



**"IMAGINE THE FUTURE"  
CONSULTATION ON  
WYCOMBE DISTRICT COUNCIL'S  
"DELIVERING THE STRATEGY FOR WYCOMBE"**

**WYCOMBE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS  
CONSULTATION RESPONSE**

**Comments relate primarily to the area of the Wycombe parliamentary constituency, and exclude consideration of issues specific to Marlow, Princes Risborough, and Bourne End.**

**Working Group;**

High Wycombe Liberal Democrats Executive and Members

**Compiled and edited by**

Cllr Trevor Snaith - WDC member for Ryemead, Lib Dem Deputy Leader

Cllr Ray Farmer - WDC Member for Ryemead

Cllr Steve Guy - WDC Member for Totteridge

Cllr Julia Wassell - WDC Member for Bowerdean

Cllr Chauhdry Ditta - WDC Member for Bowerdean

Neil Timberlake –Spokesman on Transport

Mrs Paula Lee

Mrs Frances Alexander

Mr Robert Perkins

Mr Ian Morton

*Note; Membership of the working group is not deemed to be consensus on every point . It should not be taken to indicate that every member necessarily agrees with every statement of every proposal in the document.*

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This consultation by Wycombe District Council is set against a background of significant housing targets imposed on the District from above. The growth in the town that will result, with all the adverse implications, will be resented and resisted by many, and risk setting people from one part of the District against another as people seek to protect precious landscapes from development.

In parallel with these impositions from above has been the relentless stripping away of real power of self-determination from local authorities. This process began with the Conservative Governments of Margaret Thatcher and John Major, and has been consistently continued by the Labour Governments of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown.

Liberal Democrats believe strongly in giving real power back to communities, so that they can exercise choices for themselves. Housing need which has been identified by local communities is much more likely to be accommodated 'organically' and by consent. There is no doubt that there are unmet housing needs in Wycombe District. In particular, many local villages and smaller communities may welcome small-scale development, with homes earmarked for local people at affordable costs. Our proposals seek to give priority to such needs.

The proposed Major developments in the plan have potential to dramatically alter the Town for good or ill.

Quite rightly local groups and residents are raising major objections to the plans and solutions proposed.

Wycombe Liberal Democrats cannot support major development in Wycombe District as proposed until adverse effects on infrastructure have been addressed. We are concerned that local transport, schools and NHS facilities cannot cope with current proposals.

Now is the time for some changes to the plan. There is no single policy that can make this happen. We therefore propose policies and options that will help the people of High Wycombe and surrounding area minimise the damage that would be inflicted by the existing plan.

### ***Land for business?***

We support the shift of office and commercial property to the town centre or to focal points of the public transport network. This is essential if we are to restrain (and hopefully reduce long-term) car journeys for commuting. The lesson of the last 30 years is that scattered, out-of-town office developments (just as has been the case with scattered out-of-town retail) is a significant car traffic generator.

There IS a very good argument for drawing residential units into the town centre, but much of this benefit can be achieved by encouraging residential occupation of the spaces above street-level retail or in office accommodation. We would prefer this approach to one which potentially saw current business property being replaced by housing sites.

### ***Housing Supply?***

It is clear that there are significant challenges attached to any effort to deal with the housing targets which have been imposed on the District by central Government and by the former Regional Assembly.

No one can pretend that reconciling competing interests is likely to be straightforward. The test of an effective policy will be one that goes about the task by sharing the inevitable burdens as well as the benefits in an equitable way. Wycombe Liberal Democrats are not convinced that the present approach as outlined in the Wycombe District Council consultation document meets this test of equitability. In particular, we are concerned that most of the pain will be directed at the urban area of Wycombe, with the probable loss of important undeveloped landscapes. In so doing, a potential benefit to some of the outlying villages risks being missed. Sympathetic and controlled smaller-scale developments could cumulatively achieve more of the overall housing target, whilst at the same time delivering a place to live for youngsters currently priced out of the communities where they grew up, and with economic benefits to smaller rural economies where precious businesses and services may be in decline.

In High Wycombe itself our approach is to seek to re-utilise appropriate buildings and sites as urban homes. There are already under-occupied premises in the town, often above shops or office premises, where there is scope to deliver much-needed homes, which could also help to revitalise the town centre. These homes should be "local homes for local people" and for their families who live and work in the area.

We would offer to Parish Councils who wish to participate, an invitation to create more homes in the villages and smaller towns surrounding High Wycombe. We believe there are some 20-30 villages and surrounding towns which would welcome the building of homes on land in and around their 'envelope'. Many can be Rural Exception Sites providing local homes for local people. This would go some way to meet the Government housing targets and satisfy local demand for housing. This will revitalise the communities, pubs, shops and allow for improved rural bus services.

### ***What type of homes do we build?***

Homes are needed in safer greener communities. A good proportion of these homes must be affordable "local homes for local people". Affordable homes with small gardens and off street parking are often held up as an ideal aspiration.

Arguably these would find greater favour than the high-density apartments that have been allowed over the past 10 years, and would in any case be more in keeping with the styles and scale of existing properties in the more rural areas! More high quality low cost homes in both small towns and villages are needed!

In both town and rural communities, people are telling us they need affordable houses for those families who live and work in the area. High prices are wrecking families and communities and undermining public services. People who belong are being forced out of area. Across the district we need more homes for local people; our young people are looking to break free from the nest!

Wycombe District needs -

- Shared equity schemes – part buy and part rent.
- Golden Share homes – Properties sold at build cost to local people on the basis they are resold at the same price to local people.
- More affordable homes (houses) to rent.

An example of a community built with care and consideration not far from High Wycombe can be seen at <http://www.fairfordleys.com/village.htm>

The whole approach of the current process is of demands imposed on the District from on high, and the District Council in its turn seeking to impose its narrow range of 'solutions' on the people who live here.

We believe that local communities and parishes should be offered an opportunity to be involved in much more detailed decision-making regarding the design, building materials, styles and sizes of new homes built in their area. Local people have an instinctive feel for the sort of developments that would add value to their communities and meet very local needs. Each town, village and community (including each of the unparished wards in High Wycombe) should be encouraged to produce its own 'Design Statement', with the emphasis on grass-roots input. This approach also offers scope to protect the heritage of the more historic parts of our town.

### ***Transport for High Wycombe***

Public transport has long been a Cinderella in Wycombe District, as in much of Buckinghamshire, neglected and marginalised by Conservative councillors on both Wycombe District Council and Buckinghamshire County Council. Little wonder that average bus ridership per head of population is so much lower than in neighbouring (and more rural) Oxfordshire, where for twenty years until 2005 a balanced administration of several political parties held sway, carrying out sustained pro-bus policies that gave the bus operators confidence to invest resources. Bus use doubled in a period of 20 years and traffic levels were contained.

We need to replicate that approach in Wycombe if the town is not to completely grind to a halt.

The proposed new housing developments in the "Imagine the Future" document carry the very real risk of adding dramatically to traffic levels, with the attendant problems of congestion, pollution, noise, and the dislocation of communities. Indeed the document makes projections for traffic growth which will bring to the already-saturated road network the promise of future day-long, network-wide gridlock!

**Future mobility in Wycombe District is critically dependent on public transport. Liberal Democrats would put much greater emphasis on public transport provision and would work closely with bus operators to create the conditions where their businesses can thrive.**

Improvements for the M40 Junction 3, to give full access in both directions, should be explored urgently. This could deliver benefits in reduced congestion along the London Road east of High Wycombe town centre, and also on the A404 Marlow Hill between the town and Handy Cross junction. WDC need to be pressing for the Highways Agency to undertake a full Cost-Benefit Analysis of this project, and to implement it as soon as possible if the business case for it can be proven.

### ***High Wycombe Town Centre***

There are a number of underutilised business and retail premises that could deliver homes and revitalise the Town Centre. These homes should be "local homes for local people" - those families who live and work in the area.

