



Planning Policy
Vale of White Horse District
Benson Lane
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17 December 2014

Vale of the White Horse District Council
Local Plan Consultation 2031: Strategic Sites and Policies; Infrastructure Delivery Plan
North Abingdon-on-Thames and North West Abingdon-on-Thames Developments

I'm writing on behalf of Christ Church, Abingdon. We are the Church of England parish for North Abingdon. Christ Church has thriving communities operating out of a major base in Northcourt Road, and a congregation meeting in Long Furlong Primary School. Together we have a worshipping community of around 750 people. We've been consulting with other churches in the area adjacent to the proposed developments in North and North-West Abingdon on Thames (Radley Parish, Sunningwell Parish, and Peachcroft Christian Church which is a partnership of four church denominations). Together we have two comments to make on the proposed developments.

(a) We would like to help building community on the new developments should they go ahead.

We have a long track record of building community in the area. On the **Long Furlong** estate we use the Community Centre to host a midweek *parent and toddler group* (Singing Circle) with 70 families registered, and a *monthly afternoon tea* for those living alone. We have recently organised a *24 hour Carol Marathon* in partnership with the local Community Association, drawing in 1200 people over the 48 half hour slots, and raising nearly £1000 for local charities. Our *worshipping community* brings 160 people of all ages together, and part of our caring for one another is expressed in a *food ministry* for those facing tough times on the estate.

On the **Peachcroft Estate** the church runs a *Community Café* twice a week, and groups for *parents and toddlers, youth, and older people*. The church also hosts a variety of other community groups.

On our **Northcourt Road** site Christ Church runs events throughout the week in addition to the thriving Sunday congregations. These include an extremely popular *parent and toddler group* (Link) with 70 families registered; a thriving *midweek youth group* with 50 teenagers registered, and a *Sunday evening youth group* with 70 older teenagers registered; *The Abingdon Emergency Food Bank* which has helped 600 families in the last 12 months; *midweek groups for the over 50's* which also includes an *annual activity week* which 230 people attended this year; we are actively engaged with *local primary and secondary schools*; we run events to support *family life*, and offer a monthly group and 1:1 support for those facing *bereavement*. In May last year we opened a *community café* on Northcourt Road, staffed mostly by volunteers, with around 600 customers visiting each week.

We would like to extend an offer to also help build community in the new housing developments, working with the other local churches. To do this we would need a base on the new developments, which can be used during the day and in the evenings.

We note that the Infrastructure Delivery Plan October 2014, Section 3.0 Infrastructure Requirements, "Overview of infrastructure in Abingdon-on-Thames and Oxford Fringe by 2031..." includes the following: "*There will be a new primary school to serve the north of Abingdon... A new community hub will be up and running in north Abingdon to serve the local community, which may contain other uses such as a police community hub and a local library.*"

We request that the planners also include one of these in the Infrastructure Requirements:

- a *plot of land* for a new church which would also be used for the community (as has been done in Bicester with Emmanuel Church); or
- a *community centre* which would be designed to enable the church to lay on events and activities which build up the community, and on Sundays for worship (as has been done in Long Furlong Abingdon); or
- make the planned school an *enhanced school*, with an additional hall, office and storage space for a church to use midweek to offer events and activities which build up the community, and on Sundays for worship.

Without such a physical base on the new housing development, it would be very difficult for us to deliver the types of community activities we are already doing elsewhere in North Abingdon.

(b) We acknowledge the genuine concerns local residents have about the appropriateness of the proposed developments.

We are aware of a range of opinions about the proposed development among the residents of North Abingdon, but in particular a high level of concern about the proposals in these areas:

- that they entail building on the Green Belt north of Abingdon and that this might also risk development creep beyond 2031, joining Radley and Abingdon into one conurbation; we would request that sufficient green spaces are built into the proposals; and
- the capacity of the existing Dunmore and Twelve Acre Drive Roads being insufficient to take future developments – in particular these roads are already heavily congested at peak times; we would request careful consideration is given to the road infrastructure remodelling.

Notwithstanding these concerns, we would like to affirm our offer to help build community in the proposed North and North West Abingdon-on-Thames developments, and request the amendments to the Infrastructure Delivery Plan to make this possible.

Yours sincerely



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