



TECHNICAL RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION - MAY 2015

# WOODSTOCK EAST



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## **Technical Response to Consultation Woodstock East May 2015**

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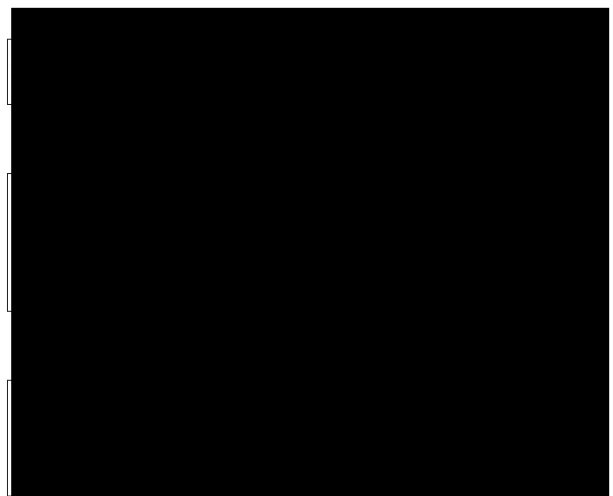
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TRANSPORT



ECOLOGY



WASTE MANAGEMENT + UTILITIES



CFSH STRATEGY, ENERGY + AIR QUALITY



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NOISE



AGRICULTURAL LAND QUALITY



RETAIL, VIABILITY + ECONOMIC



LIGHTING



CONSULTATION



DRAINAGE



CARE VILLAGE DESIGN



HERITAGE



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# 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 This report seeks to address matters, which have been raised by West Oxfordshire District and Cherwell Councils as well as other statutory consultees in response to the proposed mixed-use development at Woodstock East.
- 1.1.2 It relates to the technical and policy issues associated with the proposals and should be read in conjunction with the Design Response Document – May 2015 and the Sustainability Statement Document – May 2015.
- 1.1.3 The site provides a housing solution that fits with the wider economic ambitions of Oxfordshire as set out in Oxfordshire County Council's Oxon 2030 as well as the Local Enterprise Partnership's Strategic Economic Plan.
- 1.1.4 It is ideally located just outside of Oxford's Green Belt and is not constrained by any other designations. Woodstock East can also benefit from planned-for infrastructure that is being put in place through secured Government funding and Network Rail investment. Located in proximity to London-Oxford Airport and to nearby Begbroke also brings employment advantages.
- 1.1.5 Woodstock is a successful settlement, scoring highly on the sustainability matrix, especially when considered against other settlements in West Oxfordshire, coming 3rd behind Witney and Carterton. However, over recent years, adhoc development has occurred, (in common with many others in the county), but due to the small scale of such development, they have not been able to deliver the required improvements in infrastructure and as a consequence schools and other local facilities have come under increasing strain. We believe it is accepted that there is a national and local need for housing. It is also accepted that Woodstock is a sustainable location for development, therefore, the decision needs to be made on:

- Should adhoc development continue to deliver the inevitable development that will come to the town, putting further strain on services.

OR

- Should the infrastructure issues be addressed for the foreseeable future by a single large development, ensuring the long term sustainability of the settlement

1.1.6 Without a significant step change in housing delivery, provision of infrastructure and the sustainability of Woodstock is at risk. By providing a well considered, respectful and design-led development in one of West Oxfordshire's most sustainable settlements, the future of Woodstock will be secured. Pressure on schools will be relieved, the retail offering enhanced and further improvements to infrastructure can be provided to ensure a balanced adjustment for existing and future residents.

## **Policy Background**

1.1.7 Woodstock lies within the county of Oxfordshire, an area of the UK, which has significant potential for growth and development and this is reinforced by Government initiatives to promote growth in the area. The Oxford and Oxfordshire City Deal, the Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan, and the subsequent Oxfordshire Growth Deal are ambitious and far reaching strategies to create jobs and training opportunities in science and pharmaceutical industries, and improve the standard of living for all Oxfordshire residents.

1.1.8 The City Deal is clear that the 'Offer' of an increased supply of new housing must be made in order to support strategic economic objectives that are the basis of funding support. The City Deal states:

1.1.9 *Oxford and Oxfordshire have overwhelming evidence that the lack of choice and availability of housing and affordable housing is a major barrier to growth.*

## **Sustainable Growth in Oxfordshire**

- 1.1.10 The Woodstock East site has particular advantages in that it is within the growth corridor between Science Vale and Bicester identified in the City Deal where new development is to be concentrated including the innovation and incubation centre at the Begbroke Innovation Accelerator and the Northern Gateway, where Oxford City Council are promoting 90,000m<sup>2</sup> of employment development.
- 1.1.11 Woodstock East is therefore in the ideal location to provide housing for the employees of these new developments.

## **Housing Need & Prematurity**

- 1.1.12 The SHMA identifies that to meet committed economic growth in West Oxfordshire, 660 dwellings per year (13,220 for the 20 year period) should be provided by the District. To improve housing affordability and economic growth in the district, 685 dwellings per year (13,700 for the 20 year period) need to be delivered.
- 1.1.13 There is also a shortfall in housing provision for Oxford, with current indications suggesting a shortfall of up to 21,800 dwellings. At this point in time there is no agreement in place between all authorities as to what the level of unmet need actually is - let alone any idea of the spatial strategy for how it will be delivered.
- 1.1.14 In the meantime Oxford's identified housing need that is set out within an agreed Strategic Housing Market Assessment isn't being delivered and current indications are that it could be at least 4 years following the publication of the 2014 SHMA that the unmet need for Oxford is identified within any adopted Development Plan. Where there is a lack of delivery within a single district, paragraph 14 of the NPPF requires planning applications to be approved without delay where they can demonstrate the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The development of Woodstock East is no different in this respect.

1.1.15 This is further reinforced by the fact that neither West Oxfordshire District Council nor Cherwell District Council can demonstrate a 5-year supply of land for housing.

1.1.16 The proposal for Woodstock East can demonstrate that it is sustainable development and the significant benefits of delivering housing to meet a significant unmet need (including that from Oxford City) is not outweighed by any identified adverse impacts.

## **Green Belt**

1.1.17 The site is not situated in the Green Belt, in fact it is the first site on leaving Oxford along the A44 corridor suitable for development. It will not be conspicuous from the Green Belt owing to the extensive screening that already exists, which will be strengthened by the further planting proposed, particularly along the A44.

## **Opportunities for preserving the World Heritage Site**

1.1.18 Proceeds from the development would be used to secure the future conservation of an internationally important heritage site, as indicated by its World Heritage Site designation. Given the broad definition of material considerations, the use of proceeds from this development to help safeguard the future of one of the world's most important heritage assets for the benefit of the public today and into the future is clearly a relevant material consideration, as it is of public, not merely private interest. It is also consistent with Policy EW1 on the Blenheim World Heritage Site in the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031.

## **Transport**

1.1.19 Significant benefits would be gained from the bus priority measures on the A44 proposed in the Transport Assessment.



1.1.20 The bus interchange will also maximise the benefits of enhanced public transport to the wider residents and business within Oxfordshire (Stagecoach have reiterated their strong support for the proposals). The interchange will be complementary and be served by existing bus services. This will ensure that the interchange will not reduce the viability of existing and proposed public transport services.

## **Ecology**

1.1.21 Natural England is satisfied that the proposal would not have an adverse impact on the Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation or Blenheim Park Site of Special Scientific Interest and have withdrawn their objection.

## **Sport & Open Space**

1.1.22 The proposal includes open space provision substantially above the standards set by the two Councils and will have major social and community benefits. The proposals will also replace Old Woodstock Town Football club's current sub standard facilities with a new FA compliant football ground to assist in their continued progression within the Hellenic League and to promote wider community participation, including youth and ladies teams.

## **Employment**

2.5 Officers at West Oxfordshire and Cherwell District Councils have identified the need for more small commercial units for start-up businesses and consider that the site is well located for such premises. The framework masterplan has accordingly been amended to provide scope for an increase in employment floorspace up to 13,800sqm on the site, should there be an identified need for this level of floorspace going forwards.

## **Retail**

- 1.1.23 The proposals will certainly increase footfall in the town centre to the benefit of local traders, such as the bank (Barclays), Hampers delicatessen, Woodstock Pharmacy, and post office and it may create the critical mass necessary to support additional convenience or comparison traders who currently struggle to operate serving the smaller community.
- 1.1.24 While a convenience store does form part of the proposals, the usual mix of retailers will not be provided on the development site in order that non convenience footfall will be driven to the town centre.

## **Heritage**

- 1.1.25 There will be no visual impact on the World Heritage site and thus no impact on its Outstanding Universal Value. Any perceived harm to the setting of the Scheduled Monument is less than substantial and outweighed by the public benefits, including the scheme of interpretation and the change in the land from arable to public open space which would stop ploughing and so limit the scope for damage to the archaeological remains.

## **Landscape**

- 1.1.26 The proposals introduce extensive areas of tree planting, which will not only create a robust and defensible edge to Woodstock and sense of arrival to the historic centre but also reflect the areas of woodland which characterise the Blenheim parkland and wider landscape setting. The Blenheim Park landscape has also inspired the landscape scheme with the establishment of avenues, vistas, informal parkland style tree planting and feature trees.
- 1.1.27 The high quality landscape scheme will ensure that the proposals represent an appropriate and sustainable development.

1.1.28 A winter visual assessment, together with an additional assessment of views within and adjacent to the Blenheim WHS, demonstrates that these views will not noticeably change. The more sensitive south western boundary has been acknowledged from the outset of the design process, resulting in the proposed woodland belt along this edge. This feature is entirely in keeping with the local landscape character and will also soften the existing settlement edge, assist in integrating the proposals and create a balanced, landscaped approach to Woodstock.

## **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1.1. This report has been prepared by West Waddy ADP in response to the consultation process undertaken by Cherwell DC with regards to planning application (14/02004/HYBRID), which has also been submitted to West Oxfordshire District Council (14/02063/OUT) due to the site falling within the administrative boundary of both Local Authorities.
- 2.1.2. Comments received in response to the application have referred to a range of constraints and opportunities of the proposals.
- 2.1.3. This report seeks to clarify points of confusion and address matters which have been raised by statutory consultees relating to technical issues associated with the proposals.

## **2.2 Consultation responses**

- 2.2.1. Responses to the application have been received from the following statutory consultees, and issues raised are addressed by this report:

- English Heritage (Historic England)
- ICOMOS (International Council on Monuments and Sites UK)
- Environment Agency
- Natural England
- Thames Water
- Oxfordshire County Council (Education, Transport, Property, Ecology, Archaeology)
- Stagecoach
- Sustrans
- Thames Valley Police
- Cherwell District Council – Waste and Recycling
- London Oxford Airport
- West Oxfordshire District Council – Planning Policy
- CPRE (Campaign for the Protection of Rural England)
- West Oxfordshire District Council – Urban Design (John Rowland)
- Sport England
- Oxford Green Belt Network

- 2.2.2. The following Parish and Town Councils have also made comments on the planning application:

- Woodstock Town Council (Kemp & Kemp and Glanvilles)
- Kirtlington Parish Council
- Gosford and Water Eaton Parish Council
- Kidlington Parish Council

## **2.3 Additional Information**

2.3.1. This report is accompanied by an addendum to the submitted Environmental Statement, and a Sustainability Statement which have been produced to address those matters not covered by this report.

2.3.2. The indicative framework masterplan has also been reviewed and amended as a result of ongoing discussions with statutory consultees (Drawing SK114), and the applicant's professional consultants. An iterative process has been undertaken to evolve the scheme. Details of the design process are in a Design Response document submitted alongside this report.

### 3 PLANNING POLICY

#### 3.1 Background

3.1.1. Woodstock lies within the county of Oxfordshire, an area of the UK which has significant potential for growth and development. Oxford is one of the most economically buoyant cities in the UK, and Oxfordshire is excellently placed to move forward the local and national economy, and bring a wealth of new jobs to the people of Oxfordshire.



Figure 1: Map of Oxfordshire

3.1.2. Currently though, Oxford and Oxfordshire are not reaching their full potential, falling behind comparable cities such as Cambridge, but this is set to change through the Oxford and Oxfordshire City Deal, the Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan, and the subsequent Oxfordshire Growth Deal. These are ambitious and far reaching strategies to create jobs and training opportunities in science and pharmaceutical industries, and improve the standard of living for all Oxfordshire residents.

- 3.1.3. The City Deal will pump £100s millions of investment into infrastructure and business development across the county, and has been signed up to by all Oxfordshire Local Authorities. However, to support this significant economic strategy, and secure the investment for a sustainable future for Oxfordshire, it must be ensured that everyone has access to a decent and affordable home.
- 3.1.4. To meet this challenge, around 100,000 new houses will be required over the next 20 years. The City Deal seeks to address all barriers to growth in the region through infrastructure improvements, some of which have already started, for example on arterial routes into Oxford including the A44, A34 and A420.
- 3.1.5. To succeed in delivering development and economic growth, housing in highly sustainable locations such as Woodstock, in close proximity to key employment centres such as the Northern Gateway and Begbroke Science Park, and located on key arterial routes are required in Oxfordshire. This housing will need to include significant proportions of affordable housing.
- 3.1.6. The West Oxfordshire Local Plan fails to acknowledge the significance of this investment for the future of the district and Oxfordshire as a whole, and does not appreciate the potential further funding which could be generated by development and growth in suitable and highly sustainable locations.
- 3.1.7. Furthermore, West Oxfordshire have failed to address even the most basic need for housing growth over the next 20 years and have decided to plan for below the lower limit of identified need as calculated through the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) for Oxfordshire, published in March 2014.
- 3.1.8. This resistance to growth will result in less investment in infrastructure from the City Deal, and a lack of further financial contributions from development to address existing problems with facilities and infrastructure let alone support the regional growth the City Deal is offering.

3.1.9. Allocating an inadequate land supply for housing development means that there will not be sufficient housing provided to fully support the delivery of the economic objectives for Oxfordshire. The City Deal is clear in that the 'Offer' of an increased supply of new housing must be made in order to support strategic economic objectives that are the basis of funding support. The City Deal states:

*Oxford and Oxfordshire have overwhelming evidence that the lack of choice and availability of housing and affordable housing is a major barrier to growth.*

3.1.10. If a lower housing figure is taken forward by West Oxfordshire, then their emerging Local Plan would not be aligned with the economic strategies in place for Oxfordshire and contrary to the NPPF (paragraphs 47, 14, 19 and 158), which state that:

- Paragraph 47 which requires Local Planning Authorities to boost significantly their supply of housing;
- Paragraph 14: Local Plans should meet objectively assessed needs with sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change;
- Paragraph 19 seeks to ensure that: The planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth;
- Paragraph 158: Local planning authorities should ensure that their assessment of and strategies for housing, employment and other uses are integrated, and that they take full account of relevant market and economic signals.