We would like to see an increase in the evening café culture – to encourage a town where students and other people live and socialise. This could create more jobs and investment in the town centre.

### ***Desborough area***

In the Desborough area, WDC's long term plans are sound:

- Improvements to public transport are supported fully.
- Closer integration of the area with the town centre through improved pedestrian and cycle routes will be welcomed.
- Provision of a new open space in the eastern part will also meet with approval.
- Opening up the River Wye to enhance biodiversity and provide a linear green park alongside it has long been needed.
- Regeneration of employment areas, complemented by conservation of the industrial heritage of the area, can only be good.

### ***M40 Gateway***

The current Handy Cross area should accommodate a business park, Coachway and Park and Ride only. We do, however, have concerns at the possible traffic impacts of any business development of the scale proposed by Wycombe District Council. This is discussed in more detail further in this document.

The opportunity to relocate the Sports Centre to Abbey Barn South/Daws Hill should be grasped! Outdoor pitches and the running track could be retained in close proximity to a new Sports Centre on that site.

### ***Daws Hill and Abbey Barn North and South***

Major development in this area cannot be supported until the adverse effects on the infrastructure have been dealt with.

Current transport solutions are inadequate to cope with the traffic movements that would be generated by the proposals.

However, an alternative use of Abbey Barn South with a mix of homes and leisure use could reduce traffic movements if delivered as part of an imaginative and improved public transport 'offer' – but there must be NO business element on this site.

The re-location of the Sports Centre to Abbey Barn South / Daws Hill will allow for all the projected business and office space to be moved from Abbey Barn / Daws Hill to Handy Cross. It is assumed that office developments are intended to finance other parts of the scheme, including the refurbishment or replacement of the Sports Centre. The office developments have the great potential to make traffic matters worse at Handy Cross and its approaches but by moving all office development to Handy Cross, traffic issues in the Abbey Barn would be reduced together with the need for the costly 'Slink' road.

### ***Terriers Farm***

***This site offers scope for a pioneering low-carbon Eco Village at Terriers Farm. This will be a welcome initiative for those who both oppose and support development on this site.***

### ***Gomm Valley and Ashwells***

Gomm Valley, a Site of Special Scientific Interest is too precious to lose and should never be built on! Moreover, any building here would impact adversely on London Road traffic.

We are more sanguine about the separate development of the Ashwells site. A sensitive development on this site, of homes for local people could be supported, using the Rural Exception Strategy in conjunction with Chepping Wycombe Parish Council.

## **WYCOMBE LIBERAL DEMOCRATS ANALYSIS AND COMMENTS ON THE WDC DOCUMENT**

This important strategic document offers Wycombe Liberal Democrats an opportunity to highlight our own policy strands towards our comprehensive "Vision" of what we would seek for the town of High Wycombe and surrounding District.

In drawing up this schedule of suggested comments, we have had the benefit of a copy of the full "Delivery & Site Allocations Update Consultation Development Plan Document" published in June 2009.

Where we have referred to specific paragraphs or questions, then the page numbers, paragraph numbers, or question numbers are those which refer to this Development Plan Document.

As has already identified and emphasised, this WDC consultation is necessarily constrained by what strategic documents have gone before, some of which we do not agree with – whether they be WDC's own "Core Strategy" adopted in 2008, or the Regional Spatial Strategy ("South East Plan") adopted by the South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) and the former South East England Regional Assembly (SEERA).

## ITF Page 16: Land for Business

A change of WDC policy is flagged here. The background is that an assessment of the local commercial property market suggests that Wycombe is well placed to come out of the recession. The recent developments of Eden, Bucks New University, and Sainsbury's are cited as likely economic boosts. It is suggested that the market is beginning to look more favourably at town centres for new office developments.

Existing commitments for office development are to be met at Glory Mill, Wycombe Marsh, Molins, Princes Estate, and Bartletts. *The agreement for the use of Molins as a business area was a bad mistake as it offered a valuable opportunity to have created an eco urban village. It would have mitigated many of the issues we face today related to the need to develop in High Wycombe town!*

WDC's suggested strategy for meeting this future demand is to earmark or permit office development at Handy Cross and Cressex Island, at Compair/De La Rue, and at Picts Lane in the short-term (up to 2016). In the medium term (from 2016 to 2021) the Swan frontage, Bridge Street and Baker Street would be used; and in the long term (post 2021) Abbey Barn South, Gomm Valley (possible) would be added, along with changes within Cressex Business Park.

### ***Q1: Do you agree with overall strategy for meeting the needs of business?***

On Q1 We support and encourage the shift of office and commercial property to the town centre or to other focal points of the public transport network. This is essential if we are to restrain (and hopefully reduce long-term) car journeys for commuting. The lesson of the last 30 years is that scattered, out of town office developments (just as has been the case with scattered out-of-town retail) is a significant car traffic generator. The diffused travel pattern which arises from scattered retail and office location is virtually impossible to serve effectively and commercially by public transport, and has significantly contributed to the increase in congestion, and the relative decline of public transport use. If we are to avoid future gridlock, then a key component of our approach must be to radically restore the balance and to promote policies that promote low-impact, 'green' transport modes. The concentration of retail and office space in the town centre allows for concentrated travel patterns, which lend themselves to modes that rely on aggregated demand patterns (bus and rail) and improve the cost/benefit case for various public transport priority methods. Putting office space into the central area also contributes to a viable retail environment (as office workers shop and eat in the lunch times) – important for the commercial health of the town centre.

The proposed 'tiers' for the promotion of land earmarked for business generally meet this objective, and our answer to Q1 is essentially "Yes".

***Q2: Do you agree with the new approach to scattered employment sites?***

WDC are looking to modify their policy on allowing current business sites to be re-developed for other uses, either residential or 'community'. As we understand it, WDC are proposing to soften the line on allowing such change of use, so long as effective marketing of an unoccupied commercial property takes place and demonstrates that the site is genuinely no longer viable for commercial use.

In general we are relaxed about the proposed change of policy, and our answer to Q2 is essentially "Yes" also.

***Q3: Should there be a different approach to the protection of scattered (office) sites in the town centres? Should they be accorded more protection?***

For the reasons outlined in answer to Q1, the policy relaxation in Q2 should NOT apply in the town centre (i.e. that we should seek to retain current commercial land-use for that purpose). There IS a very good argument for drawing residential units into the town centre, but much of the benefit of this can be achieved by encouraging residential occupation of the spaces above street-level retail or office accommodation. This approach is preferable to one that potentially saw current business property being replaced by housing sites.

Answer to Q3 is also, therefore, "Yes".

**ITF Page 21: Housing Supply, including the potential release of Greenfield sites**

The next questions relate to the vexed issue of housing supply.

Clearly, as things stand, WDC have no choice but to plan for meeting the imposed housing target. Wycombe Liberal Democrats do however hold a different view on the order of priority in releasing the reserve sites. We would also offer a new and different perspective by working with local communities and Parish and Town Councils.

We support the priority given to using Brownfield land first, in the hope that sufficient such land will come forward so that we don't need to develop one or more of the Greenfield sites. We do however see major problems with developing Greenfield sites like Abbey Barn and Gomm Valley in light of need for Greenfield protection and biodiversity.

If all of the Greenfield sites were to be developed, it is said that this would provide 1,600 dwellings and take the expected total new housing delivery to 6,188 (out of a target of 7,386). However, a further brownfield supply of 1,198 dwellings has been identified on sites where there is currently no information on

delivery. The Core Strategy Inspector's report has indicated that these can be counted towards the target.

A key question is posed at this point:

***Q4: Should these additional previously developed land sites where there is a lack of information on their deliverability be included, with a related decrease in Greenfield housing requirements?***

We suggest the answer should be: YES. It is said that this might negate the need to develop one large and one small Greenfield site from those listed (Abbey Barn North and South, Gomm Valley and Slate Meadow?). Key question 5 looks at the allocation of sites in the Princes Risborough area. These are outside the parliamentary constituency, and thus outside the area of Wycombe Liberal Democrats and we leave members of Aylesbury local party to respond if they wish.

