

## **Response from Wroughton & Wichelstowe Parish Council to Swindon Borough Council's Regulation 18 Public Consultation on the Emerging Local Plan**

Wroughton & Wichelstowe Parish Council (WWPC) is not against development per se. Parish councillors understand that local people want and need somewhere to live, whether that's first time buyers, people who are downsizing, people who are relocating etc. However, any new housing needs to be in the right place, it needs to meet local needs, and the infrastructure needs to be delivered before residents move in, so as not to exacerbate the issues relating to the existing service provision which is already under pressure and over-stretched (eg: health service, education, sports and leisure) or even non-existent (NHS dental provision for adults as well as children, a larger supermarket), or create a two-tier provision for services including broadband and mobile phone coverage, EV charging, and the management of open spaces.

Residents understandably have little confidence in any kind of plan since Wroughton's Neighbourhood Plan 2016-2026 was largely disregarded due to Swindon Borough Council's (SBC's) lack of a 5 year housing land supply, which led to the unplanned development of 270 dwellings: on The Grange (144 homes), Ridgeway Park (103 homes), Langton Park (8 homes), Clevedon House (10 homes), The Check Inn (5 homes) as well as infill.

In addition, residents living on developments adjacent to and just outside of the Parish boundary use services within this parish, which impacts the availability of service provision to residents living in the parish eg: Burderop Park (84 homes). However, there has been no acknowledgement of this impact on existing residents through developer contributions (s.106 or CIL). We are also aware there is an intention to develop the Wroughton Park and Ride site which is also to be expected, an additional 340 homes to be built on the very outskirts of the parish.

In the Wroughton Neighbourhood Plan 2016-2026 (WNP) the community, including the Parish Council) identified 5 sites which could accommodate at least 150 new dwellings (see paras 3.5 and 3.9) as required under the existing Swindon Local Plan. Actually sites were identified where 173 homes could be built, of which 1 site (Hills site off Woodland View) has only recently started activity to clear and clean the site, and the building of the 104 homes probably will not start for another couple of years. Of the rest, only 13 houses currently have a granted planning permission on the site of Haskins car park on Sun Lane. ie: out of 173 homes to be built on the sites identified in the WNP 2016-2026, there is active planning permission for only 117.

In addition, outline planning permission was granted for 4,000 homes in Wichelstowe. Approximately 3,200 were allocated to Middle and West Wichelstowe, which are within this parish, over 20 years ago. Since then, 721 homes have been built and occupied in Middle and West Wichelstowe alone, which is approximately 10% of the existing parish. Swindon Borough Council has allocated 1,620 to be rolled over from the existing current local plan. That leaves 859 homes which have been planned, permitted, but remain unaccounted for.

Homes on Wichelstowe are built out at a maximum of 250 per year. Those 859 homes which are unaccounted for should be rolled over into the new Local Plan and deducted from the allocations on Wroughton's eastern boundary. This would completely negate the need for any development on Wroughton's eastern boundary.

Residents living in Middle and West Wichelstowe come into Wroughton for their community services and facilities including the health centre, as there are few facilities there other than Waitrose and a pub. A site for the new health centre at Wichelstowe was allocated from the outset but has still not been built. The number of people it was intended to serve will be significantly larger than was originally envisaged when the Wichelstowe outline planning application was submitted and granted. Realistically it will also serve the surrounding areas, including additional, unplanned development in Wroughton, as well as residents from East Wichel, Pipers Way and West Swindon.

### **Deliverability of Swindon Borough Council's proposed sites**

WWPC is concerned that the proposed housing development sites have not yet been fully or adequately assessed by Swindon Borough Council for deliverability, as site access has not been identified as a constraint, nor have the proposed accesses been set out for residents to consider.

It is impossible to see how access to these sites can be delivered without significant disruption to the A4361, one of only 2 roads in and out of Wroughton. WWPC is concerned that there is no highways infrastructure project at all to address the absence of those accesses and the impact on existing residents. Construction of all 3 new accesses, would all require junctions on a very short stretch of the A4361/ Swindon Road.

- Land east of Swindon Road (191 homes): The developers for Balmoral Land show a proposed access onto their site, but their proposal also includes additional land, and presumably therefore, additional homes, neither of which is identified on the Local Plan.
- Akers Land (300 homes): The existing road to Prospect Hospice incorporates a large gas main and is not adequate for the 300 homes which Swindon Borough Council proposes to build there.
- Berkeley Farm (365 homes): Wood Lane is currently too narrow to be used as an access road.