3.1.11. This planning proposal represents an opportunity to go some way to overcome this barrier and ensure sustainable economic growth in line with the NPPF. Further to supporting additional infrastructure improvements, development at Woodstock East will benefit directly from already planned infrastructure enhancements in the area;



- Northern Gateway – highway improvements to the north of Oxford to unlock economic growth, employment and retail. £7.3m of funding through the City Deal allocated to this and expected delivery is 2015 onwards<sup>1</sup>;
- Improvements to Cutteslowe and Wolvercote roundabout expected from 2015 onwards;
- A40 to A44 link road expected by 2020<sup>2</sup>;
- Funding investment for Begbroke Innovation Accelerator; and
- Through the Oxfordshire Growth deal funding is allocated for superfast broadband<sup>3</sup>.

3.1.12. It should also be noted that Network Rail are investing huge sums of money into realising East West Rail. This is a rail link from Oxford around to Bicester and into London Marylebone. This is due to open at the end of this year with a new station approximately 5.5km from the site at Oxford Parkway. Eventually this will link to Milton Keynes and around to Cambridge.

3.1.13. The housing needs identified as a result of the SHMA represents a step change in housing delivery which must be dealt with by all Local Authorities in Oxfordshire head on. Economic plans for Oxfordshire, infrastructure delivery and funding to facilitate this growth is on the premise of housing delivery. Failure to provide that housing undermines the economic strategies of the County and would be inconsistent with paragraphs 14, 19 and 158 of the NPPF. An extension to Woodstock at Woodstock East represents an opportunity to develop well-planned housing that would enhance the settlement and provide much needed homes within the District.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/city-deal-oxford-and-oxfordshire>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/local-transport-plan-ltp4>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/oxfordshire-growth-deal>

## 3.2 Sustainable Growth in Oxfordshire

- 3.2.1. CPRE, The Oxford Greenbelt Network and Woodstock Town Council all resist this development and raise concerns that the proposed development is too big in scale, and surplus to need.
- 3.2.2. Whilst the proposed development is large in scale, it is not surplus to need, as the Oxfordshire SHMA has identified a significant unmet need for housing growth in Oxfordshire. Woodstock is a sustainable settlement, acknowledged by WODC in their Local Plan and in the response to the planning proposals from the WODC Planning Policy team. Developments of this scale are necessary to meet the housing need identified in the SHMA and deliver much-needed facilities and services for the growing population.
- 3.2.3. This site has particular advantages in that it is:
- within the growth corridor between Science Vale and Bicester identified in the City Deal where new development is to be concentrated;
  - is close to the innovation and incubation centre at the Begbroke Innovation Accelerator, which is focused on advanced engineering, and will therefore be a significant source of employment;
  - is close to the Northern Gateway, where Oxford City Council are promoting 90,000m<sup>2</sup> of employment development through its Northern Gateway Area Action Plan, and which will therefore create a large amount of employment;
  - situated close to Oxford Airport where improved bus connections are proposed to link with Oxford and Witney (discussed through Oxfordshire County Council's Local Transport Plan).



Figure 2: Oxfordshire Growth Corridor

3.2.4. It is therefore in the ideal location to provide housing for the employees of these new developments.

3.2.5. The scale of development also allows for significant new infrastructure to be proposed as part of the development, which would not be viable with a smaller number of dwellings. In this respect it is important to note that paragraph 52 of the NPPF acknowledges that:

*'The supply of new homes can sometimes be best achieved through planning for larger scale development, such as new settlements or extensions to existing villages and towns.'*

3.2.6. The scale of the development will support the economic growth of Oxfordshire as a whole, and allow for a more sustainable Woodstock.

### 3.3 Local Planning Policy and the NPPF

3.3.1. Woodstock is identified in Local Planning Policy and its evidence base as a sustainable location for growth and one of the most sustainable settlements

within West Oxfordshire, expected to accommodate the required growth in the District.

- 3.3.2. A planning policy response to the application has been received from the Policy team at West Oxfordshire District Council. This focuses on the conformity of the planning application with local planning policies. However, as is set out later in this report and was explained within the submitted Planning Policy Statement, it is not appropriate to determine this application in accordance with the extent to which it adheres to either the adopted Local Plan 2011 or the emerging Local Plan 2031.
- 3.3.3. The adopted Local Plan is out-of-date, and as WODC do not have a five year housing land supply (see next section), the NPPF requires that planning applications should be approved unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits (paragraph 14).
- 3.3.4. As such, policy H7 of that Plan is of diminished weight when making a decision on this application and West Oxfordshire should look to the NPPF when making planning decisions (para 215, NPPF).
- 3.3.5. Reference is also made to Policy H2 of the emerging Local Plan 2031, which is currently at the pre-submission draft stage. This Plan has therefore not undergone Examination by an Independent Planning Inspector and can be given very little weight. Furthermore, policy H2 states that new dwellings will be permitted within Main Service Centres, Rural Service Centres and Villages in the following circumstances:
- On undeveloped land within or adjoining the built up area where the proposed development is necessary to meet identified housing needs and is consistent with criteria 3) below and other policies in this plan.*
- 3.3.6. The proposals therefore meet the emerging local policy which clearly acknowledges the need for future housing growth in the district.

3.3.7. It is expected that an examination will not take place until WODC have revised their housing numbers, which are currently not aligned with the housing need identified in the objectively assessed Strategic Housing Marketing Assessment (SHMA). This is the most up to date and accepted evidence to base housing numbers upon, available to WODC. The SHMA adheres to paragraph 47 of the NPPF that states:

*To boost significantly the supply of housing, local planning authorities should:*

*... use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area (para 47, NPPF)*

3.3.8. Until WODC's emerging Local Plan 2031 is adopted the proposed policies contained within it carry very little weight as there are a substantial number of objections to them.

#### Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

3.3.9. The comments from WODC policy team highlight that the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) identified the part of the site within West Oxfordshire as being suitable for 180 dwellings. Indeed the SHLAA (June 2014, acknowledges that:

*'the site is relatively close to the town centre, access can be achieved from the A44 and development would relate well to the existing built form. It would not have a significant landscape impact and there are no significant constraints to development.'*

3.3.10. It is therefore logical to assume that the principle of development is acceptable here.

3.3.11. Following on from this it should also be clarified that the application site covers a wider area than the SHLAA site and incorporates land within Cherwell District

Council's administrative boundary. As such, this development is in general conformity with the findings of the SHLAA.

### **3.4 Five-Year Housing Land Supply**

3.4.1. The comments from the WODC Planning Policy team refer to West Oxfordshire being able to demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply. This is contested and full details of the actual 5-year housing land supply are presented in Appendix A. The key points are:

- West Oxfordshire does not have a 5-year supply of housing as its current assessment is based on the inappropriate inclusion of strategic sites (within an emerging Local Plan) that have not undergone testing at Examination and are subject to significant objections – including queries about the deliverability of these draft allocations.
- West Oxfordshire cannot rely on two key strategic sites where the decision notice has not yet been issued (North Curbridge and East Carterton) and the expectation that they will deliver 1,000 homes.
- West Oxfordshire does not have a 5-year supply of housing as they are planning to deliver housing numbers lower than assessed in the Oxfordshire SHMA (contrary to paragraph 47 of the NPPF).
- The findings of the SHMA and the evidence underpinning it has been found appropriate by the Inspector for Cherwell's Local Plan. Cherwell District Council is now planning for the mid-point housing figure in the SHMA, therefore the precedent has been set and West Oxfordshire should be following the same guidance. If not, their emerging Local Plan is very unlikely to be found Sound in accordance with the NPPF.
- West Oxfordshire has delivered on average 303 dwellings per year since the beginning of the plan period. Based on mid-point SHMA figures this is

less than half the number prescribed by the SHMA (660 per year mid point figure).

- West Oxfordshire clearly demonstrate an under-delivery of housing over the plan period and should therefore apply a 20% buffer to their 5-year housing land supply. This means that the District can only demonstrate a 2.89 year supply of housing (or 2.75 based on the full requirement of 685 dwellings per year to deliver the full affordable housing need).
- Even if West Oxfordshire were to deliver only 525 dwellings per year, a 20% buffer would still be required based on past under delivery of housing since the beginning of the plan period.

3.4.2. The policy response also refers to the majority of the site falling into Cherwell District Council's boundary and that it is not identified as a strategic, allocated site. This is correct however, as Cherwell District Council also cannot demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply, paragraph 49 of the NPPF is relevant in that:

3.4.3. *Housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Relevant policies for the supply of housing should not be considered up-to-date if the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites.*

3.4.4. It is also argued that Cherwell has only a 4.9 years supply of housing as they too have a history of under delivery (see appendix A).

### **3.5 Housing Need**

3.5.1. WODC planning policy team consider that the proposed housing development is not required to meet housing need.

3.5.2. The proposed number of dwellings that West Oxfordshire propose to deliver through their emerging Local Plan is not sufficient, based on the findings of the

Oxfordshire SHMA (2014) undertaken for the housing market area of Oxfordshire and, as such, is contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) at paragraph 47, which states:

*...Local planning authorities should use their evidence base to ensure that their 'Local Plan meets the full, objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area, as far as is consistent with the policies set out in this Framework, including identifying key sites which are critical to the delivery of the housing strategy over the plan period'*

3.5.3. The SHMA identifies that to meet committed economic growth in West Oxfordshire, 660 dwellings per year (13,220 for the 20 year period) should be provided by the District. To improve housing affordability and economic growth in the district, 685 dwellings per year (13,700 for the 20 year period) need to be delivered.

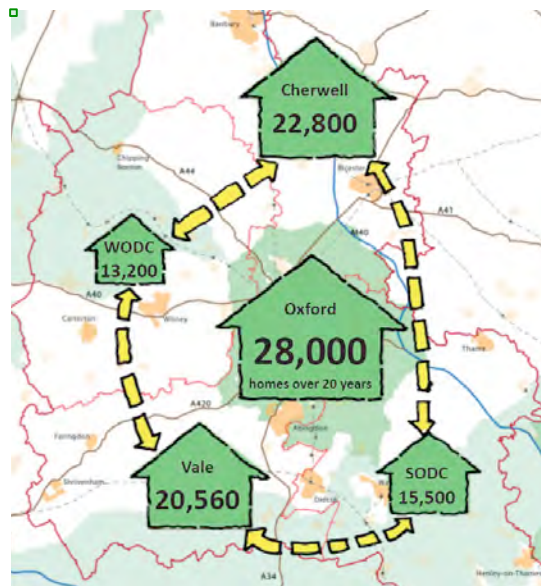


Figure 3: SHMA Housing Targets

3.5.4. It is acknowledged that West Oxfordshire has conducted two studies into the robustness of the housing figures contained within the SHMA and the data underpinning them. However, these have not been tested and the evidence base



that has been used to produce the SHMA has now been considered sound through the Local Plan examination process.

3.5.5. Cherwell District Council's Local Plan examination hearings were suspended on 4 June 2014 for six months. The Inspector's note of the 9 June 2014 stated:

*This is to enable the Council to put forward proposed modifications to the plan involving increased new housing delivery over the plan period to meet the full, up to date, objectively assessed needs of the district, as required by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and based on the Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2014 (SHMA).*

3.5.6. The Planning Inspector also confirmed that the starting point for the determination of the most appropriate housing figures for the Cherwell Local Plan should be the mid-point between the housing numbers identified in each of the 3 projections. Cherwell is now planning for 1,140 dwellings per annum (22,800 in total), which is the SHMA mid-point for the District.

3.5.7. Using this as a precedent West Oxfordshire should be at least planning for the mid-point figure of 660 dwellings per annum (13,200 over 20 years). However, given the clear housing shortage and previous undersupply of affordable housing within the District, the full economic and affordable housing need of 685 dwellings per year (13,700) should be planned for.

3.5.8. Considering the above, Woodstock East is unquestionably required to help West Oxfordshire (and Cherwell) meet their housing needs based on the findings of the SHMA and the weight given to it through a neighbouring authority's emerging Local Plan.

## **3.6 Prematurity**

3.6.1. The issue of prematurity has been raised with regards to the development of Woodstock East. The proposal for Woodstock East is supported by a robust argument that the scheme can meet and deliver part of Oxford's unmet housing

need – in addition to the identified needs of both West Oxfordshire and Cherwell District Councils.

3.6.2. However, Officer's at West Oxfordshire District Council raise the following comments in relation to this matter:

*In further support of their case, the applicant alludes to the issue of unmet housing need arising from Oxford City. I would agree that there is a significant amount of unmet need that will need to be accommodated within the HMA [housing market area] however a process of joint working is currently underway being co-ordinated by the Oxfordshire Growth Board, in order to consider the best options for dealing with this unmet need. Until that process is complete, there can be no certainty about whether this site represents a preferred option for accommodating Oxford City's unmet housing need. There will be a large number of other options considered and assessed and to release this site now before that process is complete would be premature and contrary to the duty to co-operate.*

3.6.3. Addressing the issue of the unmet need of Oxford City is proposed to be dealt with through the Oxfordshire Growth Board which is charged with implementing the legal requirement of the duty to co-operate between each Oxfordshire Local Authority.

3.6.4. The 2014 Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) identifies the overall housing need for Oxford City Council. At this present time, there is no agreement between the Oxfordshire Authorities as to how much of Oxford City's identified need can and cannot be met within their own administrative boundaries. At this stage the shortfall suggests a figure of up to 21,800 dwellings. The City Council and other authorities disagree (publicly) over this figure and as such the first stage of the process of identifying and dealing with Oxford City's unmet need is still in dispute with no agreement in place. It follows

therefore that there can be no identification of spatial options for allocating the unmet need until the overall figure to be planned for has been agreed.

