only be provided by WBC. Wokingham Town Council wants to see effective relief roads around the perimeter of these developments so as not to force traffic into the town but to give an opportunity for traffic from the new developments to bypass the town and the new settlements. There is no commitment to these roads.</p> |
| Introduction | Section 1.7 (page 4) | <p>This document does not fulfil the stated aim which is <i>".. to provide for the delivery of the necessary infrastructure to support the four SDLs and to ensure the proper phasing of this infrastructure."</i> It is long on ideas and aspiration but short of detail, implementation dates and costs. It leaves too much for the developer both to pay for and negotiate with WBC, rather than detailing the major infrastructure framework. Moreover it fails to answer any of the points raised</p> |

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| | | in our previous comment on the draft Infrastructure SDL submitted in March 2010. |
| Section 106 Agreements | Section 6.13 (page 17) | It is not acceptable to state that <i>“the final phasing, timing, funding and construction details of infrastructure is complex and will need to be worked up during pre-application discussions, and is not covered in depth within this SPD.”</i> There needs to be some outline of infrastructure needs to avoid developers claiming at a later and critical stage that the development is not viable with the proposed S106 requirements. |
| Other Consents | Section 6.19 (page 18) | This section acknowledges that various elements will require other consents and that these will be pre-requisites of infrastructure delivery required for development of the SDLs. The Core Strategy and this SPD regularly refer to an “overarching” Transport Policy. Currently, LTP3 makes no attempt to forecast the desired mix and volume of public and private transport. It is therefore hard to see how the infrastructure requirements can be defined. |
| NORTH WOKINGHAM | | |
| Transport Infrastructure | Table 3 (page 48) | <p>The infrastructure for North Wokingham seems to be based on two flawed premises – an Ashridge Interchange (but only with two slip roads towards Bracknell) and a partial Northern Relief road.</p> <p>The partial Northern Relief Road route is not agreed and there is to date no provision for this to be built. It should be stated precisely when work will start on an interchange, where it will be, who will obtain “planning permission” and the cost before developers’ planning permissions and Section 106 agreements. Two way access onto the A329(M) needs to be re-assessed, considering relocation of the junction and de-classification of the A329(M). Not all of the 1.35 forecast vehicles per household will only want to access the motorway eastwards. Provision of the Northern Distributor road, as per the Core Strategy CP21, should be in place prior to any North Wokingham development so that the construction traffic does not have to pass through an already overloaded Norreys estate or the restricted and already congested roads of Emmbrook. This should be classed as a relief road on the outskirts of, and <i>not through</i>, the development. There is no mention of widening of, or improvements to, Coppid Beech roundabout, which should be the start of both the Northern and Southern relief roads. There are no upgrades to, widening of or junction improvements to existing roads (as per CP21).</p> |
| Park & Ride at Coppid Beech | Table 3 | The need for the Park & Ride is not spelled out. If it is solely for access to Reading, it offers little to Wokingham residents vs. an improved rail link. If it is intended to provide buses into central |

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| | (page 50) | Wokingham, there is little likelihood of it being used by residents of either Wokingham or Bracknell, and buses will thus clog the centre of Wokingham for no reason. A clear strategy, with strong evidence of demand, is needed. |
| Education | Table 3 (page 51) | <p>Insufficient consideration has been given to education as no school sites or sizes have been identified. It raises the question as to whether Infrastructure or housing build trajectory should lead; in fact the two need to go hand-in-hand at the early stage of strategic planning. It is too late to leave decisions “of suitable sites” until Planning applications.</p> <p>A new primary School location should be agreed so as to minimise the need for school runs. If central government constraints preclude a replacement secondary school for Emmbrook within the Emmbrook Ward (subject to further consultation), then provision must be made for safe walking or cycling routes to and from St Crispin’s, and consideration needs to be given to increased congestion on the London Road at school delivery and collection times where in the morning the road is shown to be already over capacity.</p> |
| Social and Community | Table 3 (page 53) | <p>On the basis that <i>“Housing trajectory indicates by 2015 circa 850 dwellings will be delivered from North Wokingham SDL”</i>, a roads infrastructure network should be agreed now. When will the Infrastructure Business Case for option 1 and option 2 be finally prepared and available? When will the promised revised traffic modelling reports be available? Recommendations may well need to be included in this SPD.</p> <p>In the Core Strategy, there was provision for a Health Centre or upgrading of existing. Where is it? This SPD has downgraded the Health Centre to <i>“Possible provision of GP surgery as part of new multi use centre or contribution to upgrading existing GP surgeries”</i>. Where are these surgeries that can be upgraded? The trend in forward-looking authorities is to have Health Centres where there are ancillary medical services not undertaken by GPs, eg chiropody, ultrasound, counselling etc. The Government is seeking to devolve many functions from major hospitals to local communities. Please reinstate a Health Centre as a requirement not just a possibility, and consider including a community centre. Both would substantially reduce off site journeys.</p> |
| SOUTH WOKINGHAM | | |
| Transport Infrastructure | Table 4 (page 60) | The provision of a Southern Relief Road (which with the current proposal for the Buckhurst Farm development would now be more aptly named a Southern Distributor Road) is essential. The route should be finalised by the Highways authority and costings known before any |