***Q6: Whether Abbey Barn South and Abbey Barn North should be released as part of a comprehensive delivery package with the RAF Daws Hill site, regardless of the detail of the housing land supply position? Whether you agree with the following suggested order of release of the remaining Greenfield sites:***

1. *Terriers Farm*
2. *Slate Meadow*
3. *Ashwells*
4. *Gomm Valley*

In terms of assessing the different Greenfield sites proposed, there is clearly going to be a great deal of contention surrounding this, as evidenced by some of the comments voiced at the consultation meetings being held in July 2009. More work needs to be done on identifying Brownfield sites and more suitable fall-back Greenfield sites.

We are particularly concerned about development of Gomm Valley. We are more sanguine about Terriers Farm. It has scope to be served by existing bus links and to add to their commercial health, as well as becoming a beacon eco village.

Accepting that Daws Hill will be developed, we cannot accept the current planned mix of uses for the development of Abbey Barn South, nor do we believe that it would be right to develop Abbey Barn North. We say this in light

of other issues that have emerged during the consultation meetings (of which more to follow).

Our answer to Q6 is therefore to bring forward the designated sites and our own proposals in this sequence:

1. Terriers Farm
2. Town centre redevelopment (Homes for local people)
3. Rural Exception sites (in conjunction with Parish Councils)
4. Ashwells (Rural Exception site in conjunction with Parish Council)
5. Abbey Barn South (but only with the identified issues addressed and with a change to what we use the land for)

## **ITF Page 31: Transport Infrastructure**

Without ANY of the planned developments it is predicted that there will be an 11% increase "*in the District*" [our emphasis] in the number of journeys made between 2006 and 2026. With the expected developments this increase *across the District* is predicted to be 20%. The predicted distance travelled increases by between 18% and 21%, but travel time is predicted to increase by 20% with no development, and 32% with the planned growth. In layman's terms this means that WDC are predicting significant increases in overall congestion levels as the road network struggles to cope with the increased traffic. This is sheer madness!!

The reference to "in the District" may be significant, as most of the development will be in the High Wycombe area. If District-wide total traffic is to increase 20%, what is the detailed predicted increase in High Wycombe? A figure considerably *higher* than 20% is implied.

The WDC report talks of 'New Public Transport Infrastructure' and cites Chiltern Railways' proposals for redevelopment of the railway station and forecourt area, and the development of a Regional Coachway and Park-and-Ride site at Handy Cross, along with "supporting bus and coach priority measures".

The railway station plans have been proposed by and are to be paid for entirely by Chiltern Railways and its partners. The proposals are in principle welcome, but the praise for them belongs to Chiltern Railways for the initiative and work, not WDC.

The Regional Coachway proposal is similarly welcome. It proposes an arrangement similar to that at Calcot (M4, junction 12, adjacent to west Reading) and Milton Keynes (M1, junction 14) whereby long-distance coaches

are encouraged and enabled to serve the adjacent urban area without the time penalty of accessing the urban centre itself. Passengers travel to/from the adjacent urban centre by dedicated public transport link or by driving to/from a Park-&-Ride site. This would enable the town potentially to be served by additional coach services (typically National Express departures) providing links to other towns and cities around the UK.

This would envisage HW being served by National Express coaches above and beyond the current generally two-hourly 737 service linking Oxford – HW – Hemel Hempstead – Luton Airport – Stansted Airport.

This is all to the good in so far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. It does NOT constitute a town-wide public transport alternative to the car!! The coachways at Calcot and Milton Keynes are typically served by only a fairly limited number of services per day.

The Calcot site is served by the following services:

National Express:	200	Bristol – Gatwick
	201	Swansea – Gatwick
	202	Swansea – Heathrow
	303	Birkenhead – Southsea
	310	Bradford – Southsea
	403	London – Bath
	404	London – Plymouth
	444	London – Hereford
	501	London – Totnes
	502	London – Bude
	504	London – Penzance
	505	London – Newquay
	508	London – Haverfordwest
Eurolines:	890	London – Fishguard
Megabus:	M14	London – Swindon – Gloucester – Cheltenham

On a typical weekday these collectively provide some 54 departures in either direction to a wide range of destinations (including many intermediate ones not shown above).

It is to be expected that the Milton Keynes coachway is served to a broadly similar level (although obviously to a quite different range of destinations).

The point here is that, welcome though similar new links for High Wycombe will be, they amount to no more than 2,000 seats per day (assuming every departure is used by 40 persons FROM Handy Cross coachway – itself not a realistic scenario) to a wide divergence of locations. This in no way addresses the volumes of travel likely to be generated by the new developments in the town.

It might be expected that the Coachway would also be served by the Oxford Tube (Europe's most frequent inter-urban coach service, linking Oxford with central London at a frequency of up to every 12 minutes, 24 hours per day, seven days a week, 365 days a year) and by the Oxford Bus Company-operated "espress" and "Airline" services linking Oxford with central London and Heathrow and Gatwick Airports. If these services stop at Handy Cross then this will provide much additional capacity, but only to the airports, central London and Oxford. In the case of the last two destinations this would only duplicate the rail service from HW provided by Chiltern Railways currently (to Marylebone) and to Oxford (from 2013 if the rail company's proposals to provide a new link go ahead.)

We are aware of studies undertaken towards the development of a Regional Coach Network. These would see High Wycombe as the northern point of a regular express service linking the town with Handy Cross, Marlow, Maidenhead, Bracknell, Camberley, Frimley and Farnborough. Frequencies might be as great as every 10 minutes. Whilst Census data points to moderately high numbers of potential travellers between High Wycombe and Maidenhead being served by this coach service, with attendant reductions in car traffic on this corridor, the Regional Coach Network does not address the issue of main urban traffic flows.

There seems to be an expectation that the Coachway will somehow solve the issue of north-south links between High Wycombe and Milton Keynes, and between High Wycombe and the Thames Valley. It is far from clear how this is expected to happen. The WDC document suggests that £25m will be expected to be spent on the Inter-Regional Coach Network. This seems a very high figure indeed when set against the County Council's total bus subsidy budget for the entire county of around £3m per annum. We hope that the expenditure on the Regional Coach Network will not distort the public transport expenditure priorities for the District and County as a whole.

More detail is lacking in the WDC document. More may perhaps emerge at a meeting organised in Reading on 14 September on behalf of the Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport, at which Richard Walker of the DfT (on secondment to SEEDA) will give a lecture on "The Development of a Strategic Coach Network".

The WDC document, in paragraph 4.3.10 states that the new housing developments will be required to make sure that new dwellings are no more than 400m (walk) / 240m (straight line) from a bus stop on a route with a frequency of 10 minutes. This is very much welcome, and is absolutely crucial. However, the same needs to be done retrospectively for all existing dwellings across the Wycombe District.

## ITF Page 31: Parking serving High Wycombe Town Centre

Paragraph 4.3.11 refers to some projected small reductions in car parking space in the town centre, when and if some existing surface car parking is turned over to redevelopment.

Hospital visitors and staff have sometimes expressed the view that there is insufficient parking space. In any event, measures are needed to ensure that parking at the hospital is reserved exclusively for hospital patients and staff with no reasonable alternative home-to-work travel mode.

We find dispersed parking on many residential streets across the town. We would encourage additional residents' parking schemes and will work closely with local residents to explore limited increases in residential parking provision where this can be achieved at low cost, coupled with robust journey planning measures and improved public transport provision to encourage residents to be able to give up or reduce car ownership, with its attendant parking problems.

It has long been observed that car users have a dysfunctional appreciation of the costs of their car journeys. Car use is perceived as being virtually free at the point of use (the only conscious charge being the marginal cost of fuel consumption and whatever parking charges may be levied).

Bus use, however, is perceived as being expensive by comparison. (Studies have shown that non-bus users *believe* bus fares to be more expensive than they actually are). Buses are also perceived as being slower and less convenient than a car journey.