- 3.6.5. The emerging Cherwell Local Plan once adopted, will be partially reviewed (it states within 2 years), once the level of Oxford's unmet need for Cherwell has been established through joint working. The Oxfordshire 'Post SHMA Strategic Work Programme' agreed by all Oxfordshire Authorities at the Oxfordshire Growth Board meeting on the 20th November 2014 identifies the work programme for how Oxford's unmet need will be dealt with and states that a 'Formal publication of coordinated Local Plan Reviews and County-wide Infrastructure Delivery Plan' will be instigated in June 2016.
- 3.6.6. Working on the basis that the Local Plan reviews will take another two years to complete after that, it seems reasonable to suggest that an adopted Local Plan that includes provision for Oxford's unmet need is at least 3 years away from adoption. The November 2014 Growth Board programme was produced nearly six months ago and the program has no doubt slipped given the issues raised above with regards to the disagreements between the local authorities over the level of unmet need to be planned for. At this point in time there is no agreement in place between all authorities as to what the level of unmet need actually is - let alone any idea of the spatial strategy for how it will be delivered.
- 3.6.7. In the meantime therefore, how is Oxford's identified housing need that is set out within an agreed SHMA being delivered in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF to boost significantly the supply of new housing? The answer is that it isn't being delivered and working on the timetable identified above, it could be at least 4 years following the publication of the 2014 SHMA that the unmet need for Oxford is identified within any adopted Development Plan. Where there is a lack of delivery within a single district, paragraph 14 of the NPPF requires planning applications to be approved without delay where they can demonstrate the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The development of

Woodstock East is no different in this respect. This is further reinforced by the fact that neither West Oxfordshire District Council nor Cherwell District Council can demonstrate a 5-year supply of land for housing. The proposal for Woodstock East can demonstrate that it is sustainable development and the significant benefits of delivering housing to meet a significant unmet need (including that from Oxford City) is not outweighed by any identified adverse impacts.

- 3.6.8. In terms of the issue of prematurity, the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) further explains what is set out within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and states that:

*In what circumstances might it be justifiable to refuse planning permission on the grounds of prematurity?*

*Annex 1 of the National Planning Policy Framework explains how weight may be given to policies in emerging plans. However in the context of the Framework and in particular the presumption in favour of sustainable development – arguments that an application is premature are unlikely to justify a refusal of planning permission other than where it is clear that the adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, taking the policies in the Framework and any other material considerations into account. (Paragraph: 014 Reference ID: 21b-014-20140306)*

- 3.6.9. Such circumstances are likely, but not exclusively, to be limited to situations where both:
- a) the development proposed is so substantial, or its cumulative effect would be so significant, that to grant permission would undermine the plan-making process by predetermining decisions about the scale, location or phasing of new development that are central to an emerging Local Plan or Neighbourhood Planning; and

- b) the emerging plan is at an advanced stage but is not yet formally part of the development plan for the area.

3.6.10. Refusal of planning permission on grounds of prematurity will seldom be justified where a draft Local Plan has yet to be submitted for examination, or in the case of a Neighbourhood Plan, before the end of the local planning authority publicity period. Where planning permission is refused on grounds of prematurity, the local planning authority will need to indicate clearly how the grant of permission for the development concerned would prejudice the outcome of the plan-making process.

3.6.11. As set out above, the timetable for dealing with Oxford's unmet need is such that there is at present, no emerging Local Plan in place or at an advanced stage that identifies a strategy for dealing with the unmet need. Therefore the argument of prematurity cannot be advanced in this regard. Taking into account the amount of housing that needs to be provided for to meet West Oxfordshire and Cherwell's own needs, this site will assist in delivering only a small proportion of the total Oxford unmet housing need that needs to be planned for. Therefore allowing this site to come forward now, would not undermine any future strategy to deal with the total unmet need. This is further supported by the fact that Woodstock East's location is within a highly sustainable location where significant future growth is already planned for. Therefore there is no suggestion that this development will undermine any future plan making process or strategy.

3.6.12. Furthermore, the planning proposals are in conformity with policies in the emerging plan, so should be approved even once adopted.

3.6.13. An argument with regards to prematurity cannot be progressed and the site should be, in accordance with the NPPF, be approved without delay to significantly boost the supply of housing in order to meet a significant and clearly identified need.

### **3.7 Duty to Cooperate**

- 3.7.1. Notwithstanding the above facts that both West Oxfordshire and Cherwell District Councils do not have 5-year supplies of housing, there is a 'Duty to Cooperate' (para 178, NPPF) between the Local Authorities of Oxfordshire with specific reference to housing delivery and Oxford City's unmet need. This is required under paragraph 178 of the NPPF.
- 3.7.2. South Oxfordshire are planning for approximately another 3,000 dwellings on top of their own housing requirement to assist Oxford City. Both West Oxfordshire and Cherwell also need to face this issue and begin to plan for additional housing. It should be noted that the allotted 3,000 dwellings has not been calculated strategically and so this number may well increase.
- 3.7.3. Considering the need to assist Oxford and their unmet need, Woodstock East will provide a logical, sustainable, sensitive and well-planned extension to Woodstock, with the added benefit of being in proximity to Oxford and surrounding employment areas such as those at Begbroke and is in compliance with emerging Local Plan policies.

### **3.8 Opportunities for enhancing Woodstock**

- 3.8.1. The policy response to the proposals from WODC considers that the development cannot be considered to be of community benefit. However, there are many opportunities that the proposals present to enhance the vitality of the town and secure a sustainable future for Woodstock.
- 3.8.2. It is acknowledged that 1,500 dwellings does generate a need for additional infrastructure. To overcome this, the development would deliver a primary school, retail space, employment land (identified as needed), a car park, new football pitches (identified as needed), public open space and a care village (housing for older people which is identified as critically needed within the District to support an ageing population). This would not only serve the development on

a stand alone basis but also be of demonstrable benefit to the community and in adherence to the emerging Policy H2.

- 3.8.3. The proposals include a new football pitch for Old Woodstock Town Football Club, alongside a new clubhouse and all weather training pitch which will meet current FA regulations, as well as encourage sport in Woodstock.



Figure 4: Sports Provision

- 3.8.4. The all-weather pitch and clubhouse will also be a great facility for the whole of Woodstock to use for a range of sports including hockey, basketball and other team sports. There is no comparable facility in Woodstock at the moment and there is very little in the way of sporting provision in the town.
- 3.8.5. A new primary school and an extension to Marlborough School creating new modern facilities would also result from the development. Overall, Woodstock would then have two primary schools and a secondary school providing a sustainable and substantial educational offer for existing and future residents in the town, and supporting growth.
- 3.8.6. An improved retail offer providing a focus for Woodstock residents, in addition to the current substantial tourist offer will ensure Woodstock is sustainable in the long term and keep local expenditure in the town.

3.8.7. Significant open space will also be created as part of the development, which will benefit existing Woodstock residents as well as the residents of the new development.



Figure 5: High Quality Green Spaces

3.8.8. In terms of concerns raised by WODC policy officers, that the proposals do not form a logical compliment to the existing scale and pattern of development and the character of the area the development meets this requirement, the housing and street layout has been designed to be sympathetic to the existing pattern and character of development in Woodstock (see Design Response document accompanying this report). This has been deliberately incorporated due to the historic importance of the settlement to which it would be adjoining.

### 3.9 Creating a sustainable extension to Woodstock

3.9.1. The CPRE state that ‘the development is designed to be largely self-sufficient and will not have good links into Woodstock. The effect will be to create a separate ‘satellite town’ on the outskirts. This, coupled with the inclusion of a medium sized new supermarket, will be detrimental to the existing town centre.’



- 3.9.2. In this respect it is important to note that the development will not be self contained but will create facilities that will be of benefit to the whole of Woodstock. This is the case, for example, with the new football pitch for Old Woodstock Town Football club and the all weather pitch. Old Woodstock Football Club has been part of Woodstock for the past 100 years, and ensuring that it has the facilities to continue being part of the Woodstock scene is a significant benefit to the whole town. Similarly the provision of an all-weather pitch is a new facility, which the town does not currently possess and so would serve the whole of Woodstock.
- 3.9.3. The residents of the new development will also have six pedestrian access points along the boundary with the town, so we do not agree that it has poor links into Woodstock. The revised masterplan demonstrates these links more clearly.
- 3.9.4. There is no threat to existing retail provision in Woodstock from the new 930 square metre convenience store as the only current convenience store is the Co-op which only has a floor space of only 114 sqm. To put this in perspective most modern petrol stations would have a 150 sqm shop.
- 3.9.5. Currently over 90% of convenience shopping expenditure that originates in Woodstock is spent elsewhere implying unsustainable shopping patterns.
- 3.9.6. The only sustainable solution to the current unsustainable shopping patterns is the provision of a new foodstore to meet convenience shopping needs locally. There are however no opportunities or sites upon which this need can be met within the constrained historic centre. Provision at the edge of the settlement will reduce travel distances for shopping but will not impact on the vitality and viability of the centre itself as it currently fails to serve any material convenience shopping function in any event and so the prospect of significant trade diversion from Woodstock does not arise. There will not be non convenience stores as part of the new development that would adversely

compete with existing businesses, such as the restaurants and cafes, in the town centre.



Figure 6: Existing Shop Fronts



Figure 7: High Street, Woodstock

- 3.9.7. The new retail provision will be a positive benefit in terms of meeting an unmet need for more floorspace and provide a sustainable solution to the current outflow of retail expenditure. In addition, the increase in population will serve to underpin the retail and service function of the centre by giving Woodstock a greater critical mass for commercial premises in the centre to feed off.
- 3.9.8. Similarly the employment provision would serve the whole of Woodstock, not just the development, as there are currently very few office or light industrial premises in the town, and both West Oxfordshire and Cherwell District Councils have identified a particular need for small start up premises.
- 3.9.9. Woodstock Town Council points out that the local economy in Woodstock relies heavily on tourism, but claims that the development would have a negative impact on tourism by diluting the town's distinctive character and putting more pressure on infrastructure. However, the histories of Blenheim and Woodstock are intricately intertwined so the prosperity of Woodstock depends on Blenheim providing a high quality tourist attraction, which is the reason why the majority of

tourists visit the town. By providing the financial resources that will allow continued high quality management of this internationally important heritage resource the proposed development will help to keep Woodstock as a prosperous place.

3.9.10. Furthermore, the planning proposals incorporate a strategy for creating an enhanced education offer with opportunity for an educational campus with Marlborough School and a new primary school. This will comprise the provision of outstanding educational facilities, including new sports facilities for use by the school; a coach parking area and high quality pedestrian links between the two schools.

3.9.11. While therefore strongly disagreeing that the proposed development would be a separate satellite, the fact that care has been taken to provide the infrastructure needed by the new residents will ensure that existing services and facilities are not overloaded and is therefore a positive feature of the development proposal.

### **3.10 Green Belt**

3.10.1. Woodstock Town Council, CPRE and the Oxford Green Belt Network all claim that the proposal would have an adverse impact on the Oxford Green Belt and that the proposal would be detrimental with regard to the five purposes for its designation.

3.10.2. It is important to be mindful that the site is not situated in the Green Belt. When the Green Belt boundary was drawn up by West Oxfordshire District Council and Cherwell District Council the site clearly did not make a significant contribution to these five purposes or they would have included this land within the Green Belt.

3.10.3. It is also claimed by the Oxford Green Belt Network that development on this site 'will be highly conspicuous from the Green Belt and will therefore be visually detrimental to the purposes of the Green Belt, detracting from its openness.'

These claims have not been substantiated with any empirical evidence to justify them.

- 3.10.4. The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment from viewpoints 11 and 12 along Upper Campsfield road (A4095) indicates that there is no intervisibility between the A4095 and the site, even in winter as a result of a thick belt of trees on the north east and south eastern boundaries of the site.

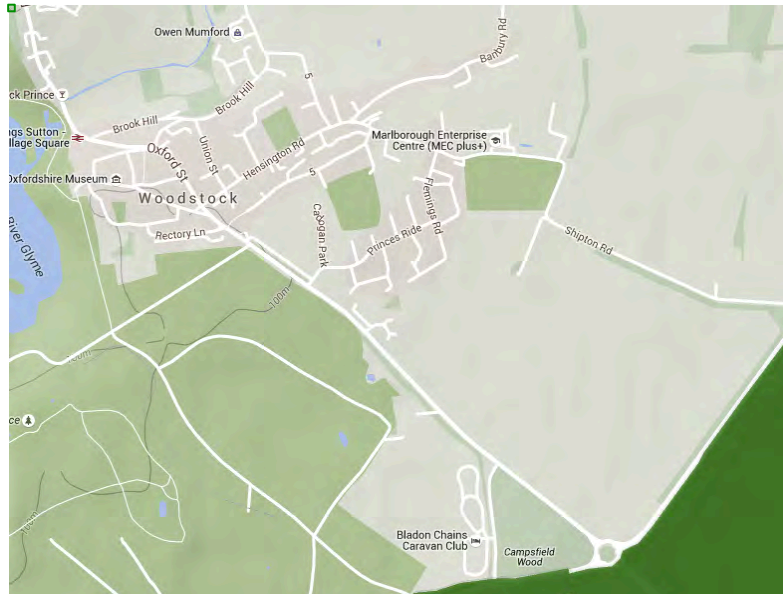


Figure 8: Oxford Green Belt (shown in dark green) and Woodstock

- 3.10.5. Similarly visibility from the higher ground to the south of Bladon roundabout will be largely screened by Campsfield Wood and the extensive new tree planting belt proposed adjoining Bladon roundabout. There will therefore be little visibility of the new development.
- 3.10.6. Woodstock Town Council states that 'the proposal includes a large 3 storey new build commercial element fronting onto the Upper Campsfield Road, directly facing the Green Belt over the road. The size, height, mass and scale of such a development hard up against the edge of the Green Belt boundary and plainly visible from it, will undoubtedly mean the Green Belt's openness and its purpose will be compromised by the development.'

- 3.10.7. This will not be the case, however, because of the existing tall and thick tree belt between the commercial element and the Green Belt.
- 3.10.8. The CPRE state that the development ‘would result in the creation of a ribbon of urbanisation linking Woodstock, via Oxford Airport and the Langford Lane business area toward Kidlington and Begbroke.’
- 3.10.9. When the Councils formulated the Green Belt boundary, however, this site was clearly not judged as necessary to be included so as to prevent these neighbouring areas joining up as one as one of the five purposes of including land in the Green Belt is ‘to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another.’ There would also still be a very substantial belt 1,500 metres wide separating Woodstock from Kidlington and Begbroke, which as it is in the Green Belt is subject to the policies on Green Belt protection. There is not therefore a threat of these areas becoming linked through ribbon development as suggested.

### **3.11 Loss of Open Space**

- 3.11.1. Woodstock Town Council argue that the proposals would result in the loss of valuable open space and would therefore be contrary to Local Plan policy BE4 which states that proposals for development should not result in the loss or erosion of an open area which makes an important contribution to the distinctiveness of a settlement; the visual amenity, or character of the locality; a facility of benefit to local residents; an area of nature conservation value; common land or a village green.
- 3.11.2. In this case the proposed development would not do any of these things.
- 3.11.3. The site is not of high landscape value with the major part consisting of a large flat arable field and so does not make an important contribution to the character of Woodstock. Indeed the site adjoins the back gardens of the modern housing estate of Hensington, which provides a rather untidy edge to the south eastern

edge of Woodstock. New development provides the opportunity to provide a more attractive, better landscaped edge to this side of the town.

