

Independent Examination of Wycombe Delivery and Site Allocations Plan

Matter 7 Issue 1

Further Statement by High Wycombe Society (025)

Policy DM1 - Transport Requirements of Development Sites

High Wycombe town is constrained by its valley location and the surrounding Green Belt and AONB. Due to general traffic growth and past developments, there is major congestion on all main roads approaching the town centre at peak times. Thus the cumulative impact of development to date has been severe and future major developments can only exacerbate this. The Highway Authority puts its faith in synchronised traffic light systems but experience shows that this is no cure-all and we have seen no improvement so far. Indeed, at some junctions, the existence of traffic lights has made the situation worse. We consider the Authority has been unable to find cost-effective improvements to mitigate these impacts to an acceptable level. There are therefore, in our view, some sites on which development will need to be refused.

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Matter 7 Issue 4

Further Statement by High Wycombe Society (025)

Policy DM3 - Former Bourne End to High Wycombe Railway Line

This text replaces the final four paragraphs of our original submission, to take account of recent detail announced by the Government of their intentions for the Great Western Rail Line and of a planning decision (Planning Application Ref. 12/05444/FUL) made this week by Wycombe District Council.

Strategic importance and economic growth

High Wycombe enjoys excellent rail connections to London and Birmingham. Developments already underway will add connections to Oxford and Milton Keynes/Bletchley, and Bedford.

The Thames Valley routes are to receive very significant improvements with CrossRail, giving connections to all London airports, a western connection to Heathrow, an interchange at Old Oak Common with HS1 and (should it proceed) HS2 and electrification of the Great Western main line to all key destinations.

However, all the growth and job opportunities that these improvements have the potential to provide will be unavailable to High Wycombe unless an integrated traffic-free public transport connection to the Thames Valley is planned for in the future.

Should the proposed additional electrification of the existing branch to Bourne end and Marlow not proceed, the lack of diesel access to Paddington, will almost certainly require that the existing Marlow service is re-instated as a light rail branch shuttle between Marlow, Bourne End and Maidenhead. The viability of such a service would be improved by extending this route to High Wycombe, thus allowing the overall service to be supported with the existing subsidy of the Marlow service and by sharing the vehicles.

The weakness of this proposal has already been demonstrated. A recent planning application to build houses in the cutting, which will considerably increase the cost and difficulty of providing this link, has had to be approved despite Councillors' misgivings. The decision was based wholly on the four-year-old appeal inspector's report, which in turn was based on the previous one, and the fear of financial penalty at appeal. At some point, the changed circumstances, and willingness of the Government to invest in rail infrastructure schemes to help the economy, has to be taken into account.

The now approved application only provides a 3m wide pavement, with a 4.8m estate road. This is neither a 5m wide green corridor, nor sufficient space for a light rail link.