Transport practitioners and economists have long used the term "generalised costs" to describe the perceived costs of differing modes. This term encompasses travel time, waiting time, access time (the time taken and convenience of walking to/from the bus stop or car parking point) as well as the actual monetary costs of the transport link.

Car journeys very often have a low generalised cost because the user does not have to wait for the car to arrive, because the car is usually parked directly outside the home/office and near to shops and because the travel time is perceived to be generally reliable and predictable.

To offer a chance for the bus to compete effectively against these perceptions, WDC has to reduce the generalised cost of bus travel to more closely equate perception to the real costs of car use: this is at the heart of bus priority provision. Because the bus will always have to stop en route at a number of stops to pick-up and deposit other passengers, and because the bus stop is likely to be further from the user's home or office than the car parking spaces, and because even on a very frequent service there is likely to be a degree of waiting involved, it is important to provide for ways to mitigate these effects and perceptions. There is also a need to make more buses available earlier in

morning and late into evening. In return for bus providers agreeing to increase services, bus lanes and bus gates should be provided as a means of speeding buses past queuing car traffic, and offering priority to the bus based upon the buses' much more efficient use of scarce road space, fossil fuels, etc.

If bus providers agree to increased services drastic measures could be considered such as Town Centre car park rationing. The experience of places such as Brighton and Oxford (which both severely rationed town centre car parking space and made sure such space was charged for at appropriate levels) is that the bus gains a higher share of the 'market' for town centre users, with resultant reductions in traffic flows, congestion, noise, and pollution.

High Wycombe should follow the same path – and MUST do so if the effect of the planned new housing developments is not to be complete network-wide gridlock in future.

Wycombe District Council and Buckinghamshire County Council should work much more closely with bus operators. We propose that a Bus Quality Partnership be entered into, whereby the Councils and bus operators jointly determine a programme of identifying necessary bus priority measures and infrastructure provision (to be supplied by the Councils) in return for commitments to improved frequencies and enhanced quality services by the bus operators.

Complaint is often heard about the supposed unreliability of local bus services. In large part this is a result of the lack of bus priority measures, forcing buses to be delayed along the same congested roads as other vehicle traffic. As well as the Bus Quality Partnership, we would introduce a Punctuality Improvement Partnership between local bus operators and local Councils. Legislation now properly places an obligation on the local highway authority to take steps to mitigate delays to bus services. This is welcomed. The prospect of the Council being fined for failure to take action should concentrate minds! WDC envisages Park & Ride at a number of sites, but Town resident car users are unlikely to use these facilities. Town residents need better and lower cost bus services first and foremost.

***Q7a: Do you agree with the potential sites identified for park & ride?***

Answer is NO.

***Q7b: Do you wish to suggest alternative sites for park & ride that you feel would be practicable and affordable?***

The proposed Terriers and Kingsmead sites are in the wrong locations – too close to the town centre. To be most effective in transport terms they need to be located at or very close to Hazlemere cross-roads and the M40 junction 3 access at Loudwater (The Railko site has been suggested as ideal for this purpose).

Princes Risborough, Hazlemere and Loudwater (Railko) are the best sites from a Park & Ride effectiveness standpoint.

***However, we are not actually convinced that P&R (except arguably at the Handy Cross Coachway location) is the right solution for Wycombe's traffic issues.***

Park & Ride works when it diverts and captures car use at a sufficient distance from the town centre destination, to effect a modal change that delivers congestion and pollution benefits, and can overcome the generalised cost perceptions of car users. A car user is much less likely to divert to the bus (with the costs and time penalties associated with that) if s/he is already within quite close proximity to the final destination and car parking.

Neither will a motorist be at all likely to use a Park & Ride site which involves them having to drive AWAY from their ultimate destination, or to divert significantly from their chosen route. (This is why the signs along the West Wycombe Road directing motorists to the Cressex Park & Ride site are absurd, as the car journey becomes LONGER as a result!).

There is also a risk that a badly-sited Park & Ride location will actually ADD to traffic congestion in its locality.

The nature of traffic flows is also important. An effective Park & Ride is one where there is a significant amount of inbound traffic to a town centre which is generated from well outside the town's boundaries. Oxford's Park & Ride scheme works so effectively because it is located peripherally and captures those motorists travelling into the City from well outside Oxford. Terriers and Kingsmead are NOT peripheral locations!

By contrast, we believe that most of High Wycombe's urban traffic is generated 'internally', and that there is a substantial *out-flow* in the morning peak (and corresponding *in-flow* in the evening peak). Park & Ride does NOT serve these transport needs! Origin/Destination studies for Wycombe we believe currently show 1/3 inbound, 1/3 outbound, and 1/3 within Town.

Our preferred solution is based on bus use alone. For those who struggle with this concept we suggest that it is thought as "Park & Ride" where you "park at home"! Town residents need better and lower cost bus services first and foremost – this is not the case in many parts of the Town

The key to this policy is fast and frequent (including late evening and weekend) high quality bus provision on all the main radial corridors and routes across the SE and other important desire-lines, with targeted bus priority measures, and a high quality of bus infrastructure (shelters, seating, real-time information) at almost all inbound bus stops.

We do however see a need to give more priority to motorcycles and cycles which should also be allowed to use all priority routes that buses can use.

***Q8: Do you think our approach to town centre car parking is the right one? Do you think the existing car parking facilities are adequate? Will they complement the master plan for the town centre...and make it easier for people to access - and park in the town centre?***

Answer here is generally – YES to the proposed reductions in car parking provision but as part of a balanced and controlled policy of committing to high quality, frequent bus services – Current plans do not go far enough.

### **ITF Page 33: The former Bourne End to High Wycombe railway alignment**

This has some significant potential transport benefits in future. However, this is not currently on the table to be delivered. The WDC document asks merely whether the line of the route should be protected from development, and if so at what level. Four options are offered:

Option 1: protect the full width of the corridor to enable future use for any form of public transport up to and including heavy rail.

Option 2: protect the full width (with certain potential relaxations) to enable future use for 'less intrusive' forms of public transport, such as a busway, light rail or ultra-light rail system (the favoured High Wycombe Society Transport Group option).

Option 3: protect only a 6m width to enable future use for walking and cycling only.

Option 4: Cease to protect the alignment.

***Q9: Do you agree with any of our options for the protection of the former High Wycombe to Bourne End rail alignment?***

We believe it is vital that Option 1 is supported, with Option 2 as a sub-optimal default. This offers scope in future for direct rail links to Heathrow and to the Crossrail project, linking across London. It would also offer a greater choice of links to the London Underground system.

Although there are limited barriers to the re-opening of the rail link to Bourne End, due to building across parts of existing formation, these are not insurmountable (and would certainly not stand in the way of any road proposal!)

The real benefits of re-opening the rail alignment come from the ability to once again operate through trains between High Wycombe (and points north) and the Thames Valley. The Option 2 proposals would not allow this, and would in future limit any link to one whereby a change of mode would be required at both High Wycombe and at Bourne End when making any through journey.

***Q10: Are there any other alternative options for protection that you think we should consider?***

Our answer is NO.

The WDC report then moves on to a number of other issues: Walking and Cycling networks, Motorway Noise, town centre definitions and retail policies. In general we think these are non-contentious.

***Q11a: What do you think of our plans for a walking and cycling network for round Wycombe and for Marlow?***

In general we would support them so far as they go, although we do wonder that could be seen to marginalise cycling. Cycling is encouraged onto quieter and less direct routes in many cases, whereas we would prefer to see effective cycle-lane provision along some of the key corridors, so that cyclists are enabled to take their preferred most direct route in most circumstances.

***Q11b: Are there other opportunities for walking and cycling that are not shown on the maps?***

We would suggest that a designated cycle lane along the length of the Bourne End to Loudwater route would be appropriate (although in the short term cyclists could use the railway alignment if created as a cycling route).