- 3.11.4. The site is also not of value to the residents of Woodstock in recreational terms, as there is currently only one footpath, which goes along part of the western edge of the site. (The statement by the CPRE in their representations that *'several public footpaths cross the site'*, is incorrect.) As such, nearly all of the site is currently inaccessible to local residents. The proposed development, by contrast would involve the creation of large areas of public open space and recreational facilities, including a new all weather pitch, wildflower meadow; and access to the site of a Roman Villa which is a Scheduled Monument, to be provided with opportunity to interpret the historic site for members of the public. This would create recreational facilities of great benefit to local residents of both Woodstock and the proposed development compared to what is in situ now.
- 3.11.5. The areas where development is proposed do not consist of areas of nature conservation value, common land or a village green. With the habitat creation proposed the site would be of greater value for wildlife than it is at present.
- 3.11.6. Rather than leading to the loss of valued areas of open space, a significant benefit of the proposed development is that it would lead to their creation.

### **3.12 Coalescence of Woodstock and Bladon**

- 3.12.1. Woodstock Town Council claim that 'the scheme would result in the coalescence of Woodstock and Bladon, eroding the distinctiveness of these two historic settlements.'
- 3.12.2. This is not the case as the distinct identity of the two settlements would be preserved by the separation created by Blenheim Park; Campsfield Wood, the substantial new tree belt at the southern edge of the proposed new development and the A44.



Figure 9: Illustrative Masterplan and Bladon (to the south west)

### 3.13 Opportunities for preserving the World Heritage Site

3.13.1. CPRE state that ‘the applicants are citing the need to raise money to pay for repairs to Blenheim Palace as special circumstances to justify the development. The Planning Committee are not permitted to take the identity or needs of an applicant into account.’

3.13.2. In this case the proceeds would be used to secure the future conservation of an internationally important heritage site, as indicated by its World Heritage Site designation. The PPG sets out why World Heritage Sites are so important, stating that:

*‘The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) World Heritage Committee inscribes World Heritage Properties onto its World Heritage List for their Outstanding Universal Value – cultural and/or natural significance which is so exceptional as to transcend national boundaries and to be of common importance for present and future generations of all humanity.’*  
(Paragraph: 028 Reference ID: 18a-028-20140306)

3.13.3. Anything that has a bearing on a world heritage site is thus of great importance and a material planning consideration.

3.13.4. The PPG states that:

*'A material planning consideration is one which is relevant to making the planning decision in question (e.g. whether to grant or refuse an application for planning permission).*

*The scope of what can constitute a material consideration is very wide and so the courts often do not indicate what cannot be a material consideration.*

*However, in general they have taken the view that planning is concerned with land use in the public interest, so that the protection of purely private interests such as the impact of a development on the value of a neighbouring property or loss of private rights to light could not be material considerations'. (Paragraph: 008 Reference ID: 21b-008-20140306)*

3.13.5. Given this broad definition, the use of proceeds from this development to help safeguard the future of one of the world's most important heritage assets for the benefit of the public today and into the future is clearly a relevant material consideration, as it is of public, not merely private interest, and must therefore be taken into account in the determination of this application.

3.13.6. This is also consistent with Policy EW1 on the Blenheim World Heritage Site in the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031, which emphasises the importance of conserving the *'exceptional cultural significance (Outstanding Universal Value) of the Blenheim World Heritage Site'* for *'current and future generations,'* and acknowledges that *'the Blenheim Palace Management Plan is a material consideration in assessing development proposals.'*



## **4 HIGHWAYS**

### **4.1 Consultation Comments**

4.1.1. Feedback has been received from statutory consultees with regards to transport and highways as part of the development proposals. In particular Oxfordshire County Council, as local highway authority, has objected to the proposal on the grounds that:

- the submitted documents do not provide an appropriate appraisal of the traffic impact that would result from the development;
- the proposed link and ride would reduce the viability of existing and proposed public transport services & infrastructure and cause an increase in car use;
- The site access proposals would have an adverse impact upon the safety and convenience of highway users as the proposed priority junction to the A44 is in close proximity to an existing junction on the opposite side of the road and the poor alignment and dimension of the roundabout to the A4095.

### **4.2 Engagement**

4.2.1. On-going discussions have been held between the applicant and their transport consultant (DTA) and the local highway authority. Key points are:

- Further traffic surveys have been undertaken and traffic forecasts have been extended (Appendix B (1)). These confirm the original assessments to be robust and appropriate;
- No consultees have acknowledged the significant benefits that would be gained from the bus priority measures on the A44 proposed in the Transport Assessment. Further assessment of the proposed bus priority measures on the A44 show that they will significantly reduce the additional

18 minutes required on the S3 route during the peak travel demand periods;

- The bus interchange will maximise the benefits of enhanced public transport to the wider residents and business within Oxfordshire (Stagecoach have reiterated their strong support for the proposals);
- Safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved (independent road safety audit included at Appendix B (2)) and development of the masterplan (Drawing SK114) has identified additional connectivity;
- Rebalancing of the quantum of employment and residential development has been appraised within an addendum to the Environmental Statement (submitted to accompany this report);
- Overall the development is clearly consistent with the requirements of NPPF and Paragraph 32 in particular. The site represents an excellent location for providing high quality accessible development in a location where existing transport infrastructure readily able to accommodate it.
- Paragraph 32 states that development will only be prevented or refused where the residual cumulative impacts of the development are severe. Not only will no severe cumulative impacts arise from the development, but the multiple NPPF-aligned material benefits arising will facilitate sustainable development and make a significant contribution to wider sustainability objectives.

### **4.3 Benefits of locating new development at Woodstock**

4.3.1. Local Transport Plan 3 Policy SD1 states that:

*Oxfordshire County Council will seek to ensure that:*

- *the location and layout of new developments minimise the need for travel and can be served by high quality public transport, cycling and walking facilities;*
- *developers promote sustainable travel for all journeys associated with new development, especially those to work and education, and;*
- *the traffic from new development can be accommodated safely and efficiently on the transport network.*

4.3.2. The proposed development at Woodstock East will significantly enhance employment, education, retail and leisure, ensuring Woodstock becomes a much more sustainable settlement. As the community grows the development will deliver new facilities to complement the existing facilities. There will be new employment units to support an expanded workforce. There will be a new primary school to support the increasing education demand. There will be additional local shops to allow residents to make day-to-day purchases within easy walking distance of their homes or work places. There will be new and improved outdoor leisure spaces and facilities.

4.3.3. Moreover there are excellent existing transport links with direct road links to Oxford, the county towns of Banbury and Witney and the strategic road network, a premium bus service (Stagecoach S3 service), a direct link to National Cycle Route 5 and an extensive pedestrian network. The proposals provide a further opportunity to significantly enhance the local road and public transport network.

4.3.4. The Transport Strategy has been aligned to Oxfordshire's Local Transport Plan (3) and seeks to respond to the challenges identified therein:

*'Despite an hourly bus service, almost 80% of journeys to work between Chipping Norton and Oxford are by car, largely because of its convenience, speed and access to non-central destinations (para A1.118)'*

*'Congestion is a problem in the following locations:*

- *the A44 approaching Wolvercote roundabout is severely congested due to the traffic volumes exceeding the capacity of the roundabout and traffic often backs up to Pear Tree and Loop Farm roundabouts in the morning peak;*
- *Loop Farm roundabout can itself also be a source of congestion even when traffic ahead of it is free flowing;*
- *the A44 approaching the Bladon roundabout south of Woodstock is often slow moving due to the volume of traffic; and*
- *the A44 passes through Woodstock, Enstone and Chipping Norton, leading to severance and air quality issues, particularly due to the relatively high number of lorries. (Para A1.124)*

*There is no bus priority between Chipping Norton and Oxford or Charlbury and Oxford until services reach Pear Tree roundabout (A1.125).*

4.3.5. Oxfordshire's Strategy is as follows:

*'Although not all local trips along this corridor are between the major settlements of Chipping Norton, Woodstock and Oxford, most originate from these settlements. Optimising management of the network and alternatives to car travel serving these settlements will be the key to reducing congestion on the A44. (para A1.127)'*

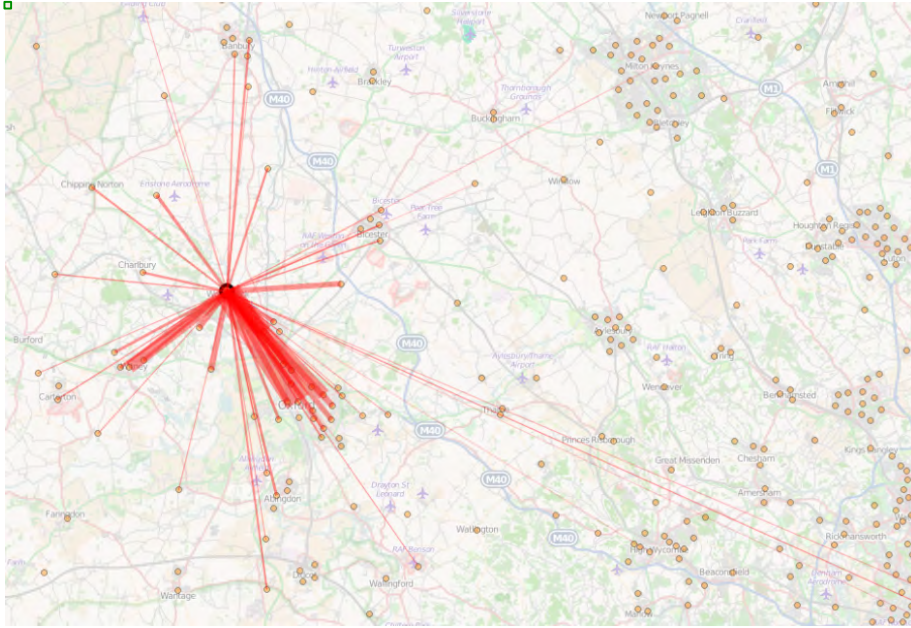
*'Bus stops in this corridor will be upgraded to premium route standard at appropriate locations. Improved public transport provision as part of Oxford's Eastern Arc could also have an important impact upon the A44, as well as upon the A40 and A34. Proposed improvements to the A44/A40 Wolvercote Roundabout should provide a way to reduce traffic and improve traffic flow (para A1.128)'*

*'A small park and ride site to serve this corridor may be pursued during the course of this Plan if congestion continues to worsen and a way can be found to give buses a travel time advantage on the route (para A1.129)'*

4.3.6. In response, the development strategy:

- *Envisages a walkable community with local facilities that are accessed via an integrated network of existing and proposed pedestrian and cycle routes;*
- *Capacity and road safety improvements are planned at Bladon Roundabout and Loop Farm Roundabout;*
- *Bus priority measures are planned for the A44 to make more efficient use of existing road space;*
- *A public transport interchange is planned that will serve existing and proposed future bus services including a 300 space car park and cycle parking to provide efficient interchange opportunities;*

4.3.7. Therefore in the context of SD1 it is clear that the proposals do provide for a high level of access to local facilities, including primary and secondary education by foot. The proposals provide for local employment but more crucially the development allows for the development of public transport needs that directly mirror the existing (and forecast) commuting patterns from Woodstock (also shown in Map 1 below, these are focused on Oxford and Witney).



Map 1: The current commuting patterns generated by Woodstock

4.3.8. Finally, the Transport Assessment has considered the impact of the residual traffic. Additional information (DTA Report 15291-08) has been provided to Oxfordshire County Council within the addendum report. This includes:

- *Further evolution of the scheme design;*
- *Additional traffic survey data which demonstrates that seasonal variation in traffic flows is such that the original survey timings reported higher traffic flows than were subsequently surveyed during a neutral traffic month;*
- *Additional background information which supports the future year trip estimates and distribution;*
- *An independent road safety audit of the proposed access designs.*

4.3.9. The assessments have identified where localised mitigation works are warranted and confirms that there will be no overall adverse impact on the operation or safety of the local transport network.

## 4.4 Public Transport

### Bus Priority

- 4.4.1. A comprehensive bus corridor priority scheme is proposed for the A44 in the TA. The scheme drawing is included within the Transport Assessment (DTA Drawing 15291-24).
- 4.4.2. As set out above the LTP3 also identifies that public transport can play a greater role within the A44 corridor and that this would in itself help to address existing capacity issues. Woodstock to Oxford off-peak is a twenty five minute journey. There is however no bus priority on the corridor to the west of the A34. As a result buses during the peak travel demand periods allow an additional eighteen minutes (>70% longer). Providing bus priority on the corridor to overcome this delay would make buses a considerably more attractive transport option and allow more efficient use of the buses.



Figure 10: Woodstock Bus

### Bus Routeing

- 4.4.3. The site has been designed to allow buses to route through the site. It is proposed that at least two services per hour would route through the site. Bus stops will be provided such that all houses would be within a 400m walk distance to the nearest stop.

### Interchange

- 4.4.4. One complementary initiative identified in LTP3 is the potential for a small park and ride:

*'A small park and ride site to serve this corridor may be pursued during the course of this Plan if congestion continues to worsen and a way can be found to give buses a travel time advantage on the route (para A1.129)'*

- 4.4.5. This accords with Local Transport Plan 3 Policy PT3 which states that:

*'Policy PT3 Oxfordshire County Council will support and promote the development of high quality public transport interchanges and infrastructure in appropriate locations.'*

- 4.4.6. In response it is proposed to create an interchange within the site to perform a similar function. The interchange will be complementary and be served by existing bus services. This will ensure that the interchange will not reduce the viability of existing and proposed public transport services. The interchange will not be branded as a park and ride. The interchange has been relocated closer to the A44.

- 4.4.7. Access times to buses (walk time + average waiting time) will be less than potential time saving achievable from bus priority on the A44. Journey time reliability will be significantly enhanced.

- 4.4.8. OCC have advised that the emerging LTP4 is likely to include the development of a large Park and Ride site within the A44 or A4260 corridors. Such a facility



may make the car park on the site redundant and thereby release this land for development. This could be secured by condition or the consent for the car parking could be time limited.

## **4.5 Site Access Junctions**

4.5.1. The site accesses will be built in accordance with prevailing best practice to ensure their safe and efficient operation. The best practice guidance included the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (TD42/95 and TD16/07) and Manual for Streets 1 and 2.

4.5.2. At this stage the accesses have been subject to preliminary design which confirms:

- There is sufficient land to allow a design guide compliant access to be secured;
- The implications for environmental and heritage issues (including existing trees and hedgerows) are understood;
- The preliminary access designs have been subject to an independent road safety audit. The RSA has identified no significant issues that could not be readily addressed at the detail design stage. The RSA made recommendations about the speed limits which can be accommodated through detailed design discussions with the County Council.

## **4.6 Local Accessibility**

4.6.1. As shown on the masterplan (SK114), and the movement and access plan (SK111) there will be a network of high quality, lit, surfaced routes within the site to ensure maximum internal accessibility.

