

Divisions affected: *Chalgrove and Watlington*

**CABINET MEMBER FOR HIGHWAY MANAGEMENT –
14 OCTOBER 2021**

**WATLINGTON – B480 CUXHAM ROAD: PROPOSED BUS STOP
CLEARWAYS**

Report by Corporate Director, Environment and Place

RECOMMENDATION

1. The Cabinet Member for Highway Management is RECOMMENDED to approve the proposed bus stop clearways on the B480 Cuxham Road as advertised.

Executive summary

2. This report presents responses received to a statutory consultation to introduce bus stop clearways on the B480 Cuxham Road as shown at Annex 1.

Financial Implications

3. Funding for the proposals has been provided by the developers of adjacent land.

Equality and Inclusion Implications

4. No implications in respect of equalities or inclusion have been identified in respect of the proposals.

Sustainability Implications

5. The proposals would help facilitate the use of public transport.

Consultation

6. Formal consultation was carried out between 12 August and 3 September 2021. An email was sent to statutory consultees including Thames Valley Police, the Fire & Rescue Service, Ambulance service, Bus operators, South Oxfordshire District Council, Watlington Parish Town Council and local County Councillor.
7. Two responses were received during the formal consultation. These are set out at Annexes 2 and 3.

8. Thames Valley Police did not object.
9. Watlington Parish Council objected to the proposal on the grounds that it does not take into account any rerouting of bus services to better serve the Red Kite development and the developments on sites Wat B and Wat C and also that it would risk damage to the local environment, in particular to the chalk stream that lies within 4.5 metres of the shelter.
10. Watlington Environment Group's Watercourses Project objected to the proposed bus shelters on the grounds that the stream running alongside the road on its south-west side (the Cuxham-bound side) is a chalk stream, a particularly sensitive and special habitat due to its high-water quality that was able to support specialist species. The erection of a bus shelter and associated removal of two trees and other vegetation on the side of the road, would remove the protective vegetated buffer and thus expose it to significantly more disturbance and, in particular, littering. They believed this damage would be significant and not justified by any conceivable benefit from the shelter and, therefore, were of the view that the project should not be proceeded with in its current form.
11. Noting the above, while acknowledging the possible future rerouting of bus services in the village, it is recommended that the bus stop clearways are approved so as to ensure the planned bus stops are available for use by the bus service given that this would also be a low-cost measure to remove should the bus route change.
12. The provision of bus stop shelters is outside the scope of the consultation on the bus stop clearways and discussions will be held with the relevant parties (including officers, the developer and Watlington Parish Council and the Watlington Environment Group) to determine a way forward on this matter.

