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CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY & PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday, 15 April 2024

At 6.02 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor A Bailey (Chair)

Councillors:	G Meadows R Smith J Aitman O Collins	J Robertshaw S Simpson D Temple
Officers:	Adam Clapton Derek Mackenzie Claire Green Sharon Groth	Deputy Town Clerk Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk Administration Support - Planning & Stronger Communities Town Clerk
Others:	Three members of the public. Councillor Geoff Doughty Councillor Thomas Ashby Councillor Rachel Crouch Councillor Denis Newcombe Councillor Jack Treloar	

P188 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies for absence were received.

P189 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or officers.

(Cllr G Meadows joined the meeting at 6:05pm)

P190 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The committee received representations from three residents of the town concerning Agenda Item 5

The Committee reconvened.

(During the discussions of Item 4 Cllr T Ashby left the meeting at 6:46pm and rejoined at 6:49pm.)

P191 **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

The Committee received and considered the outline planning application for the North Witney Strategic Development Area received from West Oxfordshire District Council.

Members recognised a development at this site was designated in the West Oxfordshire Local Plan and there was little scope to object. There was agreement however, that the development should be the best possible and must be tied to agreements and legal obligations which ensured vitally needed infrastructure was considered at this outline application stage and delivered early in the development.

There was further agreement that the Council should explore the possibility of a community governance review of Witney's boundaries as this development would utilise Witney's infrastructure and services.

Resolved:

1. That, the comments, as per the attached document be forwarded to West Oxfordshire District Council and,
2. That, Witney Town Council considers requesting a Community Governance Review, with officers providing a report at the next meeting.

The meeting closed at: 7.04 pm

Chair

Consultee Comments for Planning Application 24/00482/OUT

Application Summary

Application Number: 24/00482/OUT

Address: North Witney Strategic Development Area New Yatt Road Witney Oxfordshire

Proposal: Outline planning application for a residential-led mixed-use development (Use Class C3 / C2), a 2.2ha primary school (Use Class F1), and up to 400m2 community use and/or co-working hub and/or shop (Use Class E and F2) and Northern Distributor Road with creation of new vehicular access off Woodstock Road, New Yatt Road and Hailey Road and provision of public open space with associated infrastructure and earthworks. (All matters reserved except accessibility to the site, for vehicles in terms of the positioning and treatment of access to the site)

Case Officer: Joan Desmond

Consultee Details

Name: Mrs S Groth

Address: Witney Town Council, Town Hall, Market Square Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 6AG

Email: info@witney-tc.gov.uk

On Behalf Of: Parish Council

Comments

Witney Town Council recognise that housing needs to be delivered as part of the development in the West Oxfordshire District Council Local Plan 2031 and given that this proposal has been identified as a Strategic Development Area there are limited opportunities to object. However, the Council recognises both the impact and opportunities a development of this scale could bring to Witney as a neighbouring parish and main service centre and will be exploring opportunities for a community governance review with all relevant parties.

In addition to the queries and concerns raised by technical consultees, the town council also asks that all neighbouring parishes comments be considered in the planning process.

Members have highlighted the following concerns:

1. In order to secure essential infrastructure to support and protect residents, any permission must be accompanied by legally binding conditions or agreements that guarantee timely and fit for purpose services and facilities with sensible phasing to ensure operational services are available to residents from the outset. Including but not limited to;
 - a. Sewerage – infrastructure and treatment works' capacity. The Environment Agency particularly, should be called upon to support with sewerage conditions and objections.
 - b. Community facilities – shops, schools, public spaces, community halls, sports pitches and pubs.

c. Delivery of the West End Link Road – and further connectivity through and to the site.

2. The current levels of sewage discharge into Witney waterways are completely unacceptable. An increase in sewerage demand, coupled with the huge loss of natural permeable drainage area will lead to increased flood risk and increased occurrence of untreated sewage discharge in what is already a high flood risk area. Developers and West Oxfordshire District Council need to secure support and cooperation from Thames Water and the Environment Agency. Witney Town Council ask that independent flood risk and drainage reports are sought.

Planners should think creatively and ensure representation is provided by the Environment Agency on how best to deliver the West End Link road and how its design could help with flood mitigation before water reaches the Bridge Street/West End catchment area of the River Windrush.