4.6.2. There will be easy walking, cycling and bus access between the site and Woodstock town centre.



Figure 11: Proposed Connectivity Patterns

## **5 ECOLOGY**

### **5.1 Natural England Comments**

- 5.1.1. Natural England objected to the application on the grounds that the application is likely to damage or destroy the features of interest for which Oxford Meadows Special Area of Conservation and Blenheim Park Site of Special Scientific Interest have been notified, due to increases in airborne emissions of pollutants such as nitrogen oxides.
- 5.1.2. A response was prepared to Natural England by WSP, which has satisfied Natural England that there would not be an adverse impact on these protected sites and they have withdrawn their objections. Both the letter by WSP and Natural England's response are included in Appendix C.

### **5.2 West Oxfordshire District Council Planning Policy Comments**

- 5.2.1. Questioned whether the ecological measures are practical and effective in the long term and whether the proposed bat corridor across the site will be suitable given the increase in light levels and the number of people who will be crossing this area.
- 5.2.2. The 25m wide bat flight corridor through the site is proposed as part of the masterplan. Its dimensions are therefore clear and the use within it is also defined. These can be tied down through a planning condition or obligation. The long-term management of the corridor will be set out in a Landscape and Environment Management Plan and can be tied down through a condition or obligation. As such the deliverability and long-term management will be readily secured through normal planning processes.
- 5.2.3. In terms of effectiveness this was considered at length in the Environmental Impact Assessment and is reflected in the design/masterplanning process. The

key elements of the corridor that give confidence in its effective functionality are continuity of linear habitat features and the creation and maintenance of a dark flight corridor. In terms of continuity the corridor is severed at one location by a new internal road. This is no wider than the existing road along the southern boundary, which bats are crossing to move from Blenheim Park into the wider landscape. However the proposed mitigation also includes the creation of a hop over at this point to push bats up and over the road such that they fly at heights above traffic thus avoiding collision risk. Overall the flight corridor will be strengthened by new planting.

- 5.2.4. In terms of light spillage this matter was considered at length in the Environmental Statement and mitigation design. We are committed to a dark corridor with less than 0.5 lux. This can be tested and controlled through a condition. This is decidedly lower (a precautionary position) than the existing light levels bats are moving through along the Oxford Road on the south side of the site. As such our analysis has shown that these light levels can be attained and then maintained (controlled through condition and monitoring) so that there is every reason to believe that bats will use this flight corridor. Further assessment of this is included in the Environmental Statement and its addendum submitted with this report.
- 5.2.5. West Oxfordshire District Council Planning Policy Comments
- 5.2.6. WODC have requested that prior to the commencement of the development, a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by the LPA. Thereafter the LEMP should be carried out in accordance with the approved details. This measure will be undertaken and set as a planning condition or obligation.
- 5.2.7. WODC have also requested that prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved, including any demolition and any works of site clearance, a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), which shall include

details of the measures to be taken to ensure that construction works do not adversely affect the biodiversity shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved CEMP. This measure will be undertaken and set out as a planning condition or obligation.

- 5.2.8. WODC have requested that prior to the commencement of the development, including any demolition and any works of site clearance, full details of the role, responsibilities and operations to be overseen by a qualified supervising ecologist(s) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. Thereafter, the development shall be overseen by the qualified ecologist(s) in accordance with the approved details this measure will be undertaken and set as a planning condition or obligation.
- 5.2.9. The WODC ecology officer has identified that the planting regime will provide good connectivity across the site, with the large area of proposed meadow, providing an ecological gain on the site if well managed. They questioned how the conservation value of the meadow would be maintained and not compromised by its use for amenity. The management of this habitat will be conditioned through the LEMP/HMP.
- 5.2.10. They identified that the planting regime, in combination with the lighting masterplan (based on Bat Conservation Guidelines will ensure a dark bat commuting route through the site. They requested that the CEMP should include the construction lighting strategy to ensure that disturbance is minimised during construction. This measure will be conditioned through the CEMP.
- 5.2.11. They requested that all species used in the planting proposals associated with the development shall be native species of UK provenance. Where possible the majority of species proposed in the landscape design will be of native species of UK provenance. This measure will be conditioned through the LEMP/HMP.

- 5.2.12. They requested that further information on the following protected species needs to be submitted to the LPA for approval prior to any site clearance, demolition or ground works. Bats (buildings and trees), Dormice, Reptiles, Great Crested Newts and Badgers, including up to date surveys as required, method statements, full mitigation both during construction and the long term, details of receptor sites where appropriate and whether licences are required. These will be conditioned either as part of the CEMP and LEMP/HMP or separately.
- 5.2.13. They requested that full details of the proposed off site compensation for farm land breeding birds needs to be submitted for approval to the LPA. In order to achieve a net gain in biodiversity in line with the NPPF, a number of off site measures will be undertaken for breeding farmland birds. They will include – the retention/development of conservation headlands, the suitable management of hedgerows and field margins in the wider landscape, to ameliorate for the loss of habitat to arable breeding birds. These measures will be conditioned as part of the LEMP/HMP.
- 5.2.14. They requested that clearance of the site and preliminary works will take into account the potential presence of ground nesting birds on the arable fields. These measures will be conditioned as part of the CEMP.
- 5.2.15. They requested that all site clearance (including all vegetation removal, movement of vehicles on site and all ground works) shall be timed so as to avoid the bird nesting/breeding season from 1<sup>st</sup> March to 31<sup>st</sup> August inclusive, unless, in the case of a tree that is required to be removed for health and safety reasons or the LPA has confirmed in writing that such workds can commence based on the submission of a recent survey (no older than once month) that have been undertaken by an ecologist to assess the nesting bird activity on site (including ground nesting birds) together with details of measures to protect the nesting bird interest on the site and subsequent monthly checks throughout the breeding season. These measures will be conditioned as part of the CEMP.

5.2.16. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved, including any demolition, and any works of site clearance, a method statement for enhancing the biodiversity shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA. Thereafter, the biodiversity enhancement measures shall be carried out and retained in accordance with the approved details. These measures will be conditioned as part of the LEMP/HMP.

5.2.17. The applicant is happy to comply with all of these requests.

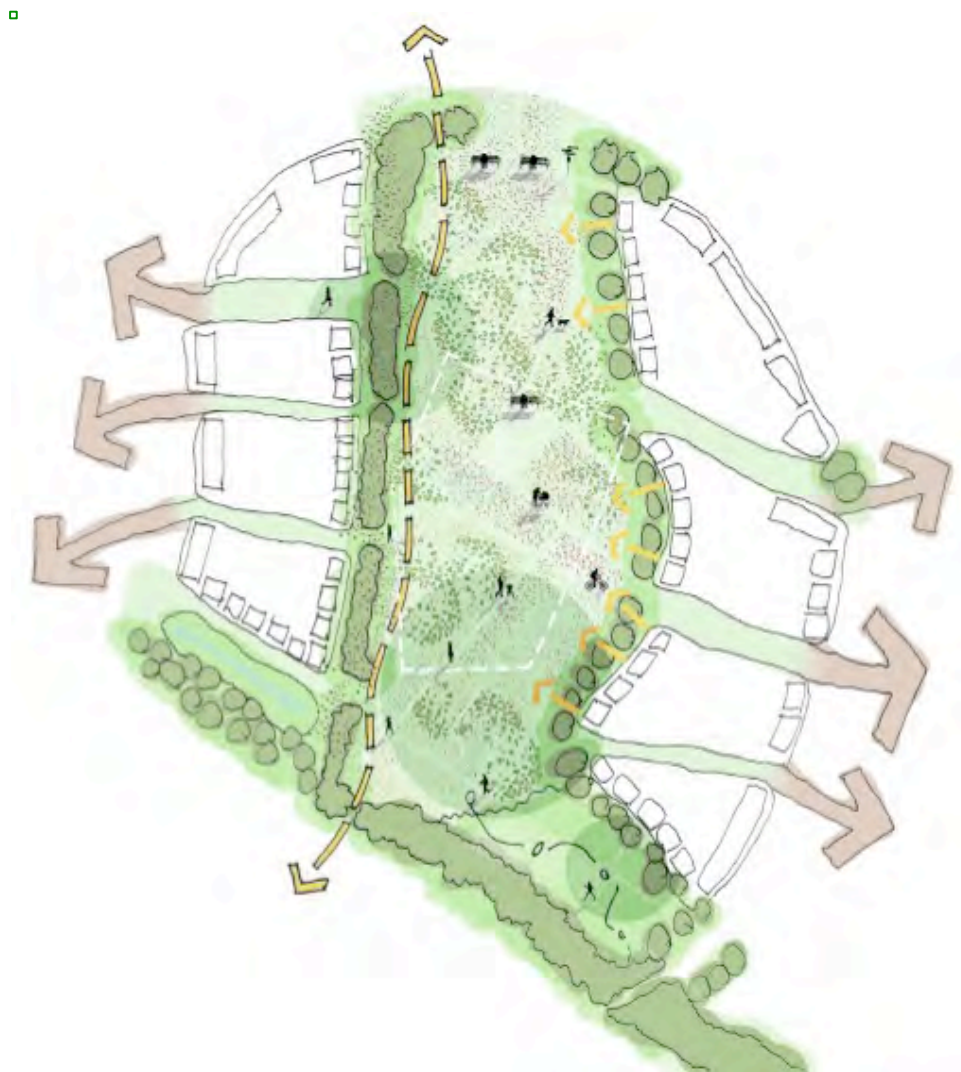


Figure 12: Proposed Woodstock Park Nature Reserve

## 6 SPORT AND RECREATION

### 6.1 Sport England Comments

- 6.1.1. Sport England objects to the proposal. Their response identifies ways to overcome the objection, as follows:
- a) Submit a revised location plan, which excludes the existing school playing field from the northern part of the application site.
  - b) Provide a clear explanation for the number and type of playing pitches to be provided to meet the needs of residents of the proposed development.
  - c) Provide a plan to demonstrate how the proposed pitches and other outdoor sporting facilities can be accommodated on the site in addition to the proposed football ground.
  - d) Clarify when the proposed sports facilities will be provided in relation to a specific phase or phases of the development.
  - e) Identify specific leisure centre improvements intended to benefit from the s.106 contributions.
- 6.1.2. Our response in relation to each of the matters raised by Sport England is as follows:
- a) Existing school playing field
- 6.1.3. Sport England mention that the Design and Access Statement contains options for the development of the proposed primary school and/or staff parking and a drop off zone on the existing school field. It states that 'none of these options fulfil the circumstances described in any of the exceptions to Sport England's Playing Fields Policy or accord with paragraph 74 of the NPPF.'
- 6.1.4. Paragraph 74 of the NPPF does permit development on playing fields where 'the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent



or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location.’ In this instance as this is an outline application and the layout is one of the reserved matters, a number of options have been identified regarding the primary school provision some of which could involve development on the existing playing fields, but it is fully accepted that if these options are pursued the replacement playing field provision would be equivalent or better than that which currently exists. However, no decision on this has yet been made and the playing field has only been included within the application site boundary so as to provide more flexibility for the configuration of the educational facilities, should the schools consider it to be preferable to have both the primary and secondary schools adjacent to one another, so as to create an educational campus. As what is intended is fully consistent with the advice in paragraph 74 of the NPPF it is not considered that an amendment to the site boundary excluding the existing school playing field from the site is required.



Figure 13: School Sports Provision

b) Provide a clear explanation for the number and type of playing pitches to be provided to meet the needs of residents of the proposed development.

- 6.1.5. In this respect Sport England makes reference to the need for a multi use games area and skate board park and comment: 'While the Land Use Parameter Plan (drawing numbered P300) and Illustrative Layout Plan (drawing numbered SK027) indicate the location of a proposed football ground with two pitches, in the northern part of the site, the Landscape Strategy (Design & Access statement pages 80 & 81) is likely to preclude the provision of any other pitches, a MUGA or a skate park on this part of the site.'
- 6.1.6. The two pitches proposed would consist of a pitch for Old Woodstock Town Football Club, plus a multi-purpose all weather pitch, so one of the two pitches shown would consist of the MUGA. The MUGA would be available both for different types of sports but also to a wide range of groups including Woodstock Town Football Club for training, local residents and local schools.
- 6.1.7. In response to Sport England's helpful comments we have made amendments to the masterplan, providing additional areas for sports provision in the eastern part of the development and the masterplan now comfortably meets all sporting standards and notably, provides an important sporting legacy for Woodstock.
- 6.1.8. With regard to the needs assessment, paragraphs 171 and 173 of the NPPF put the onus on local planning authorities to carry out these assessments. This is again re-enforced in the PPG where the section entitled '*How should open space be taken account in planning?*' states: '*It is for local planning authorities to assess the need for open space and opportunities for new provision in their areas.*'
- 6.1.9. We have accordingly used the standards set out by the two Councils in their relevant policy documents.

6.1.10. In the case of West Oxfordshire District Council these are set out in its 'West Oxfordshire Open Space Study 2013 – 2029.' The standards which the Council has adopted are set out in Table 4 on page 46. Each of these standards is met and in most cases substantially exceeded in the proposed provision of open space at Woodstock East, as indicated in the following table:

<b>Open space: Quantity and Access Standards for West Oxfordshire District Council</b>			
<b>Typology</b>	<b>WODC Requirements from new development (ha/1,000 population)</b>	<b>Requirement in ha at Woodstock East based on 1,500 dwellings &amp; 2.37 people per dwelling giving a population size of 3,555</b>	<b>Proposed provision at Woodstock East (ha)</b>
Allotments	0.25	0.89	1.0
Natural Green Space	2.0	7.1	8.18
Parks & Recreation Grounds (including sports provision)	1.0	3.5	13.97 (excluding Woodstock Town Football Club pitch)
Play Space (Children)	0.05	0.178	0.18 ha
Play space (Youth)	0.02	0.07	0.07 ha
<b>Total</b>		<b>11.738</b>	<b>23.4</b>

6.1.11. The open space provision at Woodstock East will therefore be 156.6% of what is required by local policy.

6.1.12. In Cherwell District the open space standards are set out in the Planning Obligations Draft Supplementary Planning Document (2011) and the compliance with these standards is set out in the table below:

Open space: Quantity & Access Standards for Cherwell District Council			
Typology	CDC Requirements from new development (ha/1,000 population)	Requirement in ha at Woodstock East based on 1,500 dwellings & 2.37 people per dwelling giving a population size of 3,555	Proposed provision at Woodstock East (ha)
Allotments	0.31	1.1	1.0
Green space (parks & gardens/natural/semi-natural/amenity greenspace)	2.3 (rural/urban edge)	8.2	18.15
Outdoor sports (e.g. tennis courts /playing pitches)	1.13	4.0	4.0 (excluding Woodstock Town Football Club pitch)
Play space for younger and older children (including MUGAs)	0.78	2.8	0.25 (+ MUGA which is included as part of the outdoor sports provision)
Total		<b>16.1 ha</b>	<b>23.4 ha</b>

6.1.13. Again, the open space provision at Woodstock East will be 145.3% of what is required by the local planning guidance.