BILL COTTON

Corporate Director, Environment and Place

Annexes

Annex 1 Consultation Plans

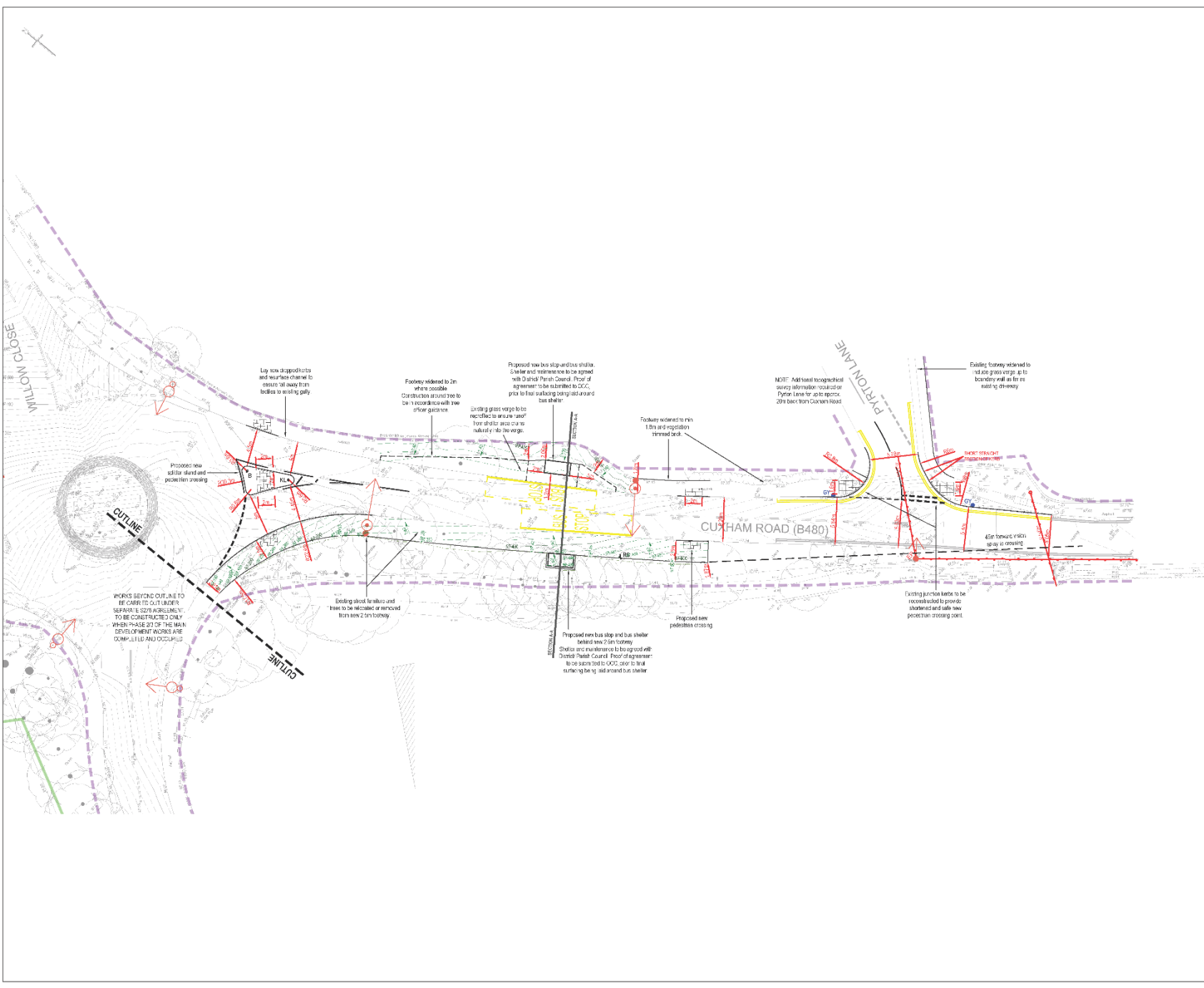
Annex 2 and Annex 3: Consultation responses

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October 2021



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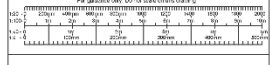
- Notes**
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 - If received electronically it is the recipient's responsibility to print to correct scale and with dimensions as stated on sheet.
 - This drawing should be read in conjunction with all other notes, drawings and specifications.


Legend

- Site Boundary
- Existing Highway Limits Boundary
- Proposed Levels and Gradings
- Proposed new gully located on new kerbside
- Proposed new gully on new kerbside
- Proposed footway gully in existing subgrade for use in footway / proposed road

Refer to drawing JKK10252-102 for site clearance
 Refer to drawing JKK10252-104 for setting out and paving
 Refer to drawing JKK10252-105 for construction details
 Refer to drawing JKK10252-106 for typical sections

P5	Issue following ODC comments. Footway extended to top of slope with a pedestrian crossing. Existing kerbside removed. Existing kerbside to be reinstated. Existing kerbside to be reinstated. Existing kerbside to be reinstated.	JG	KJ	10.12.20
P4	Issue following ODC comments.	JG	KJ	10.12.20
P3	Issue following ODC comments.	JG	KJ	02.07.20
P2	45m forward vision splay as required.	JG	KJ	14.05.20
P1	FIRST ISSUE	JG	SWP	12.12.16
New	Description	By	Cost	Date