If Swindon Borough Council has investigated and overcome the access constraints, they should be open and transparent with residents about these as part of their Reg.18 public consultation.

How does Swindon Borough Council intend to ensure that any planning permissions which may be granted for their proposed sites would be built out within a reasonable timeframe? The site at Oak & Ash House, Brimble Hill (4 dwellings), Artis Farm (13 dwellings), Land adjacent to Berkeley Farm House (5 + 1 dwellings) and Haskins Garage (13 dwellings), Langton Park (48) are just 5 sites where planning permission for 84 dwellings has been granted but no homes have yet been built.

**It should be noted that since the beginning of the current Local Plan, 270 homes have been built and planning permission has been granted for an additional 84 which remain unbuilt. ie: Planning permission was granted during the existing Local Plan for 354 homes, The total of is way in excess of the 150 which was allocated to Wroughton Parish (excluding Wichelstowe).**

### **Infrastructure Projects**

Should any of the sites go forward into the Reg 19 consultation, then the following needs to be added into the Infrastructure Projects for the proposed development sites in Wroughton and Wichelstowe parish:

#### **Housing**

- Any housing on the proposed sites should include a minimum of 30% social housing and/ or affordable housing of different tenures to meet local need within the parish.
- Each site (including Wichelstowe) should also include a number of homes set aside for key workers to support Wroughton's & Wichelstowe's health and education needs and facilities.
- There is a need for housing for independent, elderly people who need to downsize; this is not retirement living which involves a high maintenance/ rental charge, but accommodation which is all on one level to meet the needs of those with impaired mobility, whatever the cause, which can increase with ageing.

### **Education Provision:**

- Given the increase in population since the beginning of the existing Local Plan, Swindon Borough Council should explain how and where the additional education provision will be provided for the proposed additional residents.
- Any primary school arising out of development of the proposed sites on Wroughton's eastern boundary needs to be built within easy walking distance of those new developments.

### **Healthcare provision**

- WWPC accepts that Swindon Borough Council cannot directly control or allocate healthcare provision. However, Swindon Borough Council needs to show where the facilities for that provision would be placed. Local residents are deeply concerned that there is currently insufficient healthcare provision for existing residents, and the proposal to build 1,031 new dwellings on Wroughton's eastern boundary would only exacerbate an already very difficult situation.
- Any policy relating to Healthcare infrastructure needs to be strengthened so it ensures the NHS has a deliverable plan as to how they will meet the existing and new healthcare needs of local residents. This should be easily understandable by residents as it is their number 1 concern.
- The NHS Hub needs to be built and staffed before any additional homes are occupied.
- Swindon Borough Council should allocate some new, affordable housing for key workers, including those required to staff existing and new healthcare facilities in Wroughton and Wichelstowe parish.
- A dental surgery to provide NHS services for both adults and children should be a requirement of any planning permission.
- A bus service whereby residents from Wroughton & Wichelstowe can catch a bus directly to GWH without having to go into the town centre and change – not ideal when you're either unwell, under stress, or both.

### **Highways:**

- New residents moving onto proposed development sites should be able to access safely all community facilities and services.
- A minimum of 1 controlled pedestrian crossing per development site on the A4361/ Swindon Road/ Moormead Road, together with a controlled pedestrian crossing outside Banks Place - the traffic has significantly increased since that development was built, and will increase again if any of the proposed sites are carried forward into the Local Plan 2026-2043.
- An assessment must be carried out into the significance of the impact of the proposed new development sites on vehicle and pedestrian safety on the B4005 Brimble Hill/ Marlborough Road/ Wharf Road and the A4361 Swindon Road/ Moormead Road/ Devizes Road/ High Street/ Church Hill, and surrounding residential roads used as shortcuts (eg: Perrys Lane and the roads through Elcombe & Salthrop).
- An increase in the number of residential properties along the eastern boundary from the Balmoral Land to Ridgeway Park will inevitably put significant pressure on the local road network, not to mention the impact of a significant number of construction vehicles. Construction routes must be conditioned as part of any planning applications to avoid known pinchpoints and reduce the risk of vehicles meeting head-on.
- Pedestrian routes into the centre of the village need to be safe and accessible for all members of the community (including those with impaired mobility) to enable them to access the services and facilities, the majority of which are within the centre of Wroughton.

## **Sports and Recreation**

- The Local Plan should acknowledge there is already a deficit of playing pitches and sports provision in Wroughton for existing residents. This deficit should be added to any addition required due to the proposed housing allocated for this parish.
- A new community sports hub is planned as part of the development in Middle Wichel. Therefore any additional sports and recreation facilities should be sited south of the M4 and within walking distance of the proposed new developments.

## **Community and Civic Facilities**

- The Ellendune Community Centre in Wroughton, and Wroughton Library receive no funding from Swindon Borough Council. The community centre charges for room hire and receives a lot of support from WWPC, including financial support when required. Wroughton Library is funded solely by WWPC.
- In addition to providing books for people to borrow, Wroughton Library provides a warm & welcome space during the winter, a welcome space during the rest of the year, acts as a safe space for the Parish Council's youth provision, runs weekly groups for both adults and children, and also acts as a meeting room, event space, amongst other uses. Its main constraint is the size of the room, which would require an extension.
- The Ellendune Community Centre acts as a central community space for Wroughton and the wider community south of the M4, with the Parish Council acting as a food bank referrer, coordinating the provision of free food, Healthy Start Vitamins, All Yours Boxes, a weekly Country Market, 2 local amdrum groups, and many, many more, as well as ad hoc uses for conferences, blood donor sessions, family parties, funeral wakes, and family contact sessions, amongst others. The increase in population as a result of Swindon Borough Council's proposed housing development will mean the Ellendune Community Centre will need more funding in order to accommodate the needs of the increase in local residents. It is a more effective and efficient use of money and resources (including staff) for the existing Ellendune Community Centre and Wroughton Library to be improved and extended, than for a separate smaller community centre to be built south of the M4.
- Funding, such as s.106 or CIL, from any proposed development should be specifically allocated in the Local Plan to enable both Wroughton Library and the Ellendune Community Centre to be reconfigured and/ or extended, so that more local groups can be accommodated and more residents can be supported and their needs met.
- The proposed sites would increase Wroughton's population south of the M4, on top of the additional residents during the past 10 years. However, the nearest supermarket is Waitrose in Mid Wichelstowe and the most expensive supermarket there is. There is nowhere local to access cheaper food. Public transport to larger supermarkets is to Waitrose only, and the walking and cycling infrastructure does not enable people to walk or cycle to Waitrose. Residents need either to drive further afield or pay more expensive prices to buy food in local convenience stores. For a village this size, there should be a larger supermarket south of the M4, within walking distance of the proposed housing development sites.
- SBC policies should be strengthened to encourage and enable local businesses to stay in Wroughton and not be priced out of the rental market.
- There needs to be a range of employment opportunities for local people and that includes local jobs.

### **Broadband & Mobile Phone connectivity**

- Officers were clear that they expect many residents in any of the proposed developments to work from home. Broadband on Wroughton's eastern boundary is poor for many existing residents. Any new developments should not result in a 2-tier service. No new developments should be started until all existing residents have equal access to a reliable, superfast fibre broadband and a consistent and reliable mobile phone signal.

### **Employment Opportunities:**

- Additional small-scale employment opportunities should be available to residents living within the parish, but should be proportionate in size and scale to complement the unique, village identity of this local area. ie: small-scale business parks, not large industrial sites.

### **Flooding and Drainage:**

- Following recent hosepipe bans, we question whether the system can cope with so many new homes and the increased demand of this resource. Equally, there is no explanation as to how the sewage system will be improved to cope with the increased demand. Both of these should be planned and implemented prior to any construction.
- Any proposed or new development must not exacerbate existing flood risks or existing flooding issues, whatever the cause.
- Any drainage/ sewage/ water/ river work required to improve existing infrastructure and stop/ reduce/ mitigate flooding should be carried out prior to any work being started on any site.
- All culverts in Wroughton should be added to Swindon Borough Council's Flood Management Strategy and all culverts should be identified as potential flood risks.

### **Utilities**

- It is not acceptable for any resident (existing or future) to experience power cuts (however short) when Swindon Borough Council is assuming that new residents will spend several days each week working from home. Any work required to improve and increase the electrical supply to ensure the power supply throughout Wroughton & Wichelstowe is reliable and sufficient for existing and all proposed additional homes, should be carried out prior to any construction.

### **Wildlife and Biodiversity:**

- There should be a policy to encourage & improve biodiversity, to ensure that Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) units should be replaced/ used on site where possible or otherwise within the parish, as close as possible to the development site.
- Wildlife and biodiversity assessments should be carried out prior to the Reg.19 consultation to ensure baseline data is available and recorded, otherwise it cannot accurately be assessed as a constraint, or for BNG purposes.