

Whittington Parish Council

One Parish : One Community



Response to Abbotswood Ridge South Public Consultation

Whittington Parish Council wish to register serious concerns about both the consultation process itself and the lack of meaningful information provided to enable residents to give informed feedback on a development of this scale.

Consultation Process

Firstly, it is difficult to regard this exercise as a genuine consultation. The format presented is essentially a short survey consisting of a limited number of questions and tick-box responses, accompanied by a free-text box. A consultation should involve discussion, detailed information sharing and an opportunity to meaningfully influence proposals. Six high-level questions are not representative of the scale or significance of a development of this magnitude. It is essentially a 'tick box' exercise where the lack of detail makes it very difficult for residents to raise specific concerns, but it will make it easy to later claim that no issues were identified during consultation.

The material presented reads more like a promotional brochure than a consultation document. The emphasis appears to be on marketing the benefits for future residents, illustrated through imagery of tree-lined boulevards, children playing and families enjoying open space, while very little attention is given to the impact on existing communities and infrastructure. This imbalance is deeply concerning.

Additionally, the consultation material states that this exercise is "entirely separate from the ongoing preparation of the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review." It is unclear why this should be the case as developments of this scale should be closely aligned with the planning framework set out in the South Worcestershire Development Plan.

Whittington Parish Council were not directly informed about this consultation, and presumably neither were other key stakeholders, and so there is serious concern that the consultation will not have reached the most important respondents. The consultation period was also unreasonably short. For a proposal of this scale, affecting multiple communities and potentially thousands of residents, the timeframe provided is insufficient.

Impact on Existing Communities

The consultation documentation contains very little assessment of the impact on existing residents and communities, such as Whittington. Existing infrastructure in surrounding villages and settlements is already under significant strain but the consultation material focuses almost entirely on the experience of new residents. Key issues that require proper assessment include:

- Increased traffic through nearby villages
- Pressure on health services and local facilities
- Environmental and amenity impacts
- Construction impacts lasting many years

Without a clear and transparent assessment of these effects, residents cannot properly evaluate the proposal.

Active Travel Corridors

The consultation refers to active travel routes, but provides little clarity on how these will function safely in practice. Specific concerns include:

- How National Cycle Route 442 will be protected and remain safe for cyclists
- How traffic will be prevented from rat-running through nearby villages such as Stoulton. Simply designating roads as “access only” does not prevent rat-running, experience in Whittington shows that drivers frequently ignore such restrictions and without physical traffic management measures, these routes will inevitably be used as shortcuts.

Surface Water and Drainage

Surface water management is a major concern in this area due to clay soils and known drainage issues. There are several unresolved questions:

- How will pollutants from surface water runoff be prevented from contaminating natural habitats and waterways?
- What assurances will there be regarding the long-term maintenance and management of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)?
- Will there be a binding contractual mechanism for ensuring these systems are properly maintained in the future?

Experience elsewhere has shown that drainage infrastructure often deteriorates without clear long-term management arrangements.

Additionally, footpaths and walking routes must be designed with surface water conditions in mind. Materials used must be capable of withstanding heavy rainfall and flooding. Similar paths built in nearby developments (such as Whittington Walk) have already proven unsuitable in wet conditions.

At present there is no credible plan for water supply, drainage or foul waste management presented in the consultation material.

Health Infrastructure

The consultation does not adequately address health infrastructure requirements associated with such a significant population increase. Questions that remain unanswered include:

- How will hospital capacity accommodate the additional population?
- What provision will be made for primary care services?
- Has cemetery provision been considered as part of long-term community infrastructure?

These are basic elements of sustainable community planning and need to be addressed transparently.

Transport and Infrastructure

The transport proposals presented are vague and appear to rely on infrastructure that does not yet exist,

in particular, the plans refer to links such as the A44 link road which may not be delivered for many years. This raises important questions:

- How will construction traffic be managed before this infrastructure is built?
- What measures will prevent surrounding villages from becoming construction traffic routes?

There also needs to be a clear commitment to accessible bus services particularly for residents who cannot drive due to age, disability or financial circumstances.

The consultation document states that: “the new development will be designed so that walking, cycling and public transport are the most attractive forms of local transport”. This claim does not reflect the current reality of transport provision in the area, which is heavily reliant on private car usage. For public transport to become genuinely attractive, services would need to operate at a

frequency and connectivity comparable to systems such as those in London. Without frequent, reliable and wide-ranging bus services, most residents will continue to rely on private cars for day-to-day travel.

There is also confusion regarding the Stoulton Relief Road as it is unclear whether the developer is proposing to construct the entire relief road, or only a small section within land currently under their control. If only a partial section is being proposed, this must be made explicit otherwise the consultation risks misleading residents regarding the extent of the infrastructure being delivered.

Cumulative Impacts

Finally, the consultation fails to address the cumulative impacts of development in the wider area. This proposal is not an isolated project, it forms part of a wider programme of residential development, industrial units and major infrastructure works. Together, these developments will generate significant cumulative impacts, including:

- Increased traffic
- Higher noise pollution levels
- Air pollution
- Environmental degradation
- Loss of amenity
- Increased pressure on health services and infrastructure

Without addressing these cumulative effects, the consultation does not provide a complete or robust understanding of the true impact on residents, the local landscape, or existing infrastructure.

Conclusion

In its current form, this consultation does not provide sufficient information or opportunity for meaningful public engagement. For a development of this scale, residents expect a detailed and transparent consultation process, supported by clear infrastructure plans and a full environmental and cumulative impact assessment. There should be full and proper regard for existing communities and how the negative impacts of the proposals will be adequately mitigated. Until this information is provided, it is extremely difficult for residents to offer informed feedback.