



## The Wokingham Society

Registered as a Charity (No. 274988)

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16 November 2018

Dear Ms Knott

### **South Wokingham Strategic Development Location**

The Executive Committee of the Wokingham Society thanks you for the opportunity to offer the following comments, in line with the feedback questionnaire:

**Q1.** We heard about the exhibition from the leaflet and the local press.

**Q2.** We already knew about the South Wokingham Strategic Development Location (SDL).

**Q3** We were aware that the Borough Council would be bringing forward further plans for the remainder of the South Wokingham Distributor Road.

**Q4.** We accepted the content of the South Wokingham SDL Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) after contributing our response to it in draft. To the extent that the Consortium's draft masterplan follows the SPD we accept its principles.

**Q5.** The caveat that the individual planning applications will 'where possible' be policy compliant is somewhat worrying. It all depends what departures from policy are contemplated, and these were not stated in the exhibition material. We trust that the nature of such proposed differences will be made clear in the general planning application submitted by the Consortium. It is also not clear why the proviso is attached to the question of affordable housing, and it would be reassuring to know that the developers will not seek to avoid meeting the 35% minimum provision by bringing forward arguments of financial unviability. We do of course believe that the borough needs more affordable housing, particularly since a number of planning applications have been able to argue that this level provision would be unprofitable.

**Q6.** Since it is not clear what the Borough Council will be proposing for what it has called the 'sports hub' on the Grays Farm site, other than playing fields, it is difficult to judge what is required from the Consortium. Assuming that the Council will solely be meeting the outdoor sports requirement specified in section 1c(v) of the South Wokingham SPD, then we will look to the developers to provide all the other facilities set out in Design Principle 1(c) of the SPD: allotments; play areas; sports needing other space than playing fields, such as tennis and bowls recreational activities (eg skateboarding and BMX tracks); and suitable alternative natural green space as well as informal green areas around the housing.

**Q7.** Given the above answer, it does not seem appropriate that the Consortium should be seeking views within a survey of limited circulation to avoid provision of any of the facilities specified in the SPD.

**Q8.** The first two sections of Design Principle 4(a) of the SPD state:

4a(i): In accordance with the Strategic Framework Plan provided in the preceding section of this SPD, the development will provide for two Neighbourhood Centres to act as community hubs. One smaller centre will be located north of the railway, and one larger centre to the south.

4a(ii): Public and community uses should include two primary schools, primary health care provision, local community space and local convenience shopping. Sufficient land should be made available to achieve a reasonable level of future proofing and opportunity for expansion.

It is thus not merely a matter of inviting the public to agree with such specifications; they are requirements within the SPD.

**Q9.** Primary health care and convenience shopping are requirements, as set out above. A café, either within or separate from the community hub, would be highly desirable.

### **Other comments.**

#### *1. Public art: Design Principle 3f(i) states:*

A strategy for public art within the built areas should be prepared. This should make provision for the involvement of artists in place making at the local level. The strategy should make explicit the timing, funding and delivery arrangements for public art.

The developers could with advantage consult David Wilson Homes to find out how they approached the provision of public art on the Montague Park development, including seeking local views on what might be provided.

#### *2. Access to the SANG north of the Reading-Waterloo line, south of Hilton St Anne's Manor Hotel:*

This is an additional area not specified in the SPD but, as we understand it, provided to compensate for the SANG immediately south of the railway line being allocated for housing (in exchange for a SANG also being provided next to the Grays Farm site). We were told at the exhibition that access from the Consortium's development will be across the new road bridge from William Heelas Way. It would be better if there was a dedicated pedestrian and cycle crossing over or under the railway but, if that cannot be delivered, it is vital that safe pedestrian and cycle paths be provided on the approaches to and on the road bridge.

#### *3. The Emm Brook:*

As mentioned at the exhibition, it would be helpful if you were to approach the Friends of the Emm Brook (website: <http://www.foteb.org.uk/The%20Brook.html>) to discuss how the Consortium might assist with the enhancement of those sections of the Brook that cross the development land. Contact [info@foteb.org.uk](mailto:info@foteb.org.uk)

#### *4. Trees:*

Another local society worth contacting is the Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association (website: <https://wdvta.org.uk/index.php>) to discuss how best to care for ageing trees on site.

They have surveyed and catalogued as many veteran and other significant trees as possible across the Borough and are thus best placed to advise on this matter. The Chairman is Alison Griffin at *See Note Below*.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Must". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Peter Must  
Chairman

**Note**

Alison Griffin's email address has been excluded from this online copy of the letter for reasons of privacy. To contact Alison please go to the Wokingham District Veteran Tree Association's website <https://wdvta.org.uk/index.php>