RPS

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Client **BLOOR HOMES**

Project Land at Britwell Road, Watlington

Title Cuxham Road S278 Works General Arrangement Plan

Status: Preliminary	Scale: 1:200 @A1	Date Created: 12.12.2019
Project Leader: SWP	Drawn By: JB	Checked by: SWP

Drawing Number: JKK10252_100	Rev: P5
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RESPONDENT	COMMENTS
(1) Traffic Management Officer, (Thames Valley Police)	No objection
(2) Watlington Parish Council	<p>Object - It is an important issue to Watlington, as I think you will recognise, and I hope that it is possible to put this aside until the plans for the proposed Edge Road has been approved and the bus companies have had a chance to consider alternative routes using the Edge Road. At this stage it is our concern that money spent on this will have a short life with bus traffic being removed from Cuxham Road once the Edge Road is available.</p> <p><i>[See Annex 3 for detailed comments]</i></p>
(2) Local group/organisation, (Watlington Environment Group's Watercourses Project)	<p>Object - The stream running alongside the road on its south-west side (the Cuxham-bound side) is a chalk stream, a particularly sensitive and special habitat due to its high-water quality that is able to support specialist species. The erection of a bus shelter, and associated removal of two trees and other vegetation on the of the road, will remove the protective vegetated buffer, and thus expose it to significantly more disturbance and, in particular, littering. We believe this damage will be significant, and not justified by any conceivable benefit from the shelter*. Accordingly, we believe the project should not be proceeded with in its current form.</p>



Watlington Parish Council

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CONSULTATION – B480 Cuxham Road (Watlington) Proposed Bus Stop Clearways

Watlington Parish Council has raised objections to this proposed new bus shelter since April 2020 with no apparent response from Bloor Homes, SODC or OCC.

WPC fully accepts that Condition 20 to the SODC planning approval for the Red Kite View development cannot be removed as it forms part of the pre-commencement conditions and that it is for the LPA (SODC) to rule on its implementation. However, OCC, as the Highways Authority, is the sole statutory consultee for this application and as such should have a view on its delivery that takes into account the views of the local community.

The Parish Council's objections to this proposal are two-fold:

- It does not take into account any rerouting of bus services to better serve the Red Kite development and the developments on sites Wat B and Wat C. These sites were included in the Watlington Neighbourhood Development Plan which was adopted in 2019 with a large majority (86%) of residents voting for its adoption.
- It will risk damage to the local environment and in particular to the chalk stream that lies within 4.5 metres of the shelter.

On the positive side, we welcome the provision of a pedestrian crossing for Cuxham Road to provide access to the industrial estate and to the new homes on the Red Kite View site. We do however query the need for two pedestrian crossings less than 50 metres apart especially as people walking along Cuxham Road towards the town centre are forced to cross the road twice more at places without marked crossings because of incomplete footpaths on both sides of the road.

Similarly, we welcome a crossing for Pyrton Lane. The acute angle of the turn and the poor visibility for both motorists and pedestrians makes this crossing very dangerous particularly as it is used by children crossing on their way to and from school. This pedestrian traffic will increase significantly once the Red Kite View development is completed. OCC needs to ensure that there is consistency between this plan and the proposals currently being developed by OCC for a crossing of Pyrton Lane slightly further away from the junction. This crossing is part of plans for improvement of pedestrian safety on Pyrton Lane which includes a new pedestrian crossing about 15m from Cuxham Road which would go to a new area of pavement built as an extension of the verge between Pyrton Lane and lane that leads to St Leonards church. Both crossings are clearly not needed and the one offset from the junction offers greater safety as it follows the route naturally taken by people walking from the church towards Cuxham Road.

