

14th November 2014

PIGGOTTS
CHURCH END
BLEDLOW
PRINCES RISBOROUGH
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
HP27 9PD

Councillor Marcus Angel
Wycombe District Council

TEL: 01844 345448

Dear Marcus,

The District Plan and Bledlow-cum-Saunderton

I am writing to summarise the Parish Council's concerns about the area plan.

Saunderton

We fully appreciate the need for new homes and understand the pressure to develop Wests Yard and the Molins site, but we are concerned that the layout of 'new Saunderton' will be most dysfunctional:

- The new Molins estate must have direct pedestrian access to Saunderton Station.
- Additional parking space needs to be found near Saunderton Station, perhaps by the Wests Yard development being redesigned to allow additional spaces on Slough Lane.

The short term expediency of planners driven by housing targets and developers driven by commercial considerations seems likely to leave Saunderton both dangerous and dysfunctional for posterity. My fellow councillors urge the district council and planners to carry out their duty to ensure that Saunderton is developed so that it works for the future generations, even at the cost of a few years' delay.

Princes Risborough Bypass

We are deeply concerned about the outline proposals for a road to be built to the South East of Princes Risborough. The AONB will already be under pressure from The Molins and Wests Yard developments. There is now a danger that the AONB will be threatened by the line of this road. Just as the railway contained the expansion of Princes Risborough for a century or more, this new road will invite south easterly expansion of Princes Risborough.

Please raise these concerns with the planners on our behalf. I have included a more detailed analysis overleaf.

Yours sincerely,



Simon Breese.

Proposed Saunderton Developments

There are currently two significant developments under consideration:

- Redevelopment of the Molins site, building approximately 213 new houses
- Redevelopment of West's Yard, building approximately 40 houses

Thus the Parish faces the prospect of 250 new houses, up to 1,000 new residents and about 500 additional cars. Whatever the planning guidelines, this is a rural area and two cars per household is the norm.

Traffic

Developers will correctly point out that there will be less commercial traffic because the businesses at Wests Yard will no longer be there, and the existing roads and junctions previously accommodated Molins. Unfortunately this is a fallacious argument: as there is little local employment the peak traffic periods are caused by people commuting to work and the school run – leaving the area in the morning and returning in the evening, while Molins and West's Yard Traffic flows runs in the opposite direction. I am uncertain how the planners view the historic traffic flow from Molins, but I understand when the factory was last fully active that a large proportion of the workers were bussed in.

Additional traffic from the two new housing estates is bound to increase the danger on junctions with the A4010 as traffic levels rise still further with the proposed expansion of Princes Risborough and the new relief road or bypass. The Parish Council believes the only safe and satisfactory solution would be to build a roundabout at the Haw Lane junction and perhaps also at the Slough Lane junction with the A4010.

Saunderton Railway Station

Depending on the capacity of the car park at Princes Risborough – once again filling up as the recession recedes – and the attractiveness of the Saunderton to London timetable, Saunderton Station has inadequate parking. At the height of the problem a few years ago when the timetable was more attractive, the roads surrounding the station were blocked to the extent that emergency vehicles often could not have gained access.

This situation will now get worse: a significant proportion of the residents of the 250 new houses are likely to commute by rail. When consulted by the Wests Yard developer, the Parish Council requested that the design provide additional road width and thus parking on Slough Lane. This has been ignored.

The only way to ameliorate the inevitable additional pressure on Saunderton Station and parking is:

1. To make additional parking provision, by widening Slough Lane for those using the station who live elsewhere.
2. To make available pedestrian access by the shortest possible route from the Molins site to the station, for those who will otherwise be tempted to drive because they are late or it is raining.

The current proposal from the Molins developer for pedestrian access to Saunderton Station is 1,600m – just under a mile (measured carefully on Google Maps), though the developer claimed it was ‘only 1,000m’. The developer’s proposed route is via Haw Lane, under the railway bridge (which often floods) along the A4010, back under the Slough Lane railway bridge (which often floods) to the station. Still worse, part of the proposal to ensure safe pedestrian access is to make the road under the Haw Lane bridge, single file and controlled by traffic lights, thus adding to the anticipated traffic congestion during rush hours!

While it is understandable that the Molins developer is driven by minimising commercial risk and planning delays, the planning authority should impose conditions to ensure that an already unsatisfactory situation is not made even worse, by requiring a path by the most direct route to the railway station. A few months’ delay may impose a cost on the developer but, once built, the street plan and access will be set for all foreseeable time.

As a point of information we understand from a local landowner that the previous developer was negotiating to acquire an adjacent field for this purpose until the data centre was shelved. A further alternative route would be to run a footpath alongside the track on railway land.

Education

Effectively, both Lacey Green and Bledlow Ridge schools are full. No satisfactory plan was offered beyond that CIL funds would be levied and might address the additional demand. The simple statement heard at the public consultation from the developer’s architect that both local schools have places is misleading:

- Bledlow Ridge has two places free at the time of writing.
- St Johns Lacey Green may have spaces. The RAF have recently moved some staff out of the area but this housing will no doubt be put to civilian use before long removing any free capacity.

