

Consideration of the Petition received - Save Cobbles Farm. Stop the M40 Junction 3a plans.

Cabinet Member: Councillor N Marshall

Wards Affected: Various but particularly Ryemead, Little Marlow and Flackwell Heath, and Tylers Green and Loudwater

Officer contact: Ian Manktelow Ext:3579
Email:ian.manktelow@wycombe.gov.uk

PROPOSED DECISION

That the impact on Cobbles Farm of a potential new motorway junction ('Junction 3A') and business development be taken into account in any more detailed assessment of options that may be taken forward for this area.

Reason for Decision

The Cabinet is required to consider the petition under the Council's Petition Scheme

Corporate Implications

1. The Cabinet are required to consider the petition under the Council's Petition Scheme. The petition raises a number of issues relating to the potential for a major business development and motorway junction between High Wycombe and Flackwell Heath which in turn raises a number of corporate implications including financial, legal and risk issues. These issues will need to be taken forward and considered as part of the ongoing work on the new Local Plan.

Executive Summary

2. A petition to save Cobbles Farm was presented to Council in July 2014, which contained 1617 signatories. The Chairman indicated at the meeting that the petition would be validated against the Council's Petitions Scheme and that Members would be informed outside of the meeting how the petition would be administered once the validation had taken place.

Background and Issues

3. The validation had taken place and as there were 1,617 signatures the Council's response to the petition was either:
 - (1) Referral to the Cabinet (as it comes within the band of 1,501 – 7,999); or
 - (2) A full Council debate (for local issues which only affect one ward requires 500 signatures, which need to be from the ward affected)
4. In accordance with the provisions of the Council's Petitions Scheme, the Head of Democratic, Legal and Policy Services had considered the petition wording and, in summary, considered that it is primarily objecting to the Council's proposals to create a new junction (Junction 3A) on the M40 motorway, which as a consequence affects Cobbles Farm. This junction had been identified in

the Council's Local Plan consultation and included the identification of three main potential parcels of adjacent land that could be developed alongside this junction to help meet the future needs of business in the town/district.

5. The Head of Democratic, Legal and Policy Services had concluded that this matter was not just a local issue affecting one ward, given it is a major proposed development for the benefit of the District as a whole.
6. The petition was therefore referred to an appropriate meeting of the Cabinet for discussion.

Wording of the Petition

7. *Petition to note that Wycombe District Council published the Local Plan in February 2014. In it they identify an opportunity to create a further Junction on the M40. As a consequence our local riding stables and Livery Yard - Cobbles Farm is threatened by CPO and the possibility of demolition. Cobbles Farm is a valued local business: providing a home for many horses - a lot of whom have been re-homed at Cobbles after very difficult episodes in their lives; teaching a lot of local children to ride and to take responsibility, plus inspiring them in future career choices. Plus we believe that the preservation of the countryside is important, providing a green barrier between High Wycombe and Flackwell Heath.*

Petition signed by 1,619 people.

Response from the Cabinet Member for Planning and Sustainability

8. To start with I would like to acknowledge the sensitivity of the option that we published earlier in the year in the Local Plan Option Consultation to consider the possibility of a major new business development and new motorway junction between Flackwell Heath and High Wycombe (so called Junction 3A). Inclusion of this option is not something we did lightly and I recognise the concerns that it has raised.
9. I would also like to emphasise that it is just an option that we are exploring – no decisions have been taken. Within that option there are different ways that any new junction might connect to the wider road network, some of which could have a significant impact on Cobbles Farm. However there are many issues to resolve if the idea of an option is to be taken forward as a firm proposal, not least the views of the Highways Agency, securing the necessary funding for it, and addressing the wide ranging environmental and other issues that such a proposal raises. This will not be a quick process but I want to ensure that the work moves on in a timely manner to ensure that we can provide greater certainty one way or the other to residents and businesses such as Cobbles Farm who quite understandably are very concerned about how it will affect them.
10. One of the important next stages of work will be to look more closely at the options for how any junction might connect to the wider road network and trying to narrow down those options, as well as continuing our dialogue with the Highways Agency. This will either remove uncertainty in relation to Cobbles Farm or require more detailed consideration of how the business might be

affected and how measures can be put in place to address the impacts on the business and hence the impacts on the many people who benefit from your business. We would clearly want to work closely with you on this and share that work as it progresses.

11. Indeed, as was mentioned at the public meeting in the summer we are looking to set up a liaison group made up of representatives from the local community to provide a mechanism for sharing the latest information and to receive feedback on that work.
12. You are right to highlight the role that the countryside in this area plays in providing a green gap between Flackwell Heath and High Wycombe. The degree to which such some separation could be maintained through the masterplanning of a development area is another important issue going forward and will also need to inform the ultimate decision about whether to proceed.

Background Papers

Link to the petition as featured on the Council website: <https://councillors.wycombe.gov.uk/mgEPetitionDisplay.aspx?ID=73&RPID=29711799&HPID=29711799>

Link to petition hosted on the direct gov uk website: <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/63890>