

Councillor David Johncock

Cabinet Member for Planning & Sustainability, Member for Flackwell Heath and Little Marlow



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Mr D Winterburn (By E-Mail)

Your Ref:

Our Ref: DJ/NLP/02/18

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Date: 31st January 2018

Dear Mr Winterburn,

“KEEP COCK LANE SINGLE” – E PETITION

Thank you for the e-petition that you organised in response to the adoption of the Gomm Valley and Ashwell’s Development Brief, which requested that the Council withdraw the proposal in the adopted Gomm Valley and Ashwell’s Development Brief to both:

- a) Widen the norther 200m or so of Cock Lane; and,
- b) Connect it to the proposed Spine Road,

as it would, in your view, attract a flood of extra traffic from outside of the area.

The e-petition ran from 19 July 2017 to 20 November 2017 and attracted 539 signatories. As a result, under the Council’s petition scheme, you are entitled to a written response from the appropriate Cabinet Member and that is the purpose of this letter. I am sorry that I have been unable to respond more promptly to the petition and I apologise profusely for the tardy reply.

My response to this e-petition follows a number of parallel communications and meetings between yourselves and other representatives at Wycombe District Council and Buckinghamshire County Council, in respect of this matter and associated issues connected to the emerging Local Plan. I will not repeat the advice given but rather try to pull together the relevant strands and set out a road map of how we intend to take this matter forwards.

In preparing our plans for the Gomm Valley and Ashwells site we have undertaken a significant level of town wide transport modelling and analysis so that we can understand the impact of future traffic scenarios and additional development on the town. Of particular relevance to the Gomm Valley and Ashwells site the transport modelling has highlighted:



1. That back ground traffic growth (i.e. what would happen if we do nothing) is expected to grow by circa 20% from 2013 to 2026. Any development at the Gomm Valley and Ashwell's would be in addition to this background traffic growth. This is a consequence of more people driving (population pressure and peoples changing habits) and more people driving further for longer. This increase in traffic is expected to be spread evenly across the roads in the town including Cock Lane because on average drivers make rational travel choices based on time.
2. Cock Lane, in its current form, is at or beyond its safe carrying capacity at peak times and therefore cannot be expected to carry significant volumes of additional traffic. A road like Cock Lane when it is over capacity leads to motorist frustration and risk taking, which is detrimental to highway safety and also leads to additional congestion.
3. London Road, particularly at junctions (Cock Lane, Gomm Road, Hammersley Lane and Rayners Avenue) is also nearing capacity and is identified as a congestion hot spot.

In view of the known current capacity issues on Cock Lane and London Road and the expected level of background traffic growth, it was not considered that the Gomm Valley and Ashwells housing site (reserved for development for the last 40 years), which would inevitably put further pressure on this infrastructure, could be released for housing without improvement. It was in this context that the spine road concept, which includes the widening of a small section of Cock Lane (Circa 180 metres), was introduced. Given the current public funding squeeze it is entirely appropriate for the Council to seek to work with developers to ensure they deliver transport solutions as part of their developments, rather than just adding to a problem that then needs to be rectified using funding from the public purse, putting yet more pressure on the tax payer.

The creation of this hypothetical new road and junction improvements on London Road resulted in the transport model assigning a large number of vehicle movements to the new road because the model assumes a relatively straight unimpeded road (this will not be the reality). For the purposes of high level planning this demonstrates that a new spine road and improvements to the top section of Cock Lane can release transport benefits in terms of capacity and the flow of traffic (hence the high modelling figures). The reality however is that whilst we want to improve the existing situation and create additional capacity for vehicles to pass along the carriageway we do not want to encourage large numbers of vehicles to transfer onto Cock Lane and/or the London Road, which have their own capacity issues. Therefore, we intend through traffic calming, both natural (i.e. parked cars, driveways, alignment of the road etc.) and engineered solutions (i.e. traffic calming, junction designs etc.) to limit the attractiveness of Cock Lane and the new spine road, so that it will deal with traffic generated by the developments and background traffic growth, but will not draw a major quantum of additional traffic.

As more fine grained transport modelling and information on the design of the road becomes available (submitted as part of future planning applications) the impact of the road and its design requirements will become clearer. The designers will need to ensure that the road design reduces the assignment of traffic onto the new spine road to acceptable levels. This work will be done in tandem with the preparation of housing layouts for the site and therefore is not yet available. It will be incumbent on the Council to ensure that the flow of traffic on the Spine Road deals with additional movements resulting from the development and increased background traffic growth. The road will need to be designed so that it will not draw an unacceptable level of additional traffic through Tyler's Green. This is a policy position we are publically promoting through the emerging New Local Plan and believe we are capable of delivering. The Development Brief makes clear at paragraph 1.2 that as more technical work is undertaken and new finer grained detail comes forwards, that there is capacity to modify the requirements of the Brief to better deliver against its stated objectives.

You will be aware that the application for development at Ashwell's (a relatively small, yet important part, of the much larger reserve) has now been submitted and is currently out to public consultation. The reference number is: 18/05002/R9OUT. The plans and particulars relating to the application are available to view on the Council's website. Public consultation ends on 26 February 2018. I would advise that you make relevant representations in respect of this matter as this is likely to be the first formal decision that is made in respect of development at the Gomm Valley and Ashwell's reserve site.

The application for development at Ashwell's includes a Transport Assessment, which contains the first stage of finer grained transport modelling. Officers are currently consulting with the County Highway Authority in respect of this matter, which should inform the most appropriate next course of action. The County Highway Authority's response to the consultation and the officer's recommendation to members will be published on the Council's website in due course. Whilst it is my understanding that the application has not yet been called to Planning Committee for consideration, given the level of public interest it is anticipated that it will be at which time there will be further public debate in respect of this matter before a final decision is reached in respect of the Ashwell's application, which will include part of the widening of Cock Lane.

In conclusion, the petition has made clear the strength of public feeling surrounding this issue and the significant additional work that is required to satisfy all concerned before any final decision can be made. However, I do not believe that it is necessary to withdraw the Gomm Valley and Ashwell's Development Brief because it (and the emerging Local Plan) sets out the position that the new road should minimise and distribute the impact of additional traffic on the existing local road network, with specific reference to the potential impact of traffic passing through Penn and Tylers Green.

Finally, may I take this opportunity to thank you for submitting the e-petition because it has been very helpful in shining a spotlight on this issue and given me an opportunity to further clarify matters.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D A Johncock', written over a light blue rectangular background.

Councillor D A Johncock
Cabinet Member for Planning & Sustainability

Copy By E-Mail To:

Mr P Druce (Democratic, Legal & Policy Services)
Ms P Tollitt (Head Of Planning & Sustainability)