There is also a need to introduce cycling route/footpath along Heath End Road/Daws Hill to Flackwell Heath. A High Wycombe to Lane End cycleway should also be explored, in partnership with local cyclists, cycling groups, parish council and local residents.

***Q12: Do you support these proposals for road noise reduction?***

These refer to plans to reduce the impact of motorway noise between junctions 3 and 8 of the M40. We support these moves. Motorway noise has been identified as a major issue for any future residents of Abbey Barn South and Daws Hill.

***Q13: Do you agree with the policy approach to and detailed definition of town centre, primary shopping area and District Area boundaries?***

We suggest YES – We can see nothing contentious in what is suggested.

The WDC document then moves on to **Green Networks, Biodiversity and Open Space provision and standards.**

In general we don't see any of this as contentious, but with two caveats. In the maps it shows Gomm Valley without seeming to designate Little Gomm Wood as being "ancient woodland" [Map 19e of the WDC document]; moreover, it is not clear what designation is given to the BBOWT wildlife protection site in Gomm Valley. Is it a "Local Wildlife Site" or a "Local Nature Reserve" or is it an "SSSI" area? The question is important because this policy document offers different levels of future protection depending on what designation is bestowed. We do have concerns that building on Abbey Barn sites is in direct contradiction with a policy of maintaining green spaces!

*Q14: Which of the two options for Open Space standards do you think is most suitable?*

We feel the current plans don't go far enough. Sustainable development is needed - a pattern of resource use that aims to meet human needs by enabling these needs to be met in the future while preserving the [environment](#).

People have not yet appreciated changes will occur in the next 20 years through Global Warming and Peak Oil, and the need for undertaking sustainable strategies. How do we, in Wycombe District, ensure that our children and grandchildren have enough food, energy, water, and means of transport?

1. By ensuring that every home, not just new build, is insulated thoroughly.
2. By tree planting in and around tarmac areas, car parks for instance, to prevent over-heating.
3. By ensuring a sound public transport network – rail, coach and bus.
4. By ensuring a network of proper cycleways
5. A framework of excellent schools in every part of the district is needed, that parents would be happy for their children to walk to.
6. By putting photovoltaic cells on every available south facing roof asap.
7. By using water power along the River Wye once again.
8. By designating areas such as High Heavens and Handy Cross as suitable for wind turbines.
9. By installing neighbourhood heating systems.

All the above should be borne in mind when planning issues are discussed.

*Q15: What in your view would be the most important priority for improvement of open space, e.g. a specific site in your neighbourhood, specific facilities you would like to see?*

Points 1-9 above plus -

We need an increase in open spaces in High Wycombe town, and allotments in the unparished wards.

Green spaces may be planted with fruit trees and vegetables – managed and harvested by local residents.

***Q16: Is the proposed threshold for seeking open space provision set at the right level?***

NO – in the unparished town wards we do not have enough open spaces or green areas and allotments, especially around affordable homes and apartments.

***Q17: Would you agree with the development thresholds for on-site open space provision?***

NO – in the unparished town wards we do not have enough open spaces or green areas and allotments, especially around affordable homes and apartments

We then move on to Planning for Flood Risk Management, and Sustainable Construction

The suggested Policy B16 on Sustainable Construction states residential applications received from now should be designed to meet Code for Sustainable Homes (CSH) Level 3; from January 2012 to reach CSH Level 4; and from January 2016 to have zero carbon emissions (CSH Level 6). **These steps are in advance of the Government's suggested timetable towards compliance. We congratulate and support WDC for this policy approach.**

Here follows the detail of the various development plans in the WDC document. A lengthy Appendix giving an Infrastructure Schedule is given. In general, much of this will have to be taken on trust. However, there are a number of points arising on examination:

SR/T3: £25m cost given of the Inter-Regional Coach Network. This figure seems high, but a detailed scheme proposal might help identify what is proposed and how this cost figure is arrived at.

SR/T6: £12m cost given for the "M40, M25, M4, A404 Motorway Box". This figure seems very low, but again, details are needed of what is proposed and how the figure is arrived at.

DW/T3: No costs are offered for "Increased car parking, improved road links and public transport at High Wycombe, Princes Risborough and Saunderton". Why not? Has none of this been quantified?

DW/E1: Is the Learning & Skills Council in a position to make an investment of £50m for the cost of the proposed "Re-development of Amersham & Wycombe College campus in High Wycombe"?

Figures are given for proposed costs related to "Primary Public Transport Corridors as follows: A404 Amersham Hill; A4128 Hughenden Road; Desborough

Avenue; A404 Marlow Hill, and for a Bus Gate on A404 Marlow Hill, at a total projected cost of £7m. However, as with so much else in the document, a lot seems to be dependent on developer contributions (Section 106 money). This must provide a cause of concern as to the deliverability of the current plans. Wycombe District Council needs to be up-front with local people as to what it considers to be the priority developments if the scale of developer contributions falls short of expectations, and what would be the impacts on Council budgets and Council Tax levels if more funding was necessary from the Councils' own coffers. Local people should be able to voice their own priorities for spending in the event that the whole package cannot be delivered.

*We note no Primary Public Transport Corridor seems to be proposed for the A40 London Road, A40 West Wycombe Road or Amersham Road to Hazlemere.*

***Q18: Do you agree with the Infrastructure Schedule set out in Appendix 3?***

As stated above, much must be taken on trust, and there are some specific questions and issues to address.

***Q19: Are there things missing or things that should be changed?***

Same answer to Q18.

***Q20: Do you agree with the suggested approach to addressing viability concerns in the current climate?***

YES – the proposals seem sensible.

***Q21: Given the long-term nature of the Delivery and Site Allocations Document, is the approach still valid in the long term in potentially different market conditions?***

The answer is NO. There needs to be a new approach to where we build ---building in Towns and Villages. The priority must be: local homes for local people.

There are significant existing funding gaps, and a lot of the infrastructure delivery seems dependent on S106 Developer Contributions. If the economy shifts to a new long-term paradigm (which may be increasingly likely in the context of environmental degradation worldwide, climate change, 'peak oil' and many other factors) then it must be possible that the WDC vision will prove undeliverable. It is clear that WDC are taking a huge gamble on this project! Much of it is imposed on the Council by outside housing targets; some of it is the Council's own strategic thinking and vision. Much of it can be applauded, but all of it carries enormous risk.

## **ITF Page 55: High Wycombe Town Centre**

The town centre plans are exciting and have vision, and could transform much of the town, correcting some of the errors of the 1960s and 1970s, and dealing with some of the issues raised by the opening of Eden shopping centre and the drift westwards of the centre of gravity of the town, with its consequent damage to the retail economy of the historic 'core'.

- The removal of Abbey Way flyover, and of the north side of the present Marlow Hill/Abbey Way gyratory;
- The diversion of the A40 via Queen Alexandra Road and a new link road across the gasworks site, with a further re-created link between Westbourne Street and Oxford Road;
- A bus loop around the town centre;
- The re-designation of Easton Street and Queen Victoria Road as two-way;
- The downgrading of Archway to single carriageway with at-grade pedestrian crossing and new shopping frontages;
- The re-emergence of the river (or a pastiche of it);
- A new public transport interchange at the railway station...

These are all things that Wycombe Liberal Democrats feel able to support and to welcome.

### ***Q22: Do you agree with our vision for the town centre as set out in HWTC1 and Fig5.2?***

The answer is YES - but again with more homes in the town, greater emphasis on car traffic reduction and improved bus services.

### ***Q23: Does it meet your aspirations for the town centre? If not, what suggestions would you make?***

In general we would say YES – with more homes in the Town, greater emphasis on car traffic reduction and improved bus services.

### ***Q24: What kind of place would you like the town centre to be in 2026?***

We would like to see a town centre that is particularly well-served by public transport – one which aspires to be a model along the lines of some of the best European towns and smaller cities, and one which, like Oxford, achieves a figure of at least 40%+ of town centre users having reached the town centre by bus.

