

What we would need to happen as part of any development – Abingdon-on-Thames North

The North Abingdon Local Plan Group has considered what the draft Local plan says about the North Abingdon site. Other notes set out where we think this proposal is not a good idea at all. However this document is based on our consideration of the proposals that are in the plan for the site, assuming that it does go ahead. This should not undermine our case against the development, but we realise that the site may go ahead whatever we say, so we have considered what is proposed. Based on what is in the plan, we have developed a list of things that we think should be put in place if it happens that the site is developed.

Urban Design principles

Appendix A for the Abingdon North site suggests that 'Houses will need to front onto the ring road. Currently very few houses in the Long Furlong site actually face onto Dunmore Road. We do not think that this should be a requirement of the new design. Dunmore Road is noisy and not an ideal prospect. As a result there will need to be estate roads with feeds onto Dunmore Road and twelve Acre Drive.

The Tilsley Park development on the South side of the site uses extensive floodlighting, particularly in the winter months. This may cause a light pollution problem to any new properties sited nearby, so their orientation may need to be adjusted.

Also to the North of Tilsley Park, there is a triangle of land North of Dunmore Road, with bridleway along its northern edge, the stream along its western side and its southern tip touching the boundary of Tilsley Park. This area was planted as woodland which has grown up and it has a path running through it which has been established for some time. We would like to see this area saved from development.

Also we have found that on the North East corner of the site there is a patch of ancient woodland known as 'Blake's Oak'. Set on a parish boundary this is the place where a Blake was executed for treason many years ago. For its historical interest this should be appropriately preserved or conserved. It is also adjacent to a large patch of more recently wooded area, on the West side of Lodge Hill at the top end of the site. There are other patches of woodland around the site and in the South West corner of the 'Peachcroft' site – close to the Peachcroft roundabout. Woodland on the edge of a large estate is at risk of degradation from people and their pets. We understand that a 15 metre buffer zone is required between the houses and the woodland to protect the roots.

There was quite severe flooding on Twelve Acre Drive in March 2008. It was just passable with a car, though this created a bow wave, see picture below, taken from Barfleur Close. This is near where the Radley Brook goes under the road and into the Peachcroft estate). Flooding is not unusual there.

The flooding extends back across the fields where there would be development (see photo), so this needs to be catered for if anything is built. Severe weather is becoming the norm.

We do have concerns about drainage through the existing estates (here and in the Farm Road area) as capacity can be limited. Other infrastructure might require work on existing roads and estates that could cause temporary difficulties or concerns.



Thus there are various issues relating to the Abingdon North site that have not apparently been considered in the plan. These seem likely to reduce the number of houses that can be fitted in. Currently a figure of 800 houses is mentioned in the plan – that might need to be reduced.

Access and Highways

Appendix A of the plan sets out some general requirements for all sites. This mentions that a transport assessment should be submitted with any planning application to identify the measures that will be taken to adequately mitigate or compensate for any harmful transport impacts.

So sensitive are the transport issues for this site that we think this process should be considered before the planning application. In particular we would like to see:

- Absolutely firm funding, clearly in place, to make the A34 Lodge Hill junction four ways by adding south facing slips. We are not entirely convinced by the current plan for most of the costs to be funded by the Local Enterprise Partnership.
- A commitment to fund proper changes to Dunmore Road and Twelve Acre Drive. Access to the estate onto Dunmore Road should not use T junctions, but should use roundabouts to ease access. Roundabouts could be aligned with the existing Boulter Drive and Alexander Close junctions. This would ease the long-standing access problems that residents of Long Furlong have and avoid similar problems for the new residents. In free flowing traffic conditions, it is difficult and dangerous to get onto Dunmore Road / Twelve Acre Drive from side roads such as Alexander Close.
- Removal of the recent constrictions on the Wootton Road/Dunmore Road Roundabout will be needed to revert to two lanes to increase throughput. On occasions, queues stretch the entire length of Dunmore Road at peak traffic times.
- As one of the ecological principles of the Vale Plan is to encourage “green” transport – including walking, cycling and the use of public transport. Currently there are only 4 buses a day on the orbital roads - so introduction of a regular service would be needed here.
- Only one pedestrian crossing is mentioned in the plan. This would not be adequate, as required by the Design Guide which says development should be integrated into adjacent settlement. Several pedestrian and cycle crossing points over Dunmore Road need to be added, perhaps where the Bridleway to Sunningwell crosses over, maybe at Boulter Drive (to access the GP surgery, hall and school), and near the Oxford Road for buses and the road into town. Two other crossings will be needed to link houses on the Twelve Acre Drive site to Peachcroft, probably at Peachcroft Road and near the Oxford Road – where there may be a need to link the Western and Eastern sites across the Oxford Road. These crossings will slow traffic to speeds more appropriate for an estate road.
- There are only two paths through the estate into town avoiding roads. One runs between the Community Hall and the primary school to South Avenue. Another runs across the green strip of land from Alder Close to Hillview Road. Both routes, but particularly the first one are likely to carry more cycle and pedestrian traffic in future. They would therefore need improvement to make them more suitable.

- We note that the section of Appendix A for the Abingdon North site mentions 'the ring road' in various places. Dunmore Road and Twelve Acre Drive will no longer provide a Northern ring road for Abingdon if new development on this scale proceeds. The A34 will become the Abingdon ring road. There will be no remaining reasonable route for any Abingdon ring road around the North West of the town. This will have implications for town centre pollution levels and require a revision of the AQMA plan.

Social and Community

A 'community hub' is mentioned with police/library/GP presence possibly. The Infrastructure Delivery Plan says this will be included in the school. Our experience at Long Furlong Primary School is that if a school hall is used for multiple purposes (gym and dining room for the school and meeting hall for the church) then a great deal of easily accessible storage is needed. Each function requires its own set of equipment, tables, chairs and even a movable stage. Good parking facilities need to be available if the school hall is used for wider community purposes. In addition, our experience on Long Furlong is that the separate Long Furlong Community Association Hall is also fully used by community groups and a Church. We would like to see similar facilities replicated on the new estate, as this will be of a comparable population to Long Furlong.

We also note the planned sports facilities to be provided on site that are to be funded by CIL according to the Infrastructure Delivery Plan. These include football pitches, Multiple Use Games Area, Cricket pitch and clubhouse. These may be best situated near the proposed primary school.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

We've commented separately on the CIL but in brief the assumed profit figure of 20% for builders seems a lot higher than current figures for building firms. A figure of 15% seems more reasonable and that would release about £10m of CIL across the Abingdon North site. CIL rates of £160 to £320 per square metre could be supported. This would fund a very wide range of infrastructure, including:

- Improving Dunmore Road and Twelve Acre Drive to cope with more traffic joining them from side roads – by building roundabouts to allow easier access from both the new estates and existing side roads;
- Widening the access from Dunmore Road onto the Wootton road roundabout, (where there is a light controlled crossing for cyclists) from the current one lane to two, to reduce peak time congestion;

- Funding more of the south facing slips at Lodge Hill (currently £9m of the £13m cost is to be funded by the LEP) More secure CIL funding would help to guarantee that this project goes ahead;
- Ensuring that drainage channels through the existing estates can cope with extreme rainfall or snow melting events as well as current drainage problems on the new estate site;
- Generally giving better and safer pedestrian and cycle access to the new estates through a variety of routes, including improving existing routes into town;
- Funding Green Infrastructure across the site generally; and
- Adding more and better community facilities, at an earlier stage, on the new estates.

We support

There are 'GENERAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL HOUSING SITE ALLOCATIONS' in Appendix A of the plan. This includes sections on Key objectives, Utilities and so forth. There is also a specific part of Appendix A for the Abingdon North site. We support the many proposals in these documents.

We also support the 'Design Guide'.

We believe that the local community would be very interested in further consultation as the detailed plans for the site are developed and approved.