6.1.14. Providing open space substantially above the standards set by the two Councils will have major social and community benefits and will ensure that the new community will have *'access to high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation'*, which will *'make an important contribution to the health and well being'* of the community in accordance with the advice in paragraph 73 of the NPPF.

c) Provide a plan to demonstrate how the proposed pitches and other outdoor sporting facilities can be accommodated on the site in addition to the proposed football ground

- 6.1.15. Plan SK114 is the revised masterplan for the development proposals which identifies where recreational and sporting facilities are proposed to be located within the development.
- 6.1.16. This includes play areas for children and youths, formal sports area, Multi-use Games Area (MUGA) and open green spaces.
- d) Clarify when the proposed sports facilities will be provided in relation to a specific phase or phases of the development
- 6.1.17. To reflect the importance of sporting provision the facilities will be provided at an early stage of the development, with the Old Woodstock Town Football club and all-weather pitch provided in years one and two (see phasing plan appendix E). The rest will come alongside development, ensuring that, as a minimum provision meets the Council's standards, but in reality due to the initial phase, will generally be well ahead of requirements.
- 6.1.18. The applicant is happy to discuss this matter further and agree a timetable for the early provision of sports facilities within this development.
- e) Identify specific leisure centre improvements intended to benefit from the S106 contributions
- 6.1.19. While it is the responsibility of the local planning authority to advise on the leisure facilities where the improvements will take place, the applicant is fully committed to making provision for leisure centre improvements within Woodstock, which will benefit the town as a whole.

## **6.2 Old Woodstock Town Football Club**

- 6.2.1. The proposed development will have a very significant benefit in terms of the improvement of sporting facilities in Woodstock. As stated in paragraphs 8.45 and 8.46 of the Planning Statement Old Woodstock Football Club has been battling with poor quality and out of date facilities that are significantly restricting the clubs ability to improve and move up the local Hellenic Football League. The

clubs facilities do not meet the standards set by the Football Association and so the club, no matter how well they play are unable to progress to the higher football league. Old Woodstock Town Football Club came second in the Hellenic Football League Division One East this season and would have been promoted if the ground met FA standards. The sub standard facilities also mean that the club is unable to encourage youth or ladies teams, which could foster further community involvement. There is a real possibility that without the promise of the new proposed facilities, this local club with over 100 years of history will fold within the next eighteen months. Indeed it has recently been refused planning permission for installing floodlights at its current ground.

6.2.2. The application proposals include a new football pitch for Old Woodstock Town Football Club, alongside a new clubhouse and all weather training pitch which will meet current FA regulations, as well as encourage sport in Woodstock. The all-weather pitch and clubhouse will also be a great facility for the whole of Woodstock to use for a range of sports including hockey, basketball and other team sports. There is no comparable facility in Woodstock at the moment and there is very little in the way of sporting provision in the town.

6.2.3. The proposal will therefore not only save a 100 year old football club, but provide the investment to lay the foundations for its long term success. We anticipate Sport England's strong backing for our major investment into grass roots football and the creation of a major sports based facility for the wider community.

### **6.3 Advantages of the development for sport and recreation provision**

6.3.1. The development will have the following advantages in terms of sport and recreation provision:

- A new FA compliant football ground for Old Woodstock Town Football Club to assist in their continued progression within the Hellenic League;

- An all-weather pitch for community use;
- Other formal sports facilities in the eastern part of the development;
- Ample open space provision
- An extensive network of paths including one around the edge of the site;
- Children's and Youth's play areas.



Figure 14: Proposed New Ground for Old Woodstock Town FC.

## **7 ECONOMY/EMPLOYMENT**

### **7.1 Comments from WODC and CDC**

- 7.1.1. Officers at West Oxfordshire and Cherwell District Councils consider that the site is well located to provide small office spaces for start-up businesses in light of the close proximity to the A44, Oxford Airport and the nearby business parks accessed off Langford Lane including Oxford Spires. They have recommended that this could be made more of and the amount of floorspace available for commercial and employment uses increased.
- 7.1.2. The proposals originally identified an area of up to 7,500sqm of locally led employment space within the framework masterplan, generating around 160 full time equivalent jobs. A review has been undertaken, and the applicant has determined to take a flexible approach. The framework masterplan has been amended to provide scope for an increase in employment floorspace up to 13,800sqm on the site, should there be an identified need for this level of floorspace going forwards.
- 7.1.3. The site is very favourably located for business use as it is within the Oxford City Deal improvement area known as the 'Knowledge Spine' including Begbroke Science Park and the Northern Gateway. Woodstock East can therefore contribute to the local employment offer, and complement other business centres.
- 7.1.4. By adopting a flexible approach to the amount of employment space available, the proposals have the potential to provide up to 300 full time equivalent jobs (based on 13,800sqm of employment space) for the existing and future population of Woodstock, creating a sustainable alternative to commuting to Oxford or further afield for work.



- 7.1.5. The location of the site adjoining the Oxford London Airport, which has plans for development in the medium to long term, also opens up opportunities for the provision of employment uses related to aviation.
- 7.1.6. Furthermore, officers at West Oxfordshire raise concerns with regards to the lack of a buffer between the employment area and neighbouring residential uses.
- 7.1.7. There is no requirement to separate the uses as the proposed employment area will consist of light industry and office use which will not generate any noise or dust which could conflict with residential use. Furthermore, the employment area will be predominantly in use during week days, and the adjacent residential areas can offer surveillance and security for the area during evenings and weekends. The proposed mix of uses is considered wholly appropriate to provide a vibrant community atmosphere and avoid areas of unusable or dead space within the development.



Figure 15: Provision for New Retail Centre and Employment.

## 8 RETAIL

### 8.1 Comments from WODC

- 8.1.1. West Oxfordshire District Council's planning policy team has stated that:
- 8.1.2. *Retail is proposed as part of the overall mix of development to serve the development. Whilst Woodstock has a strong town centre draw with a good mix of independent shops and other facilities and services, we need to be fully satisfied that this retail element will not harm the functions of the town centre. The retail element is above 500sqm (up to 930sqm) and therefore a retail impact assessment should be carried out.*

### 8.2 Retail Impact Assessment

- 8.2.1. The retail impact of the proposed development was assessed in chapter 4.3 of the Environmental Statement. This concluded that the increase in available convenience and comparison expenditure (£4.7m Convenience and £8.5m in comparison expenditure) and the increase in local population will bring more people to the town centre, which will have a positive effect on how retailers view Woodstock as a potential location increasing the settlement size to a scale that may attract more multiple operators.

### 8.3 Benefits of the proposals

- 8.3.1. The proposals will certainly increase footfall in the town centre to the benefit of local traders, such as the bank (Barclays), Hampers delicatessen, Woodstock Pharmacy, and post office and it may create the critical mass necessary to support additional convenience or comparison traders who currently struggle to operate serving the smaller community.
- 8.3.2. The additional workforce accommodated in the 7500 or 13,800 sqm of new employment space proposed at Woodstock East will also generate additional trips and business in the town centre as it will provide the service centre

requirements (banks/sandwiches/day to day shopping needs) for the new local workforce. The effects of Settlement Growth on the vitality and viability of Woodstock Town Centre will therefore be positive.

- 8.3.3. With regard to the Council's concerns that the provision of 930 sqm of retail floorspace as part of the development at Woodstock East, could potentially harm the town centre, this will not be the case as currently over 90% of convenience shopping expenditure that originates in Woodstock is spent elsewhere. The only current food store in Woodstock is a Co-op convenience store with a floor area of 114 sqm; and with the heritage constraints in the town centre, it would not be possible to provide a large retail store as this would involve the loss of listed buildings in order to accommodate the floorspace and servicing requirements.
- 8.3.4. At the present time Woodstock residents do very little convenience shopping in Woodstock. This probably applies to other shopping too. Retaining some of this convenience shopping in Woodstock is likely to benefit other types of shopping in Woodstock too. The provision of a new store on Woodstock East would not therefore impact on food stores in the town centre. There will also be benefits from the greater critical mass with a much larger population. With a population of about 5,000 it may result in banks or other stores deciding to locate in Woodstock or stop them closing down, as a lot of these decisions are made purely on the basis of population numbers. The new retail provision will thus be a positive benefit in terms of meeting an unmet need for more floorspace and provide a sustainable solution to the current outflow of retail expenditure.
- 8.3.5. Many of the retail units in the town centre are currently cafes and restaurants. Increased numbers of people in the town will have a positive impact on these businesses, and the usual mix of retailers will not be provided on the development site in order that non convenience footfall will be driven to the town centre.

## **9 HERITAGE**

### **9.1 Non-Technical Summary**

- 9.1.1. This note is prepared by Montagu Evans LLP, under the direction of Chris Miele, the Senior Partner in the practice who oversees a specialist heritage planning team. The applicants have appointed Montagu Evans to advise on these matters because the senior professional formerly providing this service at West Waddy ADP has retired.
- 9.1.2. This application engages a number of heritage considerations, which were the subject of consultation responses from Historic England, ICOMOS and the District Councils of Cherwell and West Oxfordshire. The following note explores, principally, matters raised in relation to the impact of the proposals on the Blenheim World Heritage Site (WHS), the Scheduled Monument (SM) Blenheim Villa, and the setting of the Woodstock Conservation Area (CA).
- 9.1.3. We conclude there is no harm to the WHS or to the CA, and such harm as may occur to the significance of the SM is at most very limited and in any event subject to judgment which will vary. Even if there were to be some harm, then there are other benefits to the proposals (such as contribution to housing land supply) that should be weighed against that harm, in accordance with paragraph 134 of the NPPF.

### **9.2 Consultation Responses**

- 9.2.1. There are generally similar issues raised by the consultees, and so we will consider each of these matters in turn.
- 9.2.2. The critical heritage consideration engaged by this application is the impact of the proposals on the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the World Heritage Site. The WHS effectively encompasses the Grade I Registered Parkland which is, in turn, the setting for the Grade I listed palace. If, then, the OUV of the WHS

is not affected by the proposals, we reason that there is no effect on the setting of the palace.

9.2.3. The principal heritage considerations relate to the impact of the proposals on:

- The setting, and therefore significance, of the Scheduled Monument within the site, Blenheim Villa, with associated unscheduled remains considered to be of national significance for their association with the SM; and
- The setting of the Woodstock Conservation Area (CA)

9.2.4. It is accepted that there is no impact on the significance of the Bladon CA to the south. An additional impact has been highlighted by the District Councils, namely on the unlisted Pest House, which we understand is a C19 building, not listed and not in a CA. The Councils considered it to be a non-designated heritage asset.



*Figure 16: Existing Heritage in Woodstock High Street*

### 9.3 The World Heritage Site

- 9.3.1. The WHS is subject of a conservation management plan developed in partnership with the planning authority and English Heritage, along with other stakeholders, and formally endorsed by DCMS (Department for Culture, Media and Sport) to ICOMOS.



*Figure 17: Blenheim Palace*

- 9.3.2. That Conservation Management Plan (CMP) is a material consideration of weight, and the weight it attracts will increase if the current, contemplated policy in the West Oxfordshire local plan, EW1, is adopted. This policy expressly recognises the CMP as a basis for considering applications potentially affecting the OUV of the WHS.
- 9.3.3. Historic England have concluded in their formal consultation response that the proposals would have no effect on the OUV of the Park. Their conclusion was qualified subject to further information demonstrating whether there would be any views of the proposed development from the upper park of the Registered Park. A further LVIA was prepared by Aspect landscape consulting, and this has been discussed with representatives of HE and the District Council.

- 9.3.4. We conclude that the Aspect information demonstrates no visual impact from the upper park.
- 9.3.5. It is notable that the WHS CMP identifies only one single view out from the site, towards Woodstock, as sensitive. That has been tested and no effect concluded.
- 9.3.6. We understand that the District Councils broadly accept these findings but would like further confirmation through the placement of tethered balloons at two or three places on the application site. This is, we understand, to be organised shortly and officers invited to back to inspect the viewpoints.
- 9.3.7. The District Councils expressed some concern about impacts from the lower park from increased visibility of development. We have reviewed the landscape proposals, which have been developed further as part of this supplemental package. We are content that the current levels of screening taken together with the screening incorporated within the western edge of the proposals, will reduce the potential for any intervisibility such that there will be no visual effect and hence no impact on the OUV.
- 9.3.8. It should be said that the CMP states that the WHS has an enclosed character, reinforced by a high boundary wall. This is evident across from the application site.
- 9.3.9. ICOMOS do not claim that the OUV as defined in the CMP is affected. They are concerned, instead, that the scale of the development will undermine what they see as an important historic relationship between the Palace and the Town, introducing an asymmetry into the current relationship.
- 9.3.10. There is no mention of this relationship in the CMP. The concerns are focused, it appears, on traffic and general intensity of use.
- 9.3.11. In answer to this criticism, we point out that the CMP is silent on this relationship. Furthermore, the ICOMOS response does not consider whether the development proposed might interject vitality into the historic town and so sustain its

significance by contributing to its economic success as a settlement. In any event, we do question how much weight can be given to the ICOMOS criticism when it falls outside of a recently adopted CMP which is accepted as valid, and whose definition of 'setting' ICOMOS did not, we understand, question.

- 9.3.12. We conclude that the proposals have no effect on the OUV of the WHS. Thus, national planning policy guidance on heritage is satisfied and so too the objectives of emerging policy EW1.

#### **9.4 The Scheduled Monument: Blenheim Villa**

- 9.4.1. The remains of this monument are completely concealed, that is, it has no upstanding expression. It is associated with a set of more extensive remains, running largely to the north of the SM. These have been variously investigated to define the extent or area of the remains and to confirm their association with the Villa SM.
- 9.4.2. The complex of remains features a dividing feature to the south and west of their alignment which has been interpreted by TVAS, the archaeological consultants, as comprising a ditch or outer limit of the remains. We understand this is not challenged.
- 9.4.3. The monument and the remains are, at present, not interpreted in any way, and so remain unappreciated except by expert archaeologists. The area is under the plough and there is no stewardship scheme, we understand, to limit agricultural activity. Both these circumstances represent a risk to the future conservation of the remains.
- 9.4.4. There is no statutory protection for the setting of Scheduled Monuments. There is a policy dealing with that matter in the NPPF, at paragraph 132, which confirms the great weight which local authorities should place on conserving the significance of designated assets. The NPPF also states that remains which are not scheduled but are of schedulable quality should be given the same regards



as scheduled remains. Thus, the provisions of paragraph 132 apply to all the remains, bearing in mind however there is no statutory protection as such.