3. Witney town centre and surrounding roads have existing problems with traffic congestion. The active travel ideals made by the developer are acknowledged, however, the reality is that Witney will be the main service centre for residents of this proposed development and given the distance of the development to the town centre, it is unlikely that the majority of residents will bus, cycle or walk to access facilities. The West End Link road is absent from the plans – Witney Town Council are not aware that this anticipated road infrastructure upgrade has been cancelled. In order to future-proof traffic and travel options the link road should be incorporated at the planning stage, along with full connectivity through and around the site, to include options for active travel, bus routes and private transport. Therefore, the town council insists upon a Section 278 agreement with Oxfordshire County Council to deliver this infrastructure and more to benefit this development and North Witney.
4. Witney Town Council note the comments from the NHS Clinical Commissioning Group which clearly state significant issues with capacity, directly affecting primary care services. Funding and planning for provision of these services should be in place ahead of new residents moving to the area, with agreed sums being index-linked.
5. Members welcome innovative proposals for the housing mix – In Witney there is a lack of bungalows for those looking to down-size and for residents with accessibility needs. There is strong demand for starter homes, and it is incredibly difficult for those looking to get on the property ladder, this would be more achievable if there was a greater supply of 1-bed houses, and a better offering if 1-bed properties were available as houses as well as flats. Accessibility needs should be considered across the offering, with options available across the mix that provide for accessibility – family homes that can include a downstairs bedroom/wet room facility; and if flats are considered, blocks should include lift access to upper floors and not just stairwells.
6. Outdoor community spaces should consider inclusivity and the needs of different age groups. These could include a ‘forest school’ type nature space that can be used by anticipated schools and other community groups. Spaces for teenagers, public houses for social gathering, and recreational space for children should offer well-lit safe spaces for teenagers to meet, as well as other facilities for families with younger children, and children with disabilities. There does not appear to be an allocation for sport pitches which are currently under-served in Witney.

7. More detail would be welcome on the use of renewable energy and sustainable design. Every opportunity should be sought to demonstrate sustainable, energy efficient homes, as is required by local and national planning policies. The Town Council also stresses a high importance on environmental and biodiverse thinking within the development site and the need for large biodiversity net gain, given the vast amount of green space being lost at the site.
8. With the creation of approximately 1,250 dwellings, generating an estimated population of 3,000, Witney Town Council expects a significant impact from the residents of this development who will look towards Witney for the vast majority of its services and infrastructure, given the proximity to the town and the natural buffer to the Hailey village envelope.

As the main service centre, the Council welcomes the response from the District Council outlining the needs for leisure, recreation and play facilities but would go further in requesting additional specific off-site contributions towards the Leys Play Area, the Witney Parkrun course, and other Open Spaces upgrades as set out in the Town Council's adopted Open Spaces Strategy which will help deliver social and environmental outcomes from the development. It is stated that,

'...by improving the quality and provision of open spaces in an area, WTC can make a positive impact on the overall health and physical activity of its residents.'

Further off-site contributions are sought for community infrastructure, cemeteries, public halls, heritage, and climate and biodiversity initiatives. Therefore, Witney Town Council would request the following based on a yearly sum per dwelling which provides services in these areas, multiplied by the anticipated number of dwellings (1,250) to deliver infrastructure impacted by the development :

- Sports & Recreation £39,900
Specific contributions to upgrade the Leys Adventure Play & Splash Park Areas, improvement to sports pitch changing rooms at Burwell Hall and ongoing delivery of items in the Council's adopted Open Spaces Strategy. (in addition to funds requested from WODC regarding sports pitches and play areas).
- Community £98,900
Contributions towards street scene infrastructure including bus shelters, bins, grit bins, community noticeboard and benches, for the provision of services and utilities to allocated allotment land, and a West Witney Parkrun hogging path (£30,000). Also, an additional sum of £10,000 towards the provision of the community bus route to serve the development and £15,000 towards the town council's demonstrable detached youth service funded to serve young people, of which there will be an increase in number from this development.
- Cemeteries £19,500
A contribution towards Windrush Cemetery for the anticipated demand for grave spaces and associated internal layout.

- Public Halls £16,700
A contribution to the Corn Exchange as a community arts facility for Witney & West Oxfordshire to provide continued improvement of theatrical equipment.
- Climate & Biodiversity £11,000
A contribution towards nature recovery and re-wilding works at Witney Lake & Country Park as set out in the Council's Land Management Plan and across Witney.
- Heritage £100,000
A contribution towards refurbishment works of the town's historical buildings in the town council's ownership, including the Buttercross, Town Hall, Corn Exchange, St Mary's Church Carillon and Towe Hill Cemetery Chapels.

Total sum: £286,000

9. The Town Council would also like further information on the primary school provision, the combined use of community spaces and the potential for a community hub, and the mode of stewardship for facilities i.e. something run by community representatives, rather than private management companies.
10. Much of the above is referenced in the North Witney Strategic Development Area specific plan policy – POLICY WIT2, and as such Witney Town Council would expect that West Oxfordshire District Council will be making every effort to ensure that this development delivers are set out in a masterplan and is a policy compliant scheme that accords with the points so clearly outlined within POLICY WIT2.