

Appendix C

Legacy & Stewardship

1. Introduction

Merton College was the first fully self-governing College in the University of Oxford, founded in 1264 by Walter de Merton, sometime Chancellor of England and later Bishop of Rochester.

Over the centuries, many eminent scholars and cultural leaders have called Merton home. They include four Nobel Prize winners, the mathematician who solved Fermat's Last Theorem, the physician who discovered the circulation of blood, and the founder of the Bodleian Library.

The College therefore has a longstanding interest in the success, health and wellbeing of the local area, and as such its vision for land at Yarnton is firmly rooted in creating a strong, cohesive community extension to Yarnton, whilst embedding a series of environmental, social and design principles that allow its residents to thrive.

2. Legacy

The College will establish a Legacy with three central tenets. These are set out below, are described in more detail in the Design and Access Statement, and would be key themes which the College would use to explore and shape the development through the detailed planning application stages, either by taking on full responsibility for its design (green infrastructure and Community Hub) or establishing key performance requirements (for proposed housing and their environmental performance):



A. Environment

This envisages new green and blue infrastructure that enhances the Site's existing environmental assets, delivering a biodiversity net gain of over 15% whilst establishing an environment that promotes a high quality approach to play, recreation, education and access to nature.

It also aims to minimise the energy consumption and emissions of the new community through its compact walkable form, promotion of high environmental build standards, and commitment to providing direct encouragement, information and education to the future community.

Reducing energy consumption and emissions is a strong ambition of the College, whilst recognising that the optimal means to achieve this will be the subject of more detailed technical studies, but is likely to include higher standards than current Building Regulations in relation to building insulation, air tightness, heat recovery and renewable energy generation. In addition, the Community Hub is intended to become a Net Carbon Zero exemplar and act as an educational resource in this regard.



B. Community

A strong sense of community will be established with a cohesive relationship with the existing community of Yarnton. Key facilities will be provided for the community to have a sense of ownership and adapt to their current and future needs.

This will include a Community Hub, allotments and shared community 'grow zones', a variety of high quality play areas set within community open spaces and recreational facilities all sitting under the umbrella of a Community Trust that gives the existing community direct control over these facilities, their management and future adaptation. Continued close consultation with Yarnton and Begbroke Parish Councils will directly shape this aspect of the scheme.



C. Design

The scheme design will strive for the highest architectural, movement, urban design and landscape architectural qualities that can forge a strong sense of identity and leave an enduring legacy for the Site. It will establish a distinct place, that is a recognisable extension of Yarnton's identity, not a separate housing estate.

The key principles that will achieve this ambition will be of substance and not just style – the aim is for streets to become lively, secure and co-ordinated, and link together spaces that provide key social, recreational and play functions. Direct and generous cycle and walking routes will be of high quality and well-overlooked, linking key destinations and attractions.

The landscape will be generous and striking, and the appearance of buildings will be co-ordinated, with special attention paid to those in landmark locations to uplift their architectural qualities to become truly special.

3. Stewardship

Merton College recognises that to fully achieve its vision, a process needs to be set out to establish the shared management of the new community assets in perpetuity.

The proposed approach to stewardship at Yarnton sets out a different approach to the green and social infrastructure within the immediate setting of the new community (which the wider public can access and use) compared to that for the informal parkland required by policy PR9 (which is specifically for the benefit of the wider community).

These different areas are identified on Figure 78 opposite, with the stewardship approach set out below in more detail.

Area A – Community Green and Social Infrastructure

A stewardship structure is proposed where residents would become members of a Community Trust that retains ownership and management responsibility for the following aspects (in consultation with Cherwell DC and Oxfordshire CC and Yarnton / Begbroke Parish Councils):

1. The Green Infrastructure within the scheme - the existing hedges, trees, green corridors, play areas, social green spaces and street trees;
2. The Social infrastructure within the scheme (complementary with the existing village facilities) - the Community Hub, its facilities and their management, how events are organised and run, how this can act as a convenience feature for the local community (for example parcel drop off / bike hub) and how social inclusivity is encouraged and supported.

