

Local Plan consultation - Marlow Society response

The Marlow Society's response to the District's draft Local Plan has been prepared by the Society's Planning Group in consultation with members. The advice given by planning officers in briefings during the last two years, most recently on 20th July, has been most helpful in understanding the many factors driving the need for substantial development in the Wycombe district.

Housing requirements

The original understanding that 300 houses were required post 2017, as indicated in the brochure distributed widely in Marlow, has now been clarified with a statement that the Plan is for the period 2013-2033 and so all housing completed since 1st April 2013, or for which planning permission has been approved, will count against the target of 300. Some 250 dwellings fall into these categories and there is an expectation that a further 50 will be approved as infill and redevelopment of existing sites. There is therefore no substantial need for any substantial re-categorisation of land as development sites.

We recognise that the figure of 300 is predicated on the ability of WDC to agree with other authorities that the Council's shortfall in development land will be met primarily in the Vale of Aylesbury. Should this not be possible it is understood that Marlow would be under pressure to provide up to a further 300 sites. This is why the Oak Tree Road option is included for consideration.

The Society notes the valuable analysis by Arup of the green belt surrounding the town. In particular this survey shows the strongest justification for the retention of the green belt because of the high level of compliance with the assessed purposes.

The Society recognises the good sense in the allocation of land at Seymour Court Road and Foxes Piece for additional housing. The redevelopment of Red Kite land at New Court is a much more sensitive issue and clarification is required showing exactly how 15 dwellings could be built there without these having an unacceptable impact on this tranquil location.

The reasons the Society rejects development at Oak Tree Road are:

- The proposed area is in green belt parcel 43b which has the highest rating in Arup's survey. No exceptional circumstances are presented to support use of green belt.
- Oak Tree Road is unsuitable as a feeder road. Car parking, particularly at the bottom, makes the road effectively single track.
- There would be intrusive visual impact on distant views of the skyline of Marlow.
- Development here would prevent building a northern by-pass to alleviate the congestion on the A4155 in Marlow.
- There would be an unquantified impact on the wide range of indigenous wildlife.

In the Society's view alternative land north of the A404/4155 roundabout (another developer proposal) offers a still unwelcome but far more suitable option for housing development. This area would offer:

- A single coherent development with no impact on the adjacent community.
- No impact on the flood plain.
- Excellent road access which would ensure that much of the traffic movement would have no impact on the town centre. Vehicular access may be provided with a redesigned Westthorpe roundabout and there exists good potential for connection to the Wiltshire Road / Wycombe Road roundabout.
- Parcel 43e has a lower green belt rating of 'medium' value on Arup's assessment.
- Public transport convenience with a bus route in Wiltshire Road and a level walk to the Station and to Globe Park employment.
- Extensive domestic development in the south east of Marlow alongside the by-pass has been successful in spite of proximity to the by-pass and the potential for noise nuisance (for example: Gossmore Walk, Gossmore Lane, Firview Close and Wiltshire Road).

Marlow Society would like to see support in the Plan for the building of a balanced stock of housing that meets the needs of all parts of our community. We need starter homes, maisonettes and affordable family homes. We need shared ownership housing. At Portlands we only got two bedroom flats. The Plan needs to include targets for specific types of development rather than leaving it to the developer to persuade the planning committee that its proposals are socially adequate.

Infrastructure

The fundamental and increasing problem that has beset Marlow for the last twenty years is traffic and parking. Any proposal for substantial new development must be assessed by the way that it would add to traffic density in the town's core.

The physical and social issues are discussed in the draft Infrastructure Delivery Plan. However the depth to which this supporting Plan is referenced in the Local Plan is minimal. We deserve a proper quantified answer to how infrastructure will be put in place in parallel with the increasing need. The failure to cross-reference in the public domain between the draft Infrastructure Plan and the Local Plan is not helpful.

Network Rail, supported by the Buckinghamshire Thames Valley Local Enterprise Partnership (BTVLEP), will be carrying out enhancement to allow up to twice hourly services to Maidenhead from Marlow and Bourne End to connect at Maidenhead to Crossrail and the existing Great Western services. The enhancements will include station improvements to Bourne End and Marlow stations. The Local Plan shows no synergy with this work although Marlow Station requires additional car parking space. If the current WDC study on restoring the Bourne End to High Wycombe public transport link brings positive results, Marlow station would further grow in importance and the Plan should recognise this.

Background Policies and Principles

The Society supports WDC's position on the redevelopment of Globe Park Industrial Estate and Marlow International. We also support retention of land to the east of the A404 by-pass as an integral part of the Little Marlow Lakes Country Park. The recent approval for housing to replace the former Computer House at Station Approach in Marlow indicates the probability that other small commercial sites at the western end of the commercial area might reasonably be released for housing, especially multi-storey blocks. Policy MR8 [3] as currently constituted has an all embracing veto on such re-zoning and we feel the policy should be revisited to allow suitable residential developments.

Policy CP7 Transport – local priorities. In contrast to consideration given to traffic in High Wycombe and Princes Risborough, the Plan makes no reference to alleviation of the chronic traffic bottleneck in Marlow's Market Place. Queues form out to the by-pass, the whole High Street is stationary to the Bridge and queues of up to sixty vehicles are the norm in West Street. This problem was identified in the WDC sponsored Halcrow Fox study of 1999. The need to explore the feasibility and cost of an environmentally acceptable northern by-pass should be recorded in the Policy.

Policy HW15 – Wycombe Air Park assumes (at section 4b) that the only impact of the proposed development on the local roads would be as shown. The Plan should estimate the increased traffic at the Clay Lane – Marlow Road junction that the proposed industrial / commercial use would generate and indicate the ability of the Marlow to Stokenchurch road link to handle it.

Principles for Marlow Page 94/95 includes:

1. *Cherish the Chilterns* (iii) supporting the tourist industry - enhanced mooring facilities for visiting boats are required.
3. *Facilitate local infrastructure by focused investment*. Here we feel inclusion of firstly - replacement of the inadequate 'soakaway' street drainage; secondly - adding decks to the town centre car parks.
4. *Foster economic growth*. In this section the increased importance of the Station should be recognised by noting a need for improved car parking there.
6. *Champion town centres*. Under (b) 'fashion centre' would be more accurately replaced by 'leisure, tourist and high-end shopping centre'. Section (c) might be reworded 'improve public transport links between Globe park, the Handy Cross hub, the town and other local centres of population'.

MEB

26 July 2016