We would like to see many more people living in the town centre, so that it does not become a desert in the evenings; a town with a healthy cultural and sporting life, as well as sustainable businesses and retail, preferably one where the retail mix includes rich provision by smaller-scale independent retailers and where the bland homogenisation of so many High Streets has been overturned – keep Tesco and McDonalds at bay!!

***Q24 (yes- there are TWO questions 24!): Do you agree with the principles for delivering our vision, as set out in policy HWTC2?***

YES – HWTC2 is a good approach.

There is then an examination of bus routing through the town centre. At present buses from the east use Abbey Way East, Queen Victoria Road, High Street East, Corporation Street, Castle Street, Queen Street, Frogmoor, Oxford Street, and Oxford Road to reach the bus station, with the same route in reverse as far as High Street East for buses travelling out of the town centre towards the east.

There are concerns that there is too much bus traffic in Queen Street, and that this detracts from the essentially pedestrianised nature of this narrow street.

What is proposed is that a one-way anti-clockwise bus loop is created around the town centre. Buses from the east would use the newly two-way Easton Street, then the High Street, Castle Street, Queen Street, Frogmoor, Oxford Street, Oxford Road as now to the bus station. Outbound buses, though, would instead travel east via Bridge Street, Desborough Road, Lily's Walk and a new local access road to link with Queen Victoria Road and Easton Street to complete the loop. Buses to/from the north and south would also use this one-way bus loop, entering and exiting the loop at appropriate points around the loop.

This would mean that bus traffic through Queen Street would be halved, and buses would no longer be delayed waiting at the traffic lights controlling alternate each-way access to this road.

To replace the Castle Street north-side and High Street north-side bus stops which could no longer be accessed by this proposal a new bus stop area would be created near the Swan Theatre, at the corner of Pauls Row / St. Mary Street. This would be no further from the High Street / White Hart Street shopping area than the current High Street shops, and closer than the current Castle Street stop, so pedestrians could benefit, to the advantage of bus services.

***Q25: Which of the two options for bus routes in the town centre do you support?***

Option 1 is 'as now'; Option 2 is the new one-way loop as described. We believe we can and should support Option 2.

***Q26: Are there any other options for bus routing in the town centre which are compatible with our vision for the town centre and the principles outlined above, which we should consider?***

We don't believe that there are. However, the importance of giving buses aided access through junctions and other traffic delay pinch-points must be stressed. Transponders should be fitted to all local buses that would enable them to change traffic lights in their favour at the following locations:

- Easton Street (east end), where buses will have to cross the path of traffic coming east off Abbey Way East to access the newly west-bound Easton Street.
- Easton Street (west end) at the junction with High Street / Crendon Street
- Oxford Street (west end) at the junction with Archway / current Oxford Road roundabout. New traffic lights here would ease the passage of buses onto the present roundabout, where they are currently delayed by priority given to other traffic.
- Bridge Street (south end) to speed access onto Desborough Road.

In addition, there must be bus lanes of significant continuous length established along Desborough Avenue (which is proposed, and MUST be supported), West Wycombe Road (between Plomer Hill and the bus station), and the currently discontinuous lengths of the A40 London Road bus lane must be joined together. These proposals are feasible with the abolition of on-road parking at points along the London Road, along Desborough Avenue, and certain limited road widening where road widths are currently slightly deficient.

The plans to create an access out of the New St James estate at Curry's is madness, forcing traffic left and to make a U turn at Hatters Lane roundabout for those wanting to head east. WDC needs to secure land from Yellow Box urgently so as to be able to create access direct onto Hatters Lane roundabout. There is then discussion on retail and planning policy, with proposals to adopt a temporarily more flexible planning approach to shops in White Hart Street and the 'island' between Church Street, Queen Street, Queen Square and White Hart Street to allow a more relaxed approach to permitted uses for a defined limited period, to avoid the problem of empty units creating an impression of decline.

***Q27: Do you agree with our approach to measuring uses by frontage length rather than unit size?***

YES – this seems entirely sensible and uncontroversial.

***Q28: Do you agree with our approach of making the policy more flexible whilst targeting a minimum proportion of retail (A1) uses to be retained? If so, do you agree with the percentages proposed for each different sector?***

YES to both parts of the question.

***Q29: Do you agree with our plan to create a Local Development Order for the central core of the town? If so, how long do you think it should last for and what should it revert to after this?***

YES for the first part, and we would be happy with the LDO to be in place for up to five years (2 / 3 years is proposed), after which the policy should revert to a mix of A1 (shops, including hairdressers, travel agents and sandwich bars), A2 (financial and professional services, including banks, building societies and betting shops), or A3 (Bars, restaurants and cafes). The proposal is for the policy to revert to A1 only or for the area to become treated as a "secondary shopping zone". A more flexible long-term approach would do no harm.

The WDC document considers the future of the Chilterns Shopping Centre, which is suffering from vacant units (which also has an impact on Frogmoor and Queen Street) and a generally tired and peripheral feel to it, not helped by the fact declared that the office space above the ground floor "has been entirely vacant since 2003". It is proposed to turn the upper floors over to residential accommodation, and to allow the shop units the flexibility to become a food/drink and leisure quarter.

***Q30: Are we right to take the Chilterns Shopping Centre out of the Primary Shopping Frontage Zone? Or do you think we should continue to robustly insist on an A1 focus in the centre?***

We support what is proposed, in particular the proposal to convert the upper floors to residential use. However, we believe the High Street is in greater need of improvement than the Chiltern Centre.

New policies for the Wycombe General Hospital site (MU31) are then proposed and discussed, as are the Suffield Road site (RES56).

The MU31 policy contains a key contradiction, and highlights an important policy perspective that keeps being missed.

The policy talks of car parking provision being increased at the hospital, by double-decking the existing car park, and at the same time refers to the need to have "a robust travel plan that minimises car traffic and parking demand"! These two approaches are directly contradictory. This fundamental contradiction is at the heart of so much policy-making (and needs to be addressed properly).

## **ITF Page 87: Desborough Area**

The WDC document identifies policy issues for the Desborough area and seeks to resolve these through:

- Closer integration of the area with the town centre through improved pedestrian and cycle routes.
- Provision of a new open space in the eastern part.
- Opening up the River Wye to enhance biodiversity and provide a linear green park alongside it.
- Regeneration of employment areas, complemented by conservation of the industrial heritage of the area.

An innovative re-development proposal is put forward for the MU4 site defined by the area between Kitchener Road, Green Street, Desborough Road, and Desborough Avenue. This is a particularly exciting and sympathetic proposal, and one which should be warmly supported.

A new public green space is proposed to be located in whichever of the three sites below first comes to market:

- The timber yard west of Desborough Park Road
- The business site east of Desborough Park Road
- The Riverside Business Centre, Victoria Street.

The site will become mixed residential and at least 50% public open space, adjoining the river. Note that it is proposed that only ONE of the sites will be developed in this way – once the first site comes to market, the others will revert to a General Business Area designation.

### ***Q31: Do you agree with the approach to the provision of new open space in the Desborough Area?***

We support what is suggested.

### ***Q32: Do you agree with the three opportunity sites that have been identified? Which do you think provides the best opportunity for providing open space?***

We agree that the three listed sites are sensible. We offer no view as to which is best – this is properly a matter for the local community.

***Q33: Do you agree that only one of these sites should be provided for open space or should there be more than one?***

We prefer to see one site utilised for the creation of new open space, as suggested. On the other two sites, we believe that space should be allocated, when developed, for increased parking space for residents of the local area.

### **ITF Page 98: M40 Gateway**

A comprehensive re-development of the site is proposed, with a relocated or refurbished sports centre, shorn of its running track (which is moving to Hazlemere) and possibly of its outside sports courts (although in one option these are retained). A Coachway will be provided, and a relocated southern Park & Ride site (moving from Cressex Island), and the remainder of the site will be given over to 'landmark' office developments facing onto the M40 to provide a strong visual gateway to the town.