9.4.5. There has been a debate between Historic England with the County and the archaeological consultants to the project. HE have interpreted the archaeological evidence to conclude that the villa was oriented to the south east intentionally to take advantage of extensive views of the hills to the south. They have said, furthermore, that as a matter of course all such buildings were oriented in this direction.

9.4.6. TVAS have commented that the evidence is not capable of straightforward interpretation and in any event Roman villas did not have a standard orientation. There are examples of villas facing in different directions. Historic England's conclusions are, in their own words, a 'contention', based on a particular interpretation of evidence.

9.4.7. It is not for this document to adjudicate between these two expert views. We have looked at the matter from the perspective of the recently published Good Practice Advice note 3, on the Setting of Heritage Assets. The application documentation applied the methodology of the precursor guidance note, the Setting of Heritage Assets (2012). The approaches these documents recommend are, essentially, the same.

9.4.8. The guidance states views are the starting point for understanding setting relationships of interest to the planning system. This is because vision is the main way we experience heritage assets and their value. All views potentially matter, as the guidance explains:

*views of, across, or including that asset, and views of the surroundings from or through the asset, and may intersect with, and incorporate the settings of numerous heritage assets*

- 9.4.9. There is undeniably an aspect of experience falling outside the visual which can affect our appreciation of an asset. Noise and vibration are the other principal ones, and ones identified over the years in EIA practice as potentially harmful effects requiring consideration.
- 9.4.10. There also can be no doubt that an appreciation of an asset's significance can be intellectual purely, that is based on understanding of factual or other information. Such understanding is the basis of modern aesthetics as established in the C18 and is, in fairness, a reasonable point to consider in these practical matters.
- 9.4.11. Such a non-experiential setting relationship could be said to exist, say, between the gatehouse of a country house and the country house itself, even where the two may not be seen together or even in the space of travelling a short distance. In this example, the distinctive architecture of the gatehouse, coupled with the experience of arrival at the house or a view of it, can be said to be part of a single experience because of memory and consciousness. Such relationships are, however, obvious. Historical information can provide the same intellectual linkage, and so affect direct experience, again through memory and understanding even where there are no obvious points of visual connection.
- 9.4.12. GPA3, in line with the previous setting guidance, recognises this where it states under the heading 'Appreciating setting' that
- The potential for appreciation of the asset's significance may increase once it is interpreted or mediated in some way, or if access to currently inaccessible land becomes possible.*
- 9.4.13. There is no interpretation of the SM at the moment. Now no one really knows there is anything there, because it is on private land and in any event has no upstanding expressing.

- 9.4.14. That mediated appreciation of setting only occurs through the development, which proposes a scheme of interpretation. Paradoxically, then, this gives rise to an appreciation of an effect which would otherwise not occur.
- 9.4.15. The present open setting in agricultural land is complementary to the villa, if one knows it is there, because villas were essentially farms, at the centre of an estate which, in this region, were generally arable. Villas were surrounded by smaller enclosures of differing dimensions, devoted to different forms of agriculture. This could include orchards or paddocks or trees. There is no evidence that the villa was laid out to contemplate a view to the hills; in fact the landscape experience from within the application site boundaries is not special in visual terms, and there are no obvious features of orientation in the distance.
- 9.4.16. Thus, any change to the land would, it is said, cause some harm to the significance of the remains, notwithstanding they cannot be seen and are not now marked or appreciated. That harm might be less, it has been suggested, if the development were to be pulled out from the view to the south. The masterplan leaves the site of the SM and related remains open, and proposes treating the land as a shared open space with some form of interpretation to be agreed.
- 9.4.17. The consultees consider the harm is less than substantial and may therefore be outweighed by public benefits. It is agreed by Historic England that the scheme of interpretation is beneficial and so too the change in the land from arable to public open land which would stop ploughing and so limit the scope for damage to the area and its archaeology.
- 9.4.18. Historic England consider these benefits do not outweigh the harm. Historic England have not considered the weight to be given to place making. The scheme of interpretation and presence of remains undoubtedly would contribute to local distinctiveness and enhance public appreciation.

- 9.4.19. Leaving aside whether the villa really did have the purposeful orientation claimed for it, the matter turns on subjective judgment. One person of a certain disposition visiting this site might well consider that the presence of housing to the south, seen over a large area, undermines his or her Romantic appreciation of the presence of the remains. Another might take a different view, and find the evidence of historical change moving. That debate might be resolved more definitively one way or the other if the remains had any physical manifestation above ground. They do not.
- 9.4.20. In considering this matter, members can make up their own minds and do so in the knowledge that Historic England and the County have identified two demonstrable benefits to the significance of the SM and the remains.
- 9.4.21. It is also the case that the setting of these remains is not remote open countryside, a setting more conducive to Romantic reflection, but a site on the edge of a settlement, near a busy road and north of an airport. The current open landscape, prairie, has no particular value. The hedge and way nearby are, in fact, of historic interest, but like the monument the development presents an opportunity for enhancement of this local resource.
- 9.4.22. We conclude, therefore, that if there is harm, taking the side of those who would tend to experience the place one way, once mitigated, it must be very limited and outweighed by benefits which have been acknowledged.

## **9.5 The Conservation Area ‘Approach’**

- 9.5.1. It has been suggested that the proposals would urbanise the southern approach to the historic town, whose core is contained within a Conservation Area. There is no published appraisal for this area, but its special interest is not at issue and can be easily understood: it is an attractive country town typical of this part of the country, whose form has evolved over time and whose streets present evidence

of several centuries of historical development. There are many listed buildings of high values.

- 9.5.2. Those are intrinsic qualities, unaffected by the proposals. The question is whether the change in character is itself harmful.
- 9.5.3. Change in itself is of course not harmful. The current character of the approach is determined by the boundary of the Registered Park and WHS on one side, with an attractive boundary wall, built of local stone, and attractive landscaping.
- 9.5.4. The edge of the development site opposite is comprised of a hedge of no particular visual quality, which bounds an unexceptional field. That arrangement communicates the historic use of the land on this side of the park, but that land itself has lost its historic organisation (enclosures).
- 9.5.5. It is proposed to mirror the landscape effect on the park or west side, by a belt of planting that would be created in the first phase of development (years 1 and 2). That belt would also be managed by the estate with its visual amenity in mind.
- 9.5.6. The further submission explains that this belt is not an ordinary, dense shelter belt of the kind one might find around a supermarket car park. It is deep enough to enable a good piece of complementary landscaping incorporating larger specimens near the road and then a further belt with understory, a typical parkland treatment that would both screen the development and be an attractive landscape feature in its own right.
- 9.5.7. The larger trees on the road would over time canopy over the approach, mirroring those on the other side. This would create an approach avenue, enhancing the experience through suitable landscaping. The approach to the town would thus be improved visually.

## **9.6 Conclusions**

- 9.6.1. Thus, we conclude there is no harm to the WHS or to the CA, and such harm as may occur to the significance of the SM is at most very limited and in any event

subject to judgment which will vary. Even if there were to be some harm, then there are other benefits to the proposals (such as contribution to housing land supply) that should be weighed against that harm, in accordance with paragraph 134 of the NPPF.

## **9.7 The Pest House**

- 9.7.1. We conclude with a few words on this undesignated asset. Its setting is not subject to statutory provision, and there is no direct physical impact arising from the development.
- 9.7.2. The application is presented in outline, and any reserved matters application for this area could be subject to special consideration, having regard to the objective of creating an appropriate setting of that building.
- 9.7.3. Its incorporation into the development, like the SM's, adds local distinctiveness and promotes place making on that basis.

## 10 LANDSCAPE

### 10.1 Background

- 10.1.1. A thorough understanding of, and high quality approach to, landscaping, is fundamental to the proposed development. The application and its supporting information has emerged from a landscape-led approach to design.
- 10.1.2. The NPPF is explicit - one of the twelve core principles of planning (Paragraph 17) requires plans and decisions to take into account the different roles and character of different areas, and recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, to ensure that development is suitable for the local context.
- 10.1.3. This proposal is aligned with the NPPF and will:
- make a positive contribution to landscape character;
  - exceed the aims and objectives set out in the Kirkham Review;
  - preserve the setting of the World Heritage Site and historic town;
  - incorporate a high quality, appropriate landscape scheme which contributes positively to the landscaped approach to Woodstock;
  - adopt a landscape scheme which has been informed by the landscapes which characterise Blenheim Palace WHS
- 10.1.4. Aspect has prepared a detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) which was submitted to West Oxfordshire and Cherwell District Councils in December 2014. Aspect also formed part of the design team from the outset to ensure that the proposals adopted a high quality, landscape led approach.
- 10.1.5. The LVIA included detailed reviews of national and local landscape character appraisals, as well as extensive field studies. This analysis informed the emerging design development to ensure that the proposals represented an

appropriate and sympathetic scheme which could be integrated in this location without significant harm to the receiving landscape character.

10.1.6. The LVIA concluded that the proposals, together with the high quality landscape scheme, have responded positively to the identified landscape features and components which characterise the localised and wider setting. The result is a considered and appropriate development that can be integrated into this landscape setting. Aspect consider that the proposals have been informed by and comply with national and local policy objectives and represent a high quality and sustainable development.

10.1.7. The LVIA acknowledges the importance of landscape character, as recognised within the NPPF, and which was highlighted by the letter from the Minister of State for Housing and Planning (27th March 2015) and states:

*“One of the twelve core principles of planning, set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, is that plans and decisions should take into account the different roles and character of different areas”.*

10.1.8. This Report recognises the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. It provides a detailed analysis of landscape character and provides relevant evidence to demonstrate that the proposed development is suitable for its local context.

10.1.9. As noted above, the landscape proposals have been informed by the landscape features and components which characterise the landscape setting of the site. The proposals introduce extensive areas of tree planting which will not only create a robust and defensible edge to Woodstock but also reflect the areas of woodland which characterise the Blenheim parkland and wider landscape setting. The Blenheim Park landscape has also inspired the landscape scheme with the establishment of avenues, vistas, informal parkland style tree planting and feature trees. Key landscape elements within the site will be retained as part



of the proposals and will ensure an established landscape framework exists from Day One, with a comprehensive scheme of planting to reinforce and enhance this soft landscape presence. The high quality landscape scheme will ensure that the proposals represent an appropriate and sustainable development. The LVIA demonstrates that the proposals have due regard to the existing landscape character and that they can be integrated without harm. This is in line with the NPPF.

10.1.10. The proposals have been widely consulted on and following submission of the planning application, comments were received from WODC, English Heritage (Historic England) and ICOMOS. This briefing note provides a detailed, direct response to those points raised and therefore includes the following:

- Review of Kirkham Landscape Character and Visual Review of Woodstock;
- Assessment of Winter Views; and
- Additional Views from within the Blenheim Palace Parkland.

## **10.2 Analysis of Kirkham Landscape Character and Visual Review of Woodstock**

10.2.1. The Kirkham assessment was prepared by Kirkham Landscape Planning on behalf of WODC, in June 2014, as part of the evidence base of the West Oxfordshire SHLAA. This was before the planning application was submitted.

### Limitations of the Kirkham Review

10.2.2. The review only considers the western part of the application site, located within West Oxfordshire, and does not include the eastern extent up to Upper Campsfield Road.

10.2.3. Within the introduction to landscape character, there is no reference to the more recent Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS). The assessment

relies on the West Oxfordshire Landscape Assessment (WOLA) which was prepared in 1998.

10.2.4. The Review acknowledges that it is not a sensitivity study.

10.2.5. Within the Summary of Recommendations, under Section 9, the review considers that the site option has the capacity for up to 350 units. Based on the total area, this equates to around 22 dwellings per hectare, which is well below the national standard and does not comply with national and local policy guidance. The removal of the entire southern field reduces the potential capacity to 180-200 units. As set out within the LVIA, it is considered that the creation of a sensitive buffer to the south western edge, alongside a comprehensive landscape scheme, ensures that such constraints to the developable area should not be applied.

#### Appraisal of Kirkham LCVR

##### “Assessment of SHLAA Site 162”

10.2.6. Within Table 8.1, the assessment acknowledges the presence of a prominent urban edge to the north west of the site, with the new development to the east of Marlborough School extending the settlement eastwards. This acknowledges that there are clear opportunities to soften the existing built edge and settlement presence. It is considered that the comprehensive scheme of landscaping associated with the Woodstock East proposals will create a robust and defensible green edge to the settlement, reflecting the mature tree belts which are associated with the south eastern edge of the site, which the assessment notes, screen the site.

10.2.7. Within Table 8.2, the review notes that the Blenheim Palace parkland is heavily wooded opposite the site. The proposals acknowledge this and include a robust woodland belt and tree avenue along the south western boundary to complement

the Parkland landscape. The landscape proposals will also ensure that a high standard of landscape design is achieved which is in keeping with its setting.

10.2.8. The review goes on to state that the development of the site option would result in the loss of farmland but that this would not affect the wider landscape. The LVIA acknowledges that the proposals will result in the loss of several large arable fields, however, these are not rare landscape features or components and as such their loss is not considered significant.

10.2.9. The landscape proposals also seek to retain all of the key existing vegetation associated with the site and, where appropriate, these features will be enhanced and reinforced through new planting. As noted above, significant tree planting is also proposed to assist the integration of the existing and proposed built environment and it is considered that this is entirely in keeping with the existing landscape features associated with the site and its setting.

“Assessment of potential benefit of landscape mitigation and contribution to Green Infrastructure at Woodstock”

10.2.10. Within Paragraphs 8.1 and 8.2, the review notes that the site option does provide opportunities to improve the settlement pattern, the interface between urban and rural landscapes and to achieve a number of the landscape and visual objectives set out within the WOLA.

10.2.11. It is considered that the proposed development and associated landscape scheme ensure that these aims and objectives are achieved, contributing positively to the green infrastructure of Woodstock and the creation of a high quality and sustainable proposal.

“Conclusions and recommendations”

10.2.12. Under Paragraph 8.4, the review sets out a number of recommendations for the future development of the site option.

*Open land in the south of the site option to be excluded*

10.2.13. The review provides no reasoned justification for the exclusion of the entire field. Such a measure ignores the possibility of a comprehensive scheme of landscaping and an appropriate, landscape led approach to ensure the integration of the development proposals.

10.2.14. This statement also goes against key policy aims and objectives. The NPPF seeks the delivery of sustainable development, which means taking account of the economic and social dimensions as well as the environmental. These roles should not be undertaken in isolation, with economic factors able to secure higher social and environmental benefits. The NPPF also seeks to make best use of land and it is considered that the exclusion of the entire southern field does not represent a sustainable approach to the development of this site.