The Community Trust would be funded by a subsidy from Merton College, alongside an annual service charge applicable to all residents (an average cost of around £300 is envisaged, which is commensurate with current best practice stewardship schemes).¹

Area B – Informal Parkland and Community Woodland

This area sits to the west and north of the proposed new community and serves a role for the wider public, as envisaged by Policy PR9 at its Key Delivery Requirements items 5 and 6, the requirements of are set out below:

5. The provision of public open green space as informal parkland on 24.8 hectares of land to the west of the residential area and a new Local Nature Reserve accessible to William Fletcher Primary School.

6. The creation of an area of a community woodland within 7.8 hectares of land to the north-west of the developable area and to the east of Dolton Lane.

This land not only provides a functional benefit for the existing and proposed community including William Fletcher Primary School, it also delivers a character and functional transition to the wider countryside and provides a critical role in delivering biodiversity net gain.

¹ <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/resources/stewardship-organisations-and-service-charges/>





Merton College will retain ownership of this land and fund its management in perpetuity thereby avoiding the new community funding this land for the benefit of the wider public, avoiding unnecessary tension.

To ensure the appropriate management of this land, a detailed Landscape and Ecology Management Plan will be agreed with Cherwell District Council in parallel with the detailed design of this land, to ensure that the management of this land for both biodiversity and recreational benefits are agreed and appropriate. The LEMP will then become the long-term management regime for this land, with a periodic review with key stakeholders to ensure the objectives of public access and biodiversity gain are met in perpetuity.

Separately, a legal agreement will be put in place at the outline planning stage to obligate Merton College to manage the land in perpetuity for full public access and in the interests of biodiversity, in accordance with the LEMP to subsequently be agreed.

In respect of the Local Nature Reserve accessible to William Fletcher Primary School, a detailed design would be developed in partnership with Cherwell District Council, in consultation with the school, with its long-term management being provided as part of Area B. We envisage this area to be no less than 2 hectares in size and to include a range of habitat types and features, with the primary aim of maximising biodiversity and educational use, the details of which will evolve through detailed design and management consultation with the District.



FIGURE 78 - STEWARDSHIP STRATEGY PLAN

4. Next Steps

Three steps are identified to progress the long-term stewardship of the scheme, these are as follows:

Stage 1 – Long-Term Stewardship Strategy

This strategy will be submitted and agreed prior to grant of detailed planning permission, it would be formulated in consultation with CDC, OCC and Yarnton and Begbroke Parish Councils, and Trustees would be appointed. The scope of this strategy would include the organisational structure of the Trust, its scope, income and expenditure model, limitations, estate management role, relationship with the Parish Councils, and the detailed facilities it would provide.

In parallel with this exercise, the Landscape and Ecology Management Plan for Area B would be prepared, alongside detail designs for the Informal Parkland and Community Woodland for separate discussion and agreement with Cherwell District Council. This discussion will include the long term conservation organisation for these areas, as set out in Policy PR9 Key Delivery Requirement 11 i).

Similarly, the detailed design of the Local Nature Reserve accessible to William Fletcher Primary School would be developed in partnership with the school and the long term conservation organisation.



Stage 2 - Trust Establishment Strategy

This strategy will be submitted and agreed prior to the first occupation, in consultation with CDC, OCC and Yarnton / Begbroke Parish Councils. It will provide detail in respect of the mechanisms for establishment and funding of the Trust, the operation and management of the Community Hub, the commitments for management of green infrastructure in accordance with a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan, and other mechanisms to provide clear guidance for residents. It would also promote the safe and healthy use of the facilities on offer, and to set out how residents can be involved in their management and use.



Stage 3 - Trust Maturity Strategy

Prior to the scheme's full occupation, a Maturity Strategy will be submitted and agreed, again in consultation with CDC, OCC and Yarnton / Begbroke Parish Councils. This strategy will provide additional detail to reflect the evolving community to ensure that the now mature community can directly shape and manage its own facilities to adapt to changing patterns and interests, within a well-managed and cohesive structure.