We fully support the Coachway, which is the first part of the development that will happen, as it is required as part of the wider infrastructure to support the 2012 Olympic Games. We are similarly comfortable with the move of the Park & Ride from Cressex Island to Handy Cross, to provide for an integrated transport link here.

However, there is an opportunity to relocate the Sports Centre to Abbey Barn South/Daws Hill. We believe that outdoor pitches should be retained in close proximity to the Sports Centre located on Abbey Barn South/Daws Hill.

This will allow for all business and office space to be moved from Abbey Barn /Daws Hill to the same-sized area at Handy Cross. We suspect that the office developments are intended to pay for the other parts of the scheme, including the refurbishment or replacement of the Sports Centre. The office developments have the potential to make traffic matters much worse at Handy Cross and on its approaches, but by moving all office development to Handy Cross the traffic issues in the Abbey Barn area and the need for the 'Slink' road are reduced.

The public consultation meeting suggested that some 250 parking spaces would be provided for the Park & Ride, and 250 for the Coachway (although there may be scope for additional decking in the future if demand creates a business case for providing it). However it is the parking for the offices that concerns us. We seem to recall the public meeting hearing that 1,000 spaces would be provided for the offices, yet the site is lauded as being served by coaches using the Coachway. We are not convinced that this will deliver the aspirations that seem to be being attached to it. The provision of 1,000 car parking spaces, plus those associated with the Park & Ride, suggests that additional traffic movement will be generated around the M40 Junction 4 and on associated link roads such as the A404.

We cannot see how the home location of the new employees in these offices can be controlled. They will, it seems, NOT primarily use the regional coach services, and whilst a number will hopefully use the Park & Ride, a large number will be drawn from along the M40 corridor and from the Thames Valley, from which they will predominantly drive.

The Highways Agency is clearly also concerned about these impacts, as it has said that "The Highways Agency is particularly concerned about the potential impacts on the strategic road network of development in the M40 gateway area".

These will be likely to include impacts on the already congested Bisham roundabout (A404) and Westhorpe Interchange (A404/A3155 junction), for which there are NO current proposals for works that might ameliorate the situation.

**The success of this office development, in transport terms, absolutely hinges upon the range and quality of the public transport links provided to it!**

## **ITF Page 99: RAF Daws Hill / Abbey Barn Area**

The RAF site has now closed and is a prime brownfield site capable of providing approximately 550 dwellings towards the District's housing target. A neighbourhood centre, local shops and local business units/offices, a primary school and a community hall would also be provided, along with playing pitches and open space.

It is suggested in the WDC document that the development of the RAF Daws Hill site is linked to development of Abbey Barn South and Abbey Barn North, as the greater size enables additional facilities to be provided, and provides for a mutually-reinforcing development. The additional facilities would include a Combined Heat and Power system across both sites, and scope to contribute to improved transport links.

Abbey Barn South is proposed to have 450 dwellings (making 1,000 in total for the combined sites) and would form a Phase 2 of the RAF site development, following on immediately from the completion of Phase 1.

The combined development would be provided with a high-quality bus service at a frequency of no less than 15 minutes "from day one".

Each site has its own issues. In particular, questions have been raised (and not answered adequately by officers, BCC or WDC ) about the volume of additional traffic the sites will be expected to generate.

It is noted that the "Assessment Criteria for Suitability for Residential Development" (Table 8.1 of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment [SHLAA] list a number of criteria against which every possible piece of

development land was to be assessed in drawing up ever shorter lists of sites to be taken forward. Criterion S17 refers to "Inadequacy of the Highway Network" and has as its "Indicator" whether or not the "Local highway network [is] adequate for [the] volume of traffic likely to be generated". If it is assessed that the land will not meet this Indicator, then the action to be taken is to "Evaluate and eliminate if cannot be mitigated". This is enshrined in PPG13, the Core Strategy Policies 16 and 20, and Site Allocations SA.

We believe that this could be argued to apply to Abbey Barn South, Abbey Barn North, RAF Daws Hill, and Gomm Valley developments. The public meeting heard that the effect of developing Abbey Barn North, Abbey Barn South and Daws Hill is expected to lead to a 28% increase in traffic on Daws Hill Lane, a 60% increase in traffic on Abbey Barn Road, and up to 14% increase in traffic on London Road. It will also destroy the Wycombe Marsh village area with the high volume of rat-running traffic.

Whilst local junction improvements proposed would be expected to mitigate these effects, these are merely a sop - there is clear danger of dislocation of the already-beleaguered community around Abbey Barn Road and Wycombe Marsh. We believe that every effort should be made to restrict traffic flows using Abbey Barn Lane as a cut-through. One possibility might be to restrict the width available to general traffic, and to provide a 'bus gate' to give priority to public transport alternatives and to provide priority access to emergency vehicles. Traffic modelling has shown that there would be no increase in traffic along Heath End Road or Kingsmead Road in the baseline case, but a very large increase in delay on Daws Hill Lane at Marlow Hill in the morning peak, some increase in traffic on Station Road (Loudwater), Treadaway Hill and Sheepridge Lane, and a substantial increase in delay on Abbey Barn Road at London Road in the morning peak.

One option proposed would provide localised junction improvements on Abbey Barn Road and at Daws Hill/Marlow Hill. These have been modelled also, and show a mitigation of the adverse effects, but no way do not negate them. However, the effect of these changes is a wider adverse impact on the overall road network, and the effective creation of an improved route between London Road and Marlow Hill that might be expected to draw in additional traffic flows from elsewhere, leading to 'rat running'.

Option 2 adds to the mix the creation of a Southern Link Road (already christened 'SLINK'), that would take one of two routes from the southern, Heath End Road periphery of the site, either via the existing Winchbottom Lane to link with the A404 southbound and with Wycombe Road near "The Blacksmith's Arms", or an alternative route that leaves Heath End Road near the M40 overbridge and hugs the side of the motorway before diverting south to link with the A404 and Wycombe Road as before.

However, this additional road, whilst providing some overall network-wide improvements relative to Option 1, worsens delays and traffic in the Abbey Barn Lane/Road area, displaces a significant amount of traffic onto Kingsmead Road, Wycombe Marsh, and Heath End Road, and creates significant intrusion into the Green Belt and AONB.

The creation of SLINK will effectively create also a new more southerly edge to the town's urban footprint, and you can be certain that the District Council would very soon come under pressure from developers to fill the gap created between SLINK and the M40 by creating new office, residential or retail park development.

There is also the issue of cost: SLINK is projected to cost £6.5m, NOT including land acquisition! Most of the traffic generated by SLINK would NOT be related to the Daws Hill/Abbey Barn development (and therefore would not meet Section 106 funding criteria – in other words WDC won't be able to get the developers to pay for it!).

Option 3 is offered as a "Low Environmental Impact Approach", involving minor upgrades to Winchbottom Lane (retaining its rural single-track road status, but providing additional passing places) and with local junction improvements at Abbey Barn Lane/Kingsmead Road/London Road; Daws Hill Lane/Marlow Hill; and other possible local traffic management measures.

**Essentially, there are no easy options for this development!**

Option 3 is the "do least" option, and essentially seeks to contain car traffic growth by NOT providing for it, encouraging residents of the new developments to use the alternative bus link and other walking/cycling options instead.

A bus-only route is proposed through the centre of the combined Abbey Barn South/Daws Hill development, linking to Flackwell Heath in one direction (and providing improved bus links to town from there) and linking to the town centre and to the Handy Cross Transport Interchange/Sports Centre via a new bus-only link from either the existing residential cul-de-sac Daws Lea, running behind St. Bernard's RC School and linking to the current sports centre site. An alternative option for the bus link is for buses to use Daws Hill Lane as far as the existing entrance access road to the school site, and thence as before.

The risk with this option is that buses will get caught in the expected heavier traffic congestion on Daws Hill Lane. The first option provides a fast bus-only route enabling buses to provide a quicker journey into town than by car.