Employment and Light Industrial Units

Many people in the area commute, and we understand the pressure on the District Council is to find room for housing. This may be the case, but the continued lack of cheap industrial space for new businesses will continue to harm the local economy. This is exacerbated by similar planning initiatives in Chinnor which are replacing existing light industrial accommodation with housing. The impact is very real. To give a simple example: the man who services my car in Chinnor can find no alternative accommodation this side of Aylesbury, and a bodywork business forced to leave Wests Yard can also find no local accommodation. We asked for some light industrial units at Wests Yard but again this has been ignored.

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty & Dark Skies

We support the planners attempts to avoid an estate with a suburban appearance, but there is another factor that needs attention – dark skies.

While it seems inevitable that brown field sites will be developed we are concerned that the character of the AONB is protected as far as possible. Bledlow-cum-Saunderton is not a

lighting authority as we support a dark skies policy, especially in the AONB. The recent exhibition of the Molins development assumed street lighting, we trust this will be refused.

‘Greater Saunderton’

Penelope Tollitt raised the concept of ‘turning Saunderton into a village with a sense of place’. This would include a village shop and perhaps additional housing development. The Parish Council is opposed to any additional development beyond Molins and Wests Yard as this would only bring additional pressure on the AONB.

A village shop would be an asset, but we question its viability. The shop in Bledlow Ridge struggles and is only just viable. This must bring the viability of a shop in Saunderton into question unless it was linked to the station in some way and able to benefit from the commuter footfall.

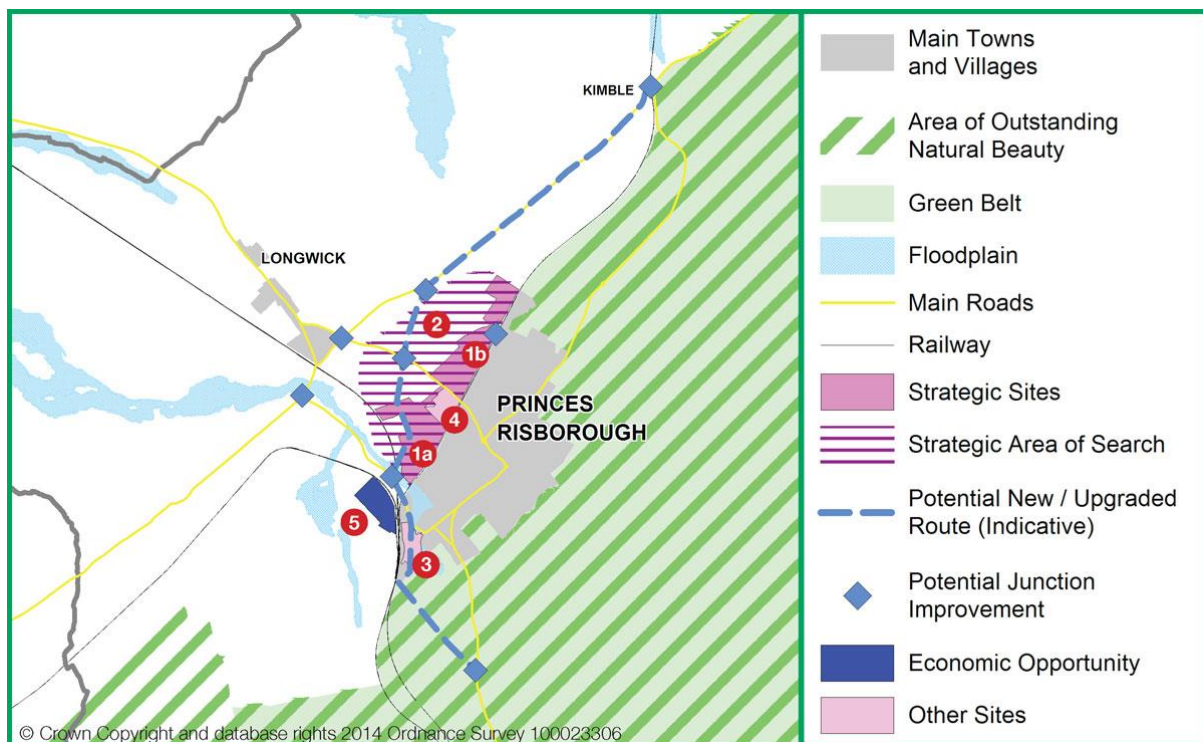
Princes Risborough expansion and proposed relief road

The current proposals are most unsatisfactory. We have asked for clarification and received no answer:

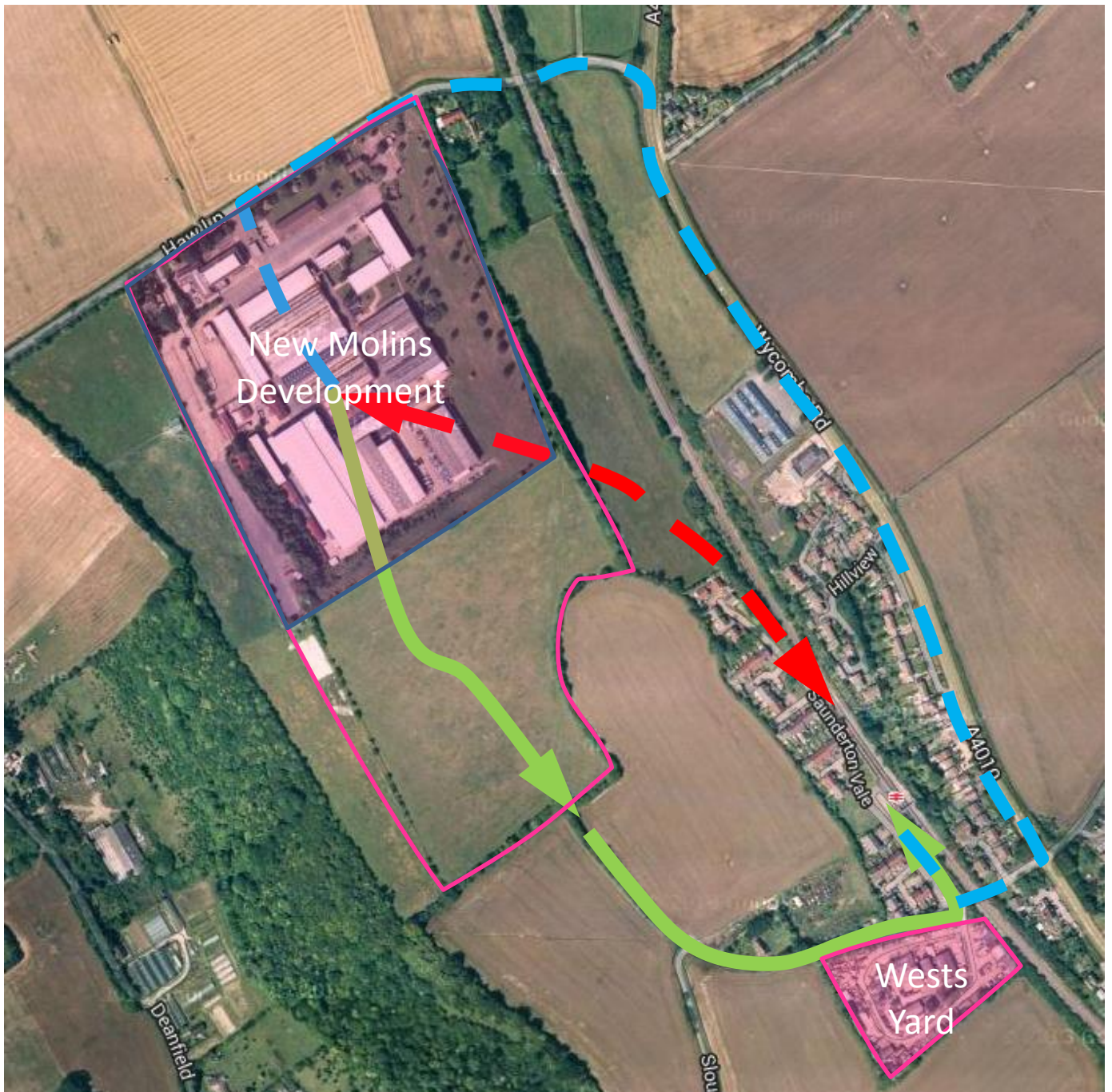
- Is the new road a bypass, or a relief road for local traffic?
- Will it be an A road or a B road?

We also note from August 2014 papers that an undefined ‘economic opportunity’ has been identified which would extend the industrial area of Princes Risborough still closer to Horsenden. Again our concern is to retain the rural character of the parish and to preserve the AONB.

We suggest the ‘yellow route’ (see p.6) would help to prevent the gradual encroachment on the AONB but that the rural character of Horsenden should be retained at all costs.



Saunderton Railway Pedestrian Access



Route	Distance from centre of new development
Blue hatched route proposed by developer	1,600m
Green route using existing rights of way where possible	1,000m
Preferred red route	700m

Princes Risborough Bypass/Relief Road

Red route

The Parish Council totally opposes this route in WDC's outline planning proposals joining B4009 at Summerleys Road.

It would encourage the future spread of Princes Risborough within the AONB, and also have ruin the rural character of Horsendon.

Green Route

In WDC outline planning proposals via Picts Lane, joining B4009 to West of Longwick

Yellow Route

Preferred by Bledlow-cum-Saunderton council minimising impact on the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and discouraging the future spread of Princes Risborough.

