



# GROVE PARISH COUNCIL

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GPC/Open Letter July 2026

By Email

The Rt Hon Bridget Phillipson MP Secretary of State for Education  
The Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government  
Olly Glover MP Member for Grove  
Matthew Barber Thames Valley Police and Crime Commissioner  
Councillor Tim Bearder Leader of Oxfordshire County Council  
Dr Martin Reeves OBE Chief Executive Oxfordshire County Council  
Councillor Bethia Thomas Leader Vale of White Horse District Council

8 July 2026

## **Open letter regarding Road Safety on Liberator Lane, Grove adjacent to the new St Johns Academy Secondary School site**

This 'Open Letter' refers to the safety concerns that Grove Parish Council (GPC) has regarding road safety arrangements for the new secondary school in Grove. This open letter has the support of the St Johns Academy senior leadership team.

The new St John's CE Secondary Site in Grove is due to open its doors for the first time at the beginning of September 2026 to pupils from the local area. The school is situated at a crossroads with Liberator Lane/Dakota Drive/Arnold Way and Douglas Drive within the new Wellington Gate development of some 2,500 dwellings (just over a thousand have been occupied and built so far) in Grove, with the main access to the school from Liberator Lane. This is also the principal entry and exit route for the entire Wellington Gate development.

Liberator Lane is now a very busy road, and traffic regularly travels along it at significant speeds, particularly during the school arrival period between 8:00am and 8:45am. While the speed limit is understood to be 30mph, there are currently no speed limit signs along the road to indicate this, and vehicle speeds frequently appear to exceed the limit. This is of particular concern given that roads near schools are commonly subject to reduced speed limits of 20mph.

There is currently no designated or safe crossing point for pupils, staff, parents, or other pedestrians wishing to access the school from anywhere north of Liberator Lane.

This situation has arisen because Oxfordshire County Council (OCC) either failed to identify the need for school crossing facilities or deemed them unnecessary during the planning process for the school. Despite OCC Highways commenting on other aspects of the development, no suitable pedestrian crossing provision was secured. Both the school and the Parish Council have raised concerns repeatedly over the last year with the Department for Education (DfE), OCC, Persimmon Homes, and the local MP; however, no meaningful action has been taken.

GPC has been pressing OCC to rectify this issue for over a year, ahead of the school's opening. Despite extensive engagement and being directed between various departments and organisations, GPC has yet to receive a satisfactory resolution. Without intervention, school students and staff will be exposed to an unacceptable level of risk when the school opens in September.

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Persimmon Homes has indicated that it would be willing to construct a crossing if OCC were able to provide the necessary technical specification. OCC has stated that it is unable to do so because the road has not yet been adopted and associated assessments, including speed surveys, have not been completed.

Despite the potential risk to life, OCC has not progressed this matter over the last year, citing procedural and technical constraints. GPC questions why this level of risk to children, staff, and other residents is considered acceptable by either OCC or Persimmon Homes.

GPC has visited the site and identified a suitable location for a controlled crossing. The Parish Council is willing to consider contributing towards the cost of a crossing, despite this not being its responsibility, because it is not willing to accept the level of risk currently facing school attendees.

It is also important to recognise that St John's operates as a single school serving pupils aged 2 - 16 across two sites located only a few hundred metres apart. Students should be able to move safely between the Primary and Secondary sites. However, at present, pupils are required to cross several roads and negotiate a complex junction with no pedestrian infrastructure simply to access another part of their own school.

This is a particular concern because primary-age pupils will frequently visit the secondary site to access specialist facilities, and secondary students may also attend activities on the primary site. The absence of safe crossing facilities therefore affects not only the new secondary school but the wider St John's school community.

GPC and the school have discussed several practical and proportionate solutions that could be implemented ahead of the school's opening. These include:

- A temporary crossing patrol ("lollipop person") at an agreed crossing point on Liberator Lane during the busiest periods of the school day (approximately 8:15am - 8:45am and 3:00pm - 3:30pm). Whilst a short-term measure, this would provide an immediate improvement to pedestrian safety.
- The installation of one or more zebra crossings on Liberator Lane. Similar arrangements already exist on the St John's Primary School site, where dropped kerbs and zebra crossing markings provide a clear visual signal to drivers, despite roads in that area also not yet being fully adopted by the highway authority.
- The agreement of an appropriate technical specification by OCC, enabling Persimmon Homes to install one or more suitable light controlled pedestrian crossings capable of safely accommodating the movement of up to 600 secondary school students.

Grove Parish Council believes that a solution is both achievable and is urgently required. It is just over 2 months until this school is opened. Action must be taken to install a crossing now, to prevent risk to life.



W R Ackers

Chairman  
Grove Parish Council