For this reason we VERY STRONGLY SUPPORT the Daws Lea bus link, combined with Option 2 of the road options, leaving the car traffic to regulate itself, but at undeniable cost to the residents of Daws Hill Lane and Abbey Barn Road.

As stated earlier, there is an opportunity to relocate the Sports Centre to Abbey Barn South/Daws Hill, to include the outdoor pitches. This will allow for all business and office space to be moved from Abbey Barn /Daws Hill to the same area at Handy Cross. The office developments have the great potential to make traffic matters worse at Handy Cross and on its approaches but by moving all office development to Handy Cross, the traffic issues in the Abbey Barn area and the need for the 'Slink' road will be reduced.

The only other way forward, it seems, is to insist that the sites be developed on the basis of a radically green transport solution, with conditions of ownership/occupancy including NO OWNERSHIP of a car, NO or SEVERELY RESTRICTED/CONTROLLED parking provision, and still greater investment in public transport solutions.

Abbey Barn North is a much smaller and environmentally sensitive site at the south end of Abbey Barn Road. Around 100 dwellings could be provided here, retaining the ecologically sensitive parts of the site, and contributing to the improvement of local bus services.

***Q34: Do you agree with a comprehensive approach to the development of RAF Daws Hill and the Abbey Barn sites, especially Abbey Barn South? If so, should Abbey Barn North be included?***

We suggest that the best (though by no means ideal) answer is: YES to the alignment of RAF Daws Hill and Abbey Barn South developments; NO to the inclusion of Abbey Barn North.

***Q35: Do you agree with the land uses being considered for the sites and the other potential infrastructure requirements identified?***

NO we do not agree. The alternative use for Abbey Barn South with a mix of homes and leisure use will reduce traffic movements – NO to any business element on the development. Abbey Barn South or RAF Daws Hill would best house the Sports Centre.

***Q36: Which of the options for the remainder of Abbey Barn South do you think are most appropriate?***

As above, and NO to any business element on the development.

***Q37: Which of the transport options do you consider to be the most appropriate? Do you have any other suggestions as to how to address the transport issues?***

We suggest that people MUST support the Daws Lea link (the alternative is unworkable and risks entirely undermining the public transport provision proposed).

*The only other way forward would be to insist that the sites be developed on the basis of a radically green transport solution, with conditions of ownership/occupancy including NO OWNERSHIP of a car, NO or SEVERELY RESTRICTED/CONTROLLED parking provision, and still greater investment in public transport solutions. This would probably not be considered to be a feasible option but highlights the problems that building on Abbey Barn would cause!*

### **ITF Page 113: Terriers Farm**

This site is proposed to provide some 400 dwellings, local shop and community facilities, and small-scale local employment. A 400-space Park & Ride site is also proposed, with bus priority measures incorporated into the junctions of Totteridge Lane/Amersham Road and Kingshill Road/Amersham Road.

We have already suggested that it is not an optimum location for a Park & Ride site. However, the only question posed in the WDC document is:

***Q38: Should we seek to include the Terriers House site within the allocation, whilst retaining the business development associated with Terriers House in some form?***

Wycombe Liberal Democrats wish to see a low carbon pioneering Eco Village at Terriers Farm. We believe that this will be a welcome initiative for those who both oppose and support development on this site. A large swathe of open space will be retained, as successful eco villages have no more than 2,000 residents. We propose a 400 dwelling village (for 1,000 residents) ranging from one bedroom to larger family properties. Homes will be built using the latest technology and non-toxic materials **to reduce the carbon footprint to a minimum**. Recycling and composting facilities will be integral rather than add-on. At its village centre there will be community facilities.

This village would require solar, wind and other renewable energy sources. Some of the features of this village could be; biological sewage treatment, organic food production with a market garden. The re-introduction and conservation of rare flora and fauna including dormouse, butterflies and the red squirrel if suitable habitat could be developed.

## **Page 116: Gomm Valley (including Ashwells)**

This is identified as a potential housing development site, with possibly up to 400 dwellings. However, the site is heavily constrained on environmental terms, being the last undeveloped chalkland valley in the High Wycombe area, with areas of ancient woodland, calcareous grassland, biologically diverse areas, with significant gradients and important views. There is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a Local Wildlife Site (there are known to be wild foxes and deer in the valley), key hedgerows, and an Archaeological Notification Site. At the southern end there is an existing office development, the whole valley is otherwise entirely unspoiled.

It is suggested that housing development is directed towards the areas of lowest impact: these would be primarily the area adjacent to Pimms Grove and Pimms Close, and the southern part of Hammersley Lane; it is suggested that a small extension to the existing business area would be accepted.

Site access would be via Pimms Grove and Cock Lane; from Hammersley Lane, and from the existing Gomm Road route underneath the railway bridge.

As well as housing, it is proposed that an on-site neighbourhood centre, local shops, community hall and playing pitches would be provided.

### ***Q39: What do you think are the most appropriate areas for development on the site?***

No part of it should be developed.

### ***Q40: What do you think of the potential site development principles?***

Without prejudice to our general view that the site should not be built upon, the development principles offered seem to us to be sound, except that we would question the value of providing playing pitches, given the lack of level ground on the site, and the continuing access to the remaining undeveloped parts of the valley.

At the top end of Gomm Valley, and to be treated separately, is a parcel of land at Ashwells. It is suggested that this could be developed with some 100 dwellings, plus open space and allotments, with access via Ashwells (and emergency access via Wheeler Avenue). A regular bus service (31) from nearby links to Hazlemere, Terriers, High Wycombe town centre and Downley, and it is suggested that the development would contribute to improvements to this service.

***Q41: Do you agree that we should allocate Ashwells and the rest of Gomm Valley separately?***

YES – we think Ashwells should be considered separately – and we could accept sensitive development on this site of homes for local people. We would expect local people to have considerable influence over the type and design of homes on the site, in conjunction of our preferred approach of inviting the local community to adopt its own 'Design Statement'

**ITF Page 121: Mixed Use Sites**

The WDC document goes on to discuss other current and proposed developments around the district. These include MU21 Wycombe Marsh. We believe this plan needs re-examination, as we are concerned that there is scope for increased traffic from the development using Abbey Barn Road, already likely to be blighted by 'rat-running' from the Abbey Barn South and Daws Hill development sites

The WDC document describes "Provision for future community development at a site within as part of the phase 1 development (as secured by the legal agreement of 2003) and with the possibility of a 700 sq. m. community development within the employment land as part of the phase 2 development (as secured by the legal agreement of 2007 as revised 2009)". We believe that the need for community facilities in the Wycombe Marsh area is pressing, and that Wycombe District Council should seek to secure such a facility in advance of the development of the MU21 site, if necessary using its own capital resources to procure it.

On page 123 a new policy for HM1 Holywell Mead is offered, allowing for possible re-development of the open-air swimming pool and Environment Centre. The policy "seeks to enhance the recreational and community role of the area through appropriate redevelopment, while recognising it is in a sensitive location at the heart of the Rye and that development will need to be of a very high standard". It is also suggested that the site could serve as a long-stay 'park and walk' car-parking site if and when it is not required for other uses.

**No opinion is solicited on this new policy development!**

**Liberal Democrats vehemently oppose any fundamental change to the Environment Centre or to Holywell Mead Swimming Pool. These need to remain as community buildings in the hands of the local council and of local people.**

**We also oppose any plans that see the adjacent car park utilised more than present, or which detract from serving the sports facilities adjacent buildings.**

Kingsmead Recreation Centre is also considered, where it is proposed that the netball centre is upgraded, with enabling small-scale residential development, and improved dual-use car parking, serving as a small-scale Park & Ride site during weekday daytimes, and serving the sports facilities in the evenings and weekends.

We oppose any further residential development on this site. Neither do we regard it as an appropriate site for a Park & Ride facility which, if developed at all, should more properly and effectively be provided at a site on the urban periphery – we have suggested the Railko site at Loudwater