*Development to be no higher than 2.5 storeys high with the rural edge*  
*development no more than 2 storeys high with a broken roofscape*

10.2.15. The assessment of Woodstock and its setting as part of the planning application has identified that a wide variety of building heights characterise the localised townscape setting. This assessment has informed the proposed parameters of the development to ensure that the development reflects the local character and is in accordance. The employment units and some built form around the Local Centre could extend up to 3 storeys, however, these are located within the development parcels of the site, away from the sensitive boundaries, with the employment built form located within the context of existing mature treescape which will assist their integration. Furthermore, 3 storey development is present within Woodstock and the immediate setting of the site. Such a proposed characteristic is therefore not considered inappropriate.

10.2.16. The proposed parameters identify the more sensitive edges of the site and in these locations the proposed building heights will not exceed 2 – 2.5 storeys. Again this is considered entirely appropriate. Furthermore, the incorporation of a comprehensive scheme of landscaping will further integrate the built form,

creating a green buffer to the existing and proposed settlement edge and ensuring the integration of the proposed development.

*The developable part of the site option area will occupy a large area.*

*Development area must therefore be broken by the provision of open space, tree and woodland planting to reduce the scale of the built form in keeping with the local townscape pattern.*

10.2.17. The proposals break the development up into parcels of an appropriate scale, reflective of the existing character and urban grain of Woodstock. As is illustrated on the submitted site-wide masterplan and set out within the Design and Access Statement (DAS), an extensive and robust network of generous green spaces have been created which are linked through green corridors and appropriate landscape treatment. The green network breaks up the proposed built form, while the comprehensive landscape proposals will assist in softening the built environment and integrating the proposals into the receiving landscape and visual context.

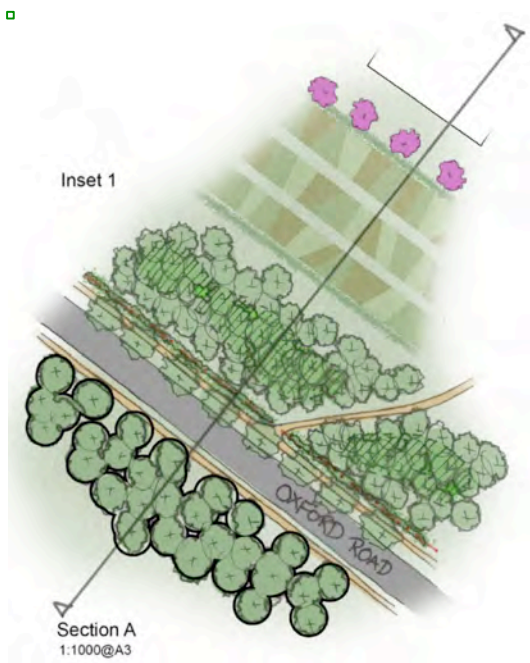


Figure 18: Proposed Landscaping in Sensitive Areas

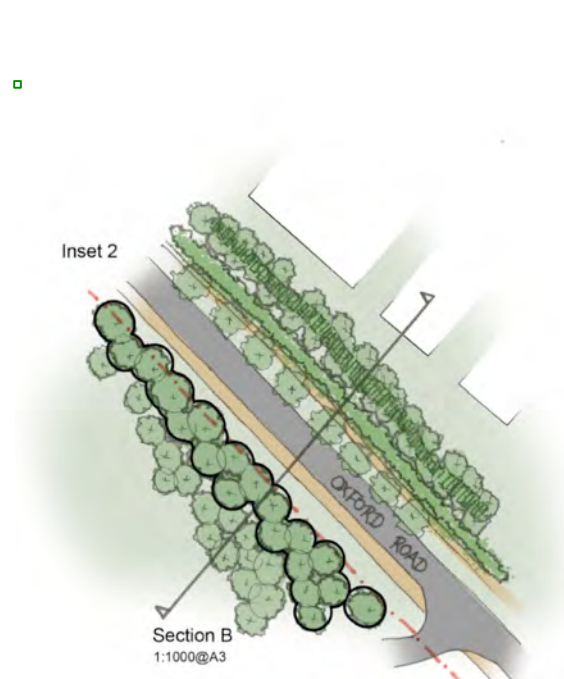


Figure 19: Proposed Landscaping in Sensitive Areas

Retain all existing mature tree, hedgerow and scrub cover to provide basic structure for landscape mitigation

- 10.2.18. The proposals will retain the key areas of vegetation associated with the site. Furthermore, the central hedgerow, which has been identified by the consultant team as an important landscape and ecological feature, is to be retained and enhanced through new planting and appropriate development offsets to ensure that the ecological properties of this feature are enhanced. Around the boundaries of the site, the existing hedgerows and tree cover will be retained and reinforced as part of the comprehensive scheme of landscaping, forming an established context for the proposals. It is considered that the proposed landscape scheme will make a significant and positive contribution to the character of the site and its setting.

Parkland style woodland to be created in the southern field to complement the wooded parkland at Blenheim Park

- 10.2.19. As illustrated on the site wide masterplan and supporting landscape strategy plan, the proposals have been informed by the landscapes of the Blenheim Palace parkland. This not only includes woodland belts and copses, but also tree avenues and more classic parkland style tree planting. It is considered that the landscape scheme successfully adopts key landscape features to ensure that the proposals complement the wider parkland to the south. The establishment of a woodland belt along the south western boundary of the site reflects the woodland on the opposite side of the A44 and provides balance, as well as greening the approach to Woodstock from the south east.

Reinforce semi-formality of approach to Woodstock along Oxford Road

- 10.2.20. The approach to Woodstock, along the A44, from the south east has formed a key characteristic which has informed the design development of the proposals. At present the south western side of the road is characterised by a line of mature

trees set within the verge, against a backdrop of mature woodland. The proposals seek to provide balance and enhance the approach to Woodstock through the establishment of a woodland belt along the south western boundary of the site and the planting of appropriate broad leaved trees, which will reflect the existing situation on the opposite side of the road and create a strong, landscaped approach to Woodstock. The woodland planting provides a semi-rural character, while the proposed specimen tree planting is a clear acknowledgment of the parkland landscape to the south west. The proposed tree lined avenues reference existing features within the Blenheim parkland, notably the avenue which defines the driveway towards the Palace once inside the Hensington Gate. It is considered that the proposals represent a sensitive and high quality response.

*Provide substantive tree planting to break up the new urban edge*

- 10.2.21. The landscape proposals introduce significant areas of woodland and specimen tree planting, to ensure that a robust green edge to the development is achieved. The woodland planting along the more eastern part of the southern boundary will soften the built edge and create an appropriate transition between town and rural landscapes. The proposals, as illustrated on the submitted masterplan, ensure that a significant and positive contribution is made to the local and wider green infrastructure.

*Detailed design of the landscape setting to each vehicular and pedestrian/cycle access and the existing road corridor should reflect the different character of each vehicular or pedestrian approach to Woodstock with particular attention to retaining the parkland character of the A44 and the semi-rural character of Shipton Road*

- 10.2.22. As illustrated on the submitted masterplan this is achieved. The proposed access arrangements have been carefully detailed by the project highway

engineers with input from the wider design team to ensure that the access into the site is safe but also that it is visually well integrated and not intrusive.

10.2.23. The access from the A44 has been designed to be located close to the existing urban edge and to minimise land take so as to minimise the break in the vegetation associated with the southern boundary and ensure that the perception of the junction is minimised.

10.2.24. The access from the A4095 will require the removal of 35 trees within the eastern tree belt, however, the highways design has been informed by a detailed arboricultural assessment to ensure that key trees of arboricultural and ecological merit are avoided and retained. The comprehensive landscape scheme will also seek to provide appropriate mitigation for those trees to be removed. The remaining tree belt will be retained ensuring that this proposed access does not compromise the presence of this landscape feature or appear prominent.

10.2.25. The landscape framework allows for a landscaped approach from Shipton Road, with new planting defining the route from the north to create a high quality, designed entrance to the site from the north. The proposals also recognise the existing public right of way which follows part of the western boundary. The proposed layout incorporates a green corridor along this edge to ensure that the route is landscaped and that an appropriate development offset is achieved.

*Major contribution to the landscape and visual objectives for this area as set out in OWLS and WOLA*

10.2.26. The creation of a high quality, informed and sensitive development will ensure that the proposals do not compromise the setting of Woodstock or the wider Eastern Parks and Valleys / Open Limestone Wolds character area, as identified within the LVIA.



- 10.2.27. The WOLA and OWLS assessments outline a number of key objectives as to how the landscape and visual environment of the landscape character types in which the site is set should be maintained and enhanced.
- 10.2.28. As is illustrated on the submitted masterplan and associated landscape strategy plans, and as is concluded within the LVIA, the proposals have adopted a sensitive, landscape-led approach to ensure that the proposed development can be integrated in this location without significant harm. The design of the proposals has been developed over a period of time with significant inputs from a wide consultant team to ensure that all constraints have been identified and mitigated. The result is a scheme of significant merit which has been informed by the landscape and visual environment in which it will be set.
- 10.2.29. The landscape proposals have been informed by existing on-site features such as the woodland belts to the north eastern and south eastern boundaries, together with the various field boundaries, as well as notable landscape features within the localised and wider setting. Of particular note is the parkland landscape of Blenheim Palace to the south west which has provided significant inspiration. As a result the landscape proposals will not only assist in integrating the proposed built form, but will also enhance the existing settlement edge, creating a robust landscaped setting to Woodstock, as well as enhancing the approach to Woodstock along the A44 from the south east and creating a high quality internal landscape which takes inspiration from the internationally recognised landscape of Blenheim to the south west.
- 10.2.30. The landscape proposals have been designed to make a significant and positive contribution to the receiving landscape character and visual environment. As is concluded within the LVIA, it is considered that the proposed development can be integrated without harm to the identified character types of the published assessments.

*Design and layout of the development should avoid uniformity and reflect the small scale character of the town in a well treed historic pattern*

10.2.31. As noted above, the landscape framework and green infrastructure, which form a key part of the layout, assists in breaking up the scale of the proposals, whilst also creating a high quality environment in which to live and work. Whilst the application is currently outline, street trees and areas of tree planting within public open space have been incorporated which contribute positively to the existing and emerging townscape as well as biodiversity and the wider landscape setting. The proposals and supporting landscape scheme have been informed by detailed assessments of the sites setting to ensure that they reflect the key characteristics of the receiving landscape and that the proposed development can be readily integrated in this location.

### **10.3 Summary of Kirkham report findings**

10.3.1. It is considered that the Kirkham Review forms a useful piece of guidance, although there are limitations. As set out above, the proposed layout and comprehensive scheme of landscaping has acknowledged the sensitive landscape and visual setting to ensure that a high quality, appropriate and robust development is achieved. It is considered that the considered and landscape-led approach to the design development of the proposals ensures that a sustainable development can be achieved which does not harm the receiving landscape character. This reflects the conclusions of the LVIA.

### **10.4 Winter Visual Assessment**

10.4.1. Aspect has revisited the site and retaken the views which were included within the submitted LVIA ES chapter to illustrate the seasonal changes as a result of the vegetation structure that characterises the site and its setting. The updated Photographic Record is included within Appendix D (1).

- 10.4.2. The winter assessment is provided as a direct response to criticisms levelled at the LVIA by consultees which stated that the views within the submitted LVIA did not take into account the loss of foliage during winter months. In line with GLVIA3 guidelines, the assessment within the submitted LVIA applied professional analysis of each of the viewpoints to assess the potential visual effects arising from the proposals during the winter. The timing of the consultation has however, allowed Aspect to return to site and retake all of the submitted views to illustrate them during the winter.
- 10.4.3. As is illustrated by the winter views, the visually contained character of the site is maintained, even without foliage.
- 10.4.4. The south western edge of the site, adjacent to the A44 is more open, however, this has been acknowledged from very early on in the design process and this has informed the comprehensive scheme of landscaping. The creation of the woodland belt along the south western edge of the site will create a robust landscape buffer between the A44 and the proposed built form. This feature is considered entirely appropriate from a landscape character perspective, reflecting the woodland to the south west of the road corridor, and, as demonstrated by the winter views, even during the winter, established woodland does maintain visual containment, screening middle and longer distance views. The winter visual assessment therefore supports the approach taken by the proposed development and associated landscape proposals, and, as set out within the submitted LVIA, it is considered that the proposals will not significantly harm the receiving visual environment.
- 10.4.5. In response to the comments received from ICOMOS, views 14, 15 and 19 are taken from within the WHS (Viewpoint 19 lies adjacent to the Column of Victory), and as demonstrated by the winter views, the loss of foliage will not increase intervisibility between the parkland of the WHS and the site.

10.4.6. In conclusion, the winter visual assessment has proven to be a useful addition, supporting the findings of the submitted LVIA and addressing the concerns raised by consultees. As is demonstrated by the winter views within Appendix D (1), the visibility of the site is not increased as a result of the lack of foliage. The assessment supports the conclusions reached within the LVIA and also reinforces the considered approach which has been taken to the design development of the proposals and landscape scheme. As concluded within the LVIA, the proposals can be integrated without significant harm to the visual environment in which the site is set.

### **10.5 Additional views within and adjacent to Blenheim WHS**

10.5.1. Aspect has also undertaken a further visual assessment from within the Blenheim World Heritage Site parkland, during the winter months, in response to comments made by English Heritage and ICOMOS. This separate photographic record (Views A – Z) is included for reference within Appendix D (2).

10.5.2. The comments received from English Heritage and ICOMOS identified the need for further viewpoints within the WHS, particularly from the more elevated areas of parkland to the north of the palace. A total of 26 additional views were identified, including viewpoints within the Upper Park, and these were taken during early March prior to the leaves appearing on the trees, shrubs, hedges and understorey. The views therefore represent the worst case scenario from a visual perspective.

10.5.3. The views demonstrate the extensive tree cover that characterises the WHS and its setting. As such views of the site from within the parkland, and the intervisibility between the site and the north eastern edge of the estate are well contained, even during winter months.

10.5.4. Photograph A is taken from a first floor window on the south eastern elevation of the Palace, looking towards the site. This view was included in response to the

comments from ICOMOS and demonstrates the degree of physical and visual separation between the site and the Palace.

10.5.5. Photographs B – K are taken from within Lower Park, while Photographs L – S are taken from rights of way within the Upper Park, including within the context of the Column of Victory. Photographs T - Y are taken from the A44 to the south west of the site, looking south west towards the edge of the parkland and WHS. These views demonstrate the dense nature of the vegetation associated with this boundary and the degree of separation created. A glimpsed, heavily filtered view is available into