

Wootton (Abingdon) Parish Council Comments on Local Plan 2031 Part 1

Wootton Parish Council has considered the radically changed Vale of White Horse District Council Local Plan 2031 Part 1 in the very short consultation time available (it should be noted that a parish council's ability to assess the proposal is made almost impossible by the daunting task of reviewing thousands of pages of on-line material of which only a small percentage is relevant to the specific proposal). The Plan envisages a major development of 200 houses (Wootton East) on Lamborough Hill just south of Home Close.

The Parish Council recognises the need for the VWHDC to identify sites for additional housing across the District and in principle has no objection to some development in Wootton to help meet this need; the proposed development for 64 properties at Wootton Business Park was supported, in principle, by the Parish Council.

The Parish Council considers, however, that the site identified in the Plan is not the most suitable for development. The site embraces prime agricultural land overlooking probably the most scenic views in the village towards Boars Hill. Developing the site would damage the green space open to the community. This is borne out by the Vale of White Horse District Council's own landscape assessment in the site study which states that the site is not suitable for more than 50 properties which would need to be in the North West corner of the site. The Landscape visual sensitivity report points out that there would be a loss of the panoramic view from Lamborough Hill to Boars Hill and rates visual sensitivity as Medium/High. A single development of such size in this location would seriously impact on the rural nature of the village.

The Parish Council believes that there are other sites in the village of much lower visual and agricultural amenity that together could meet the VWHDC development target for Wootton. Examples of this from the sites analysed in Appendix 26 would be WOOT 08 – Land West of Cumnor Road and WOOT 13 - Land North of Honeybottom Lane which together would produce the same number of properties as WOOT 14 Wootton East.

Green Belt

The Parish Council has concerns about the release of land from the Green Belt. The detailed review only appears to have been carried out on three sites two of which were deemed unsuitable for development (although still apparently released from the Green Belt) leaving the third site the only remaining option. The third site Wootton East being the site of highest visual amenity. Other sites on scrub land do not appear to have been assessed. The Parish Council has concerns about the methodology used in cherry picking individual sites of high visual beauty and understands there may be grounds for considering the review to be legally flawed.

Infrastructure

Any further development in Wootton would need to be accompanied by significant improvements to the infrastructure. Wootton is served by an inadequate bus service, primary school places are limited and at a premium. The B4017 is an overused B road as it provides a main route for through traffic from Oxford (Botley) and the A420 (Swindon, Faringdon) to Abingdon and to the A34. The proposed location of the site would require access from the B4017 near a known accident blackspot identified by the presence of a speed camera. Additionally there is an existing dangerous junction on the B4017 between Fox Lane/Honeybottom Lane in close proximity to the proposed site. These considerations would require considerable mitigation. Diluting any development throughout the village would assist in distributing any additional traffic generated throughout the village rather than concentrating it all at one known problem area.

Flood Risk

There have been several incidents of homes being flooded in the village. One of the locations where this has occurred is alongside the B4017 and was largely due to excessive run-off from Boars Hill after intensive rain. The proposed site suffers from run-off in a similar way. Housing development on the scale proposed is likely to exacerbate the problem; mitigation of this risk would again be considerable.

Conclusion

There is considerable opposition in the village to the proposed development and the Parish Council objects to the inclusion in the Plan of the development of this site.