

**Watlington Neighbourhood Development Plan
Hearing matters statements**



Terence O'Rourke Ltd on behalf of Pyrton Manor and the Beechwood Estates Company Ltd

February 2018

Session 1: The Proposed bypass of Watlington

What evidence underpins the proposal in the Plan for a Watlington bypass?

As explained in our representations in response to the Submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan, along with the appended representations prepared by Entrant, we question the evidence that underpins the proposal for a Watlington bypass.

The bypass is a strategic matter, crossing more than one parish. Its function and need should be justified strategically as part of the Local Plan process by the District Council.

The issues associated with a bypass have implications beyond the boundaries of Watlington, particularly in the neighbouring parishes of Pyrton and Shirburn. This includes economic, social and environment impacts on surrounding parishes, such as traffic, noise, light, air quality, landscape/visual, heritage/setting, biodiversity, employment, etc.

To date no conclusive evidence or rationale has been published to suggest that a bypass is appropriate or necessary, compared with alternative options. This should be resolved at a strategic level via the Local Plan process before it is progressed via the Neighbourhood Plan. Of particular relevance, a report published by CPRE in March 2017 actually found that road schemes can induce rather than reduce traffic.

Would the combination of the three proposed housing allocations and the bypass represent sustainable development?

No. As explained in our representations, it appears that the proposed housing allocations have been selected as they would contribute towards bringing forward the bypass proposal, without a wide-ranging assessment of the sustainability implications at the neighbourhood and district level.

There are various references in the Plan (para 2.6/WNDP10) to earlier proposals to use Willow Close and the access road to the Watlington Industrial Estate as the western part of a bypass for the town. Does this route have any status and/or is it safeguarded?

To be addressed by others.



How will the proposed route be delivered in general terms? Is its delivery dependent on financial contributions from the emerging residential development at Chalgrove (as set out in the submitted South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2033) and/or from other sources of funding? In broad terms is the development of a bypass commercially viable?

As explained in our representations, the County, District or Parish Council has yet to demonstrate that the bypass is necessary and can be funded.

The bypass is not identified as a proposed transport scheme in the Local Transport Plan. Specific details regarding the funding sources for a bypass are yet to be disclosed by the District or County Council. It is understood that the delivery of the bypass is at least partly reliant on proposals for the redevelopment of Chalgrove Airfield coming forward. There is currently uncertainty surrounding the deliverability of these proposals.

The extent of land required to deliver a bypass is also not clear, or whether all land required is available or whether any land would need to be compulsorily purchased, which would add further delay and uncertainty. If Chalgrove Airfield does come forward, a bypass is likely to introduce significant additional vehicular movements through the narrow centre of Shirburn, with potential impacts on heritage assets located very close to the carriageway. It is also not clear how the 7.5 tonne weight restriction zone would be enforced.

Irrespective of other considerations, if it cannot be funded, it is not a deliverable proposal. If it is not deliverable then it should not be in the Neighbourhood Plan.

What discussions have taken place between public bodies and potential site developers of the sites proposed in the submitted Plan to ensure a co-ordinated approach towards its design and delivery? Has an appropriate technical standard been determined?

It is clear that discussions regarding the bypass proposal have not been joined-up. Oxfordshire County Council has raised concerns about the bypass proposal, including questioning whether it is required. It therefore does not appear that the County Council has been involved – or fully involved – in discussions regarding the proposal.

This is worrying given that the County Council is the Highways Authority for the District. We re-emphasise that a bypass proposal is more appropriately considered at a strategic plan making level both in terms of case of need and design.

When is it anticipated that the bypass (within the NP area) will be delivered?

As explained in our representations, based on the current proposal, the bypass cannot be delivered solely within Watlington. It requires land within the parish of Pyrton (PYR1 and PYR2).



The bypass is clearly a cross-boundary matter. It would be inappropriate for the views of neighbouring parishes and their residents (particularly Pyrton and Shirburn) – along with the potential impacts on these areas – not to be taken into account. There is a lack of democratic accountability in the current approach.

The view that all those affected by the proposal should be able to vote on the Neighbourhood Plan at referendum is given by the County Council, as set out in their representations on the Submission version.

The delivery of the bypass is also predicated on not only the three proposed housing allocations in the Watlington Neighbourhood Plan coming forward at the same time, but also sites within Pyrton. Of particular relevance, PYR2 – a significant area of land within Pyrton required to deliver a bypass – is proposed as a local gap in the Pyrton Neighbourhood Plan that was submitted on 12 February 2018 for examination. This gap provides a vital role in preventing the coalescence of Pyrton and Watlington and conserving their separate identities and settings.