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| | | <p>developer's applications are considered, so that the community at large is assured that a road will be built. This should NOT go through the Southern development, but should be a Relief or Ring Road from the Coppid Beech roundabout to the Finchampstead Road, with limited access to it from roads on the development. This will give access for site traffic and cut down on the traffic on London Road which is already under pressure and, at peak times, over capacity. It will also allow HGVs to avoid the town centre to a greater degree, without passing along inappropriate roads in the new development. There will still be a need for Buckhurst Boulevard for local traffic and access to the centre of Wokingham.</p> <p>What is the position with the rail bridges, and the A321 Molly Millars Lane junction? These schemes should be in place and costed and not left to developers to instigate. There is nothing concrete in this SPD, only concepts.</p> <p>Please spell out what is meant by <i>"consideration will be given to the linkages between interim improvements needed by the North Wokingham SDL."</i></p> <p>We do not consider it adequate to say that <i>"Prior to the granting of any consent the mechanism for the delivery of off-site infrastructure, including any separate planning consent, will need to be in place in accordance with agreed phasing."</i> These consents should be in place for the community to know what is going to happen and to allow the developer to plan around these fundamentals. Could we please see, contribute to and agree the business cases for the Southern Relief Road and Road Over Rail bridges?</p> |
| Education | Table 4 (page 64) | Please see our comments on the North Wokingham SDL. Primary School position and size should surely be agreed before Planning Applications. Forward estimates should be available for Secondary school numbers. Is it desirable and practical to increase considerably the size of St Crispin's School? |
| Social and Community | Table 4 (page 65) | Please see our comments on the North and South Wokingham SDLs. We think modern Health Care complexes should be provided, preferably on the same sites as a community centres. Logically, they should be included in shopping parades to minimise vehicle movements. |
| Affordable Housing | Table 4 (page 67) | If a provision of 60 units of extra care housing is required for the North Wokingham SDL (1500 dwellings) then more units will be required here (2500 dwellings). This whole section has been copied from the North Wokingham "Specification" without consideration for increased numbers. |
| TOWN CENTRE | | |

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| <p>Transport Infrastructure</p> | | <p>In his report on the Core Strategy, the Inspector noted: “The existing level crossing by the station is an acknowledged constraint that would be extremely difficult and expensive to improve” – should we consider a South-Western Relief Road, for example roughly along the line of Smith’s Walk? Whilst this would be considered undesirable to a proportion of residents in Evendons and Emmbrook Wards, it would satisfy a larger number of people who consider current proposals are still unworkable in the area of the station.</p> <p>With the increased traffic likely from the Town Centre regeneration and the building of the Southern Relief Road, terminating at the start of Molly Millar’s Lane, more traffic will use Wellington Road. This road is at the present inadequate, and has only one narrow dangerous footpath. It is visually unattractive and a pedestrian unfriendly route from the station to the town centre. WBC could, even at this late stage, change this, plant the trees on this route as shown on the Town Centre Regeneration plans, by widening the road. This could be done by rescinding/ altering the planning permission given for the cricket ground to give a slightly wider road with pavements on both sides of the road. WBC own the land from the level crossing roundabout up to Park Road. They could reduce the size of the proposed building in the Town plan in this situation and widen the road here. This would leave approx 100m between private houses and Cantley Lodge Hotel which would need CPOs to give width to complete the road widening. This would give an attractive road to and from the station and also provide a safe pavement for mothers with prams and toddlers and wheelchair users. (The alternative is to make Wellington Road one way to provide a safe pedestrian and tree lined route.) Ignoring Wellington Road now, by not widening it whilst still possible, will condemn it to be a scruffy unappealing and dangerous pedestrian access from the station to the Town Centre.</p> |
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