Rerouting of bus services

WPC has proposed on several occasions that the bus route would better serve the residents of the Red Kite view development and the proposed developments of sites Wat B and Wat C if bus stops were provided along the Edge Road. A single stop on Cuxham Road will leave some residents of the new developments having long walks. Department of Transport guidance (Inclusive Mobility, 2005) recommends a maximum walk to the nearest bus stop as being 400m (about a quarter of a mile) with use of public transport falling sharply if the distance is more than 200m, especially for disabled or elderly people. The furthest homes on the Red Kite View site will be more than a 400m walk from the bus stop, and certainly well over the 200m mark. A single stop about midway along the Edge Road through Red Kite View would provide a better service to residents.

WPC understands that the proposed positioning of the new bus stops on Cuxham Road is not something Bloor Homes is wedded to and we are surprised that they have submitted this application, rather than proposing to provide a stop on the Edge Road when it is eventually completed. If the proposal to reroute bus services around the Edge Road is adopted, a bus shelter on Cuxham road would be redundant, while one on Edge Road could serve not only the residents of Red Kite View, but would also be within acceptable walking distance of residents of Marlbrook. If the sites B and C developments provided a similar single bus stop, this would be even more suitable for Marlbrook.

We realise that this will require support from the bus operators, Thames Travel. The current drive for sustainable transport would justify an increase in bus provision from Watlington, and the increase in the total number of homes in Watlington by nearly 50% should provide further impetus for such a change.

This is an issue that needs to be addressed with some urgency now that work on the road through Red Kite View has commenced. The provision of a bus lay-by is not part of the plan for the site but could be if action were taken now. Pushing ahead with this proposal for a bus shelter on Cuxham Road risks spending money on infrastructure that will have a very short useful life and could be totally redundant once the Edge Road is complete.

The bus shelter on the north-east side of the road would appear to be largely redundant as that stop is currently used only to drop passengers. There is very little chance of people waiting here for bus that can only take them into the town centre. If provision were made in the Red Kite View for homes for the disabled or elderly there might be some justification for the shelter, but there is no such provision.

Environmental Harm

The concern here is partly loss of the attractive green screening that hides the industrial site, but of higher priority is the loss of protection for the chalk stream that runs through the area.

The proposed works involves land in close proximity to the Chalgrove Brook. This is a chalk stream and designated Main River supporting a population of wild trout with proven

potential to reach Watlington, and this stretch of stream has also been the subject of significant habitat enhancement work by local volunteers to improve suitability for trout and associated species. Since this is designated as a Main River, and the work is taking place within 8m of it, consultation with the Environment Agency is required. Such chalk streams are internationally rare and require protection.

Accordingly, it is essential that any work that takes place, including the proposed removal of trees, and (unspecified) clearance of other vegetation, is fully explained and justified, and done with the greatest of care, in a way that does not cause damage to the stream and its environs.

Additionally, any associated changes in the character and future management of the adjacent land must not lead to adverse impacts to the stream and its associated buffer, and that any risks are mitigated; these include run-off from any chemicals used, and greater littering. Any opportunities to deliver habitat measures that would be of benefit to the stream need to be taken.

Construction of a bus shelter on the north-bound side of Cuxham Road will involve the loss at the substation of two substantial birch trees on the new 2.5m pathway to the shelter, as well as a smaller laburnum tree closer to the roundabout. There are further trees behind these three so screening of the industrial building behind will not be entirely lost. Where the shelter is to be erected is mainly hawthorn, with at least two trees having to be removed to make sufficient space for the shelter behind the 2.5m pathway. This will place the rear of the shelter at about 2 to 3 m from the stream with no established trees between the shelter and the stream. However, there are trees on the far side of the stream so again the industrial building will be partially screened from the road. If the shelter is placed there some smaller trees or shrubs should be planted there, both to help with the screening the industrial building and more importantly to help make the stream less accessible.

To allow full assessment of the impact of construction of the shelter the site clearance and sections drawings (JKK10252-102 and JKK10252-106) need to be included in the information provided for this consultation.