Are any measures being pursued by public bodies to secure the connection of the proposed Watlington bypass to the B4009 to the east of the neighbourhood area (in Pyrton parish)?

To be addressed by others. However, no consultation by public bodies has taken place with the neighbouring parishes of Pyrton or Shirburn.

What would be the likely impact of the proposed new developments (Sites A/B/C) on the free and safe flow of traffic in the town before an effective bypass of Watlington is developed?

If the bypass is pursued, it could be many years before it is fully operational. There is also no guarantee that all three sites can be delivered at the same time – or in sequence – without significant delays, which could cause long term disruption.

It must be remembered that land for a bypass has only been safeguarded as part of the draft Local Plan, which itself has yet to be submitted or examined. It is not an allocated proposal and it is therefore unlikely that consideration has been given to how it could come forward and how the surrounding road network will be affected.

This is a significant shortcoming in the proposal for a bypass in the Neighbourhood Plan and reconfirms the view that it is too soon for it to proceed when the evidence and rationale behind a bypass is yet to be fully developed, considered and tested.



What would be the likely impacts of the proposed scale of development on traffic levels along Pyrton Lane (with or without a bypass)? What impact will any changes in traffic levels have on the character of Pyrton Lane?

It is acknowledged that Watlington has a housing requirement as set out in the emerging Local Plan that it is required to plan for to meet the future needs of the town. However, the selection of housing sites must have regard to the potential impact on the local environment.

As set out in our representations, the areas around Watlington are very sensitive and contain a number of nationally significant heritage and landscape designations, as well as having a distinctive local character. An increase in traffic would adversely impact upon the character of Pyrton Lane, as well as the setting of both Pyrton, Shirburn and Watlington and their respective assets.

Session 2: The proposed housing allocations

Can the proposed housing allocations be sensitively incorporated within the neighbourhood area in general, and its surrounding agricultural landscape in particular? Do they take account of the Chiltern Hills AONB to the south and east of the town?

As explained in our representations, it appears that the three proposed housing allocations have been selected ahead of other potential sites, principally because of their ability to contribute land towards a bypass and assist in bringing it forward.

The three sites would introduce a significant amount of development clustered together along the western edge of Watlington. They have the potential to create a separate ‘new’ community that is not well related to or integrated with the existing built form in the town.

It is the view of Pyrton Manor and the Beechwood Estates Company Ltd that both individually and cumulatively the three sites have the potential to adversely impact upon the Chiltern Hills AONB, as well as the immediate and surrounding landscape in general. Any harm would likely be compounded by the addition of a bypass around Watlington, which forms part of each of the proposed housing allocations. The proposed allocations should also be considered alongside the live application for up to 100 new homes at land off Pyrton Lane (ref. P16/S2576/O).

The proposals at Chalgrove Airfield will have a bearing on Watlington (including the proposed allocations) in terms of education provision and health services. The former is raised by the County Council in its representations on the Submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan. In short, they explain that the impacts of the redevelopment of Chalgrove Airfield on the town cannot currently be confirmed. It is therefore possible that a review of the proposed allocations and land availability in the town will be required.



Can the three sites be satisfactorily incorporated into the design, layout and townscape of Watlington? Do they take account of heritage assets?

As explained above, there is a risk that a large quantum of new development in one part of the town will struggle to integrate with the existing built form.

In addition, little appreciation is given to the proximity of Site C to the Grade II* listed Pyrton Manor, its 50 acres of historic parkland, and location within the Pyrton Conservation Area, or the Grade I listed Shirburn Castle, its Grade II* and Grade II listed buildings, and the Grade II listed Registered Park and Garden. As explained in our representations, Pyrton Manor and its parkland would be immediately contiguous with any development at Site C, while Shirburn Castle would be at the boundary of the proposed re-aligned route and in close proximity to Site C.

All that is noted in the Neighbourhood Plan is that any proposed development at Site 3 should provide “*a suitable buffer zone between housing development and the Pyrton Manor estate*”. There is no mention of the potential impacts of the proposed residential development alongside the proposed bypass, which have the potential to individually and cumulatively impact upon the setting of heritage assets in the local area, particularly in Watlington, Pyrton and Shirburn.

Would the development of Site A be compatible with the ongoing operation of existing businesses on the Watlington Industrial Estate?

To be addressed by others.

What is the current progress of planning application P17/S3231/0 on Site A?

To be addressed by others.

What is the anticipated timetable for the submission of planning applications on sites B and C?

To be addressed by others.