

**Joint Buckinghamshire County Council and Wycombe District Council  
Position Statement for Highway Improvements to Abbey Barn Lane and the  
Abbey Barn Lane/Abbey Barn Road/ Kingsmead Road junction – ADOPTED  
MAY 2018**

**1. Introduction**

In November 2014 Wycombe District Council's Cabinet agreed to the release of the Wycombe Reserve Sites known as Abbey Barn North, Abbey Barn South, Gomm Valley & Ashwells, Terriers Farm and Slate Meadow. The Submission version of the new Wycombe Local Plan formally allocates the sites for development. One of the reasons for releasing these sites simultaneously was to allow the cumulative impacts of the sites to be identified, particularly in respect of transport, so that mitigating measures could be planned and appropriate contributions sought from developments. The High Wycombe Transport Framework (HWTF) (Jacobs, 2016)<sup>1</sup> was carried out to identify highway opportunities and constraints and to ensure planning decisions are appropriately informed.

This Position Statement from Buckinghamshire County Council (BCC) as local highway authority and Wycombe District Council (WDC) as local planning authority sets out the Council's response to the recommendations set out in the HWTF in relation to the Abbey Barn Lane area. It also takes account of further technical work commissioned by the Councils in 2017 considering the scope to realign Abbey Barn Lane and reconfigure the junction with Kingsmead Road.

This Position Statement is a material consideration that will be taken into account in assessing any planning applications on adjacent and nearby sites notably Abbey Barn South and Abbey Barn North.

**2. Abbey Barn Lane**

Abbey Barn Lane is an unclassified road measuring 1.3km in length with a speed limit of 60mph. To the south, Abbey Barn Lane joins Heath End Road in the form of a priority T junction. Provision for pedestrians and cyclists is generally poor, with no footway or cycleways and steep gradients that vary along its length.

To the north, Abbey Barn Lane narrows and both the vertical and horizontal alignments are restrictive. Over the railway bridge there is a section of single lane give-way working, which has poor intervisibility with vehicles frequently meeting on the bridge. There is a weight restriction of 18tn maximum gross weight on Abbey Barn Lane due to the weak bridge over the former railway line.

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<sup>1</sup> Reserve Sites Transport Framework, January 2016 – Available at:  
<https://www.wycombe.gov.uk/uploads/public/documents/High-Wycombe-Reserve-Sites-Transport-Framework-190116-Final.pdf>

The junction to the north with Kingsmead Road and Abbey Barn Road is a T-junction with a sharp change of vertical and horizontal alignment approaching the give way line with Kingsmead Road.

### **3. High Wycombe Transport Framework**

Traffic modelling undertaken to support the HWTF indicates that in 2026, the number of vehicle movements on Abbey Barn Lane will increase significantly as a result of background traffic growth, which includes that generated by the two Abbey Barn developments and Gomm Valley & Ashwells. The HWTF states that the narrow give-way bridge is not acceptable in its current form due to poor intervisibility caused by the vertical and horizontal alignment. The HWTF recommends that the bridge is either signalised or widened. The preferred solution is widening. The alternative option of signalising the railway bridge would do nothing to improve the substandard road geometry, or conditions for pedestrians and cyclists and would likely increase delays for traffic. The signalisation of the railway bridge has therefore not been supported as a long term solution.

Modelling also indicates that by 2026 the predominant traffic flow at the Abbey Barn Lane/Abbey Barn Road/Kingsmead Road junction will be from Abbey Barn Lane/Abbey Barn Road. Currently Abbey Barn Lane has to give-way to Kingsmead Road. The HWTF recommends a change in junction priority to support the predicted changes in traffic flows along Abbey Barn Lane. It is important that any changes to the junction ensure that the east-west cycle route along Kingsmead Road remains safe and attractive for cyclists travelling along the valley floor.

### **4. Policy Context**

The requirement to secure improvements to the Abbey Barn Lane area is in accordance with the adopted Local and National Planning Policy.

Paragraph 9 of the NPPF identifies that sustainable development involves seeing positive improvements in the quality of the built environments and that this includes *“replacing poor design with better design and improving the conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure”*.

Paragraph 32 of the NPPF requires:

*“Plans and decisions to take account of whether...*

- *Safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people.*
- *Improvements can be undertaken within the transport network that cost effectively limit the significant impacts of the development. Development should only be prevented or refused on transport*

*grounds whether the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe”*

Policy HW4 of the Submission Version of the Wycombe District Local Plan requires the access and layout proposals for the Abbey Barn North site to provide for the realignment of Abbey Barn Lane through the site where feasible. Policy HW5 requires the Abbey Barn South site to contribute to the realignment of Abbey Barn Lane and reconfiguration of the Abbey Barn Lane/ Abbey Barn Road/ Kingsmead Road junction subject to feasibility.

This is acknowledged in Abbey Barn South Development Brief, as set out in paragraph 6.5.3:

*“It is currently considered likely that the development at Abbey Barn South will need to contribute to the widening or other improvements of the existing road bridge crossing the former rail line on Abbey Barn Lane and the reconfiguration of the Abbey Barn Lane/Kingsmead Road/Abbey Barn Road junctions as well as other measures on the A40”.*

The Local Plan policies for Abbey Barn North and Abbey Barn South also require other contributions to transport improvements including for measures being led by the County Council for improvements on the A40 London Road corridor.

Any planning obligations and any financial contributions secured towards infrastructure will need to be in line with Regulation 122 of the CIL Regulations i.e. they should be:-

- Necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms
- Directly related to the development
- Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development.

## **5. Priorities for Abbey Barn Lane**

With the projected increases in traffic from both development and background traffic growth, Abbey Barn Lane will increase in importance as a Peripheral Secondary Arterial Route for High Wycombe.

The priorities for the Abbey Barn Lane area are as follows:

- Make Abbey Barn Lane of a suitable standard to accommodate projected future traffic flows.
- At the northern end replace the narrow give-way bridge to provide for two way vehicular movements

- Upgrade the junction with Kingsmead Road to take into account the predicted changes in traffic flows.
- Ensure safe access to the new development sites for all users, including pedestrians/cyclists.

It is not proposed to change the current weight limit on Abbey Barn Lane due to the weak bridge over the river, immediately north of the junction which is not being replaced. In addition Kingsmead Road is a traffic calmed residential road and we would not want to advocate its use by vehicles over 18tonnes.

The HWTF states that the preferred access to Abbey Barn North site is from a reconfigured Abbey Barn Lane/Abbey Barn Road/Kingsmead Road junction. It is noted however that an alternative would be to take access directly from Abbey Barn Lane which may be less constrained in terms of land ownerships.

## **6. Work undertaken to assess feasibility of realigning ABL**

In July 2017 consultants were commissioned by Wycombe District Council working in partnership Bucks County Council to test the feasibility of realigning the northern end of Abbey Barn Lane through the ABN site and reconfiguring the Kingsmead Road/ Abbey Barn Lane/ Abbey Barn Road junction.

An outline design of the preferred alignment and junction arrangement is set out in Appendix 1. An interim junction layout could be constructed to achieve the access to the proposed development site and enable the new road to be built in phases.

In January 2018 the Government announced its intention to make funding available through the Housing Infrastructure Fund (HIF) to assist in the delivery of the proposed realignment of ABL and the new junction with Kingsmead Road. Initial costings works demonstrates that this funding award will not be sufficient to deliver the full scheme

## **7. Development Principles**

The ABS and ABN developments will be expected to meet the following requirements:

- They must not prejudice the delivery of the road alignment and new junction as shown in principle the outline design in Appendix 1
- They must contribute appropriately to the realignment and new junction in accordance with the R122 tests so that together with HIF funding the new road and junction can be put in place in a timely way. This will ensure that the traffic from these sites have access to a safe and effective highway network that meets the reasonable needs of the users of these sites.

- There are different delivery and phasing options available. Delivery in a single phase would be preferred but to facilitate housing delivery, a phased approach is acceptable to the Councils, provided that, as far as possible any interim access arrangements to ABN is consistent with and supports the overarching aim of improving ABL along the new alignment with a new junction as shown in principle on the outline design at appendix 1.
- If required for the cost effective delivery of the scheme, development on ABN must facilitate the phased delivery of the works, and where possible opportunities should be taken to coordinate construction works so as to minimise the cost to the public purse.
- Whatever contributions these developments make by way of physical delivery and by way of any financial contributions must ensure that the delivery of the scheme shown in principle at appendix 1 can be assured taking account of the availability of HIF funding.

Further highway improvement schemes required in the Abbey Barn Lane area outlined in the HWTF, Local Plan Submission Version and the Abbey Barn South Development Brief include the following:

- Access to the ABS site off Abbey Barn Lane connecting through to the Pines Tree development.
- Three-arm roundabout will be constructed at the junction of Abbey Barn Lane and Heath End Road with Winchbottom Lane retained as a separate un signalised priority junction.
- Provision of a pedestrian crossing on Abbey Barn Lane the form to be agreed through detailed design.
- Reduced speed limits on Abbey Barn Lane and Heath End Road as appropriate.
- Improvements and/or contributions to improve walking and cycling facilities in the area.

### **8. Impact on the former High Wycombe – Bourne End railway corridor**

The new road alignment would cross the disused former High Wycombe to Bourne End railway corridor. Currently Policy DM4 of the Adopted Delivery and Site Allocations Plan, 2013 safeguards a 5m width of the route for the provision of a dedicated walking/cycling route.

Wycombe District Council commissioned a study into the business case of returning a heavy rail service between High Wycombe and Bourne End in 2017. This work is yet to conclude but the initial findings indicate that the restoration following the old alignment would be unlikely to meet Department for Transport

funding criteria in terms of benefit to cost ratio and value for money. Hence a heavy rail scheme along this alignment is not foreseeable.

There remains a good case for a dedicated walking/cycling along the former rail alignment. There should be careful consideration of what the opportunities for walking and cycling along the old railway are and the best way to join the highway network at Kingsmead Rd/ Bassetsbury Lane. Some provision of a grade separated pedestrian/cycle route under the new alignment may be required. If this cannot be provided an alternative route that provides for safe and attractive routes for walking/cycling should be put in place

## **9. Next Steps**

This Position Statement is agreed by both WDC and BCC and is a material consideration in assessing any planning applications for development at Abbey Barn North and Abbey Barn South.

Further detailed work is required to finalise the design of the realignment and new junction and to secure planning permission. This work will be progressed by the various delivery partners.

# Appendix 1 – preferred alignment and junction configuration – outline design

