

Woodstock Community and Infrastructure Delivery Plan

Appendix 9 – Oxford Diocesan Board of Education feedback (September 2019)

Submission from Gordon Joyner, Deputy Director of Education, Oxford Diocesan Board of Education

Whilst naturally the school discussions have focused on both Woodstock C of E Primary School and The Marlborough Secondary School and on how they may grow to meet demand, it is also worth taking into account the schools just outside of Woodstock and the potential benefit or impact they could have on the Woodstock schools. In particular, there is a shared catchment area in Old Woodstock between Woodstock C of E Primary School and Wootton-by-Woodstock C of E Primary School.

It is noted that Woodstock C of E Primary school is an outstanding school and will continue to be under pressure to grow but the reality is that it cannot continue to grow indefinitely and regardless of the size, if it is full there will need to be alternative options, particularly for those families who miss the usual admission deadlines (which happens every year).

The proposed 120 homes north of Hill Rise are in a shared catchment for both Woodstock and Wootton-by-Woodstock C of E Primary Schools and they are likely to generate a demand for 30 primary places over time. Wootton has a relatively small school and provides a viable alternative option to the increasing size of Woodstock Primary (some families prefer a smaller school to a larger one). It has a capacity of just over 70 with 40 pupils currently on roll, so it would be able to accommodate all of the pupils generated from the Hill Rise development should they be able to get there safely.

Transport is clearly an issue in Woodstock and the surrounding areas, but this could be mitigated by improving the cycle routes from Wootton to Woodstock and more generally in the town. This would make it more attractive to get to school in a sustainable way. It is worth bearing in mind that improved cycle routes from Woodstock to surrounding villages would also have the benefit of encouraging secondary aged pupils to cycle into Woodstock which would clearly be assisting traffic issues.

If the surrounding schools are not considered and the plan is merely to keep expanding Woodstock C of E Primary School, it may, in time, lead to some of the villages schools becoming unviable and having to close. This would inevitably end up exacerbating the traffic issues within Woodstock as many of these families may turn to Woodstock for their schooling. This will clearly make the traffic worse and I doubt if this has been given much consideration at the moment.

Clearly it would benefit Woodstock and the surrounding villages if they all had strong and successful schools, so if all of the existing school capacity was utilised it would leave section 106 funding to contribute to other priorities. This would help create viable vibrant villages outside of Woodstock but with improved links which would be beneficial to all.

In addition, to improved cycle routes between Wootton and Woodstock consideration should also be given to a transport proposal to provide a bus service from the new development to the Wootton Primary School, combined with a community transport service for the village, which would significantly enhance the public transport connectivity between Wootton and Woodstock and provide a vital link for many village residents. Without this proposal, it is likely that even the existing limited connectivity outside of the village on the A44 would be reduced as a result of the proposed relocation of the bus turning circle from its current location outside of Wootton.

So in summary:

- If footpaths/cycleway links were in place between Wootton and Woodstock it would allow the best use of existing school facilities to be made and minimise traffic.

- If the bus route went as far as Wootton it would improve connectivity and minimise traffic.
- It would help to maintain existing facilities and not in time lead to more pressure being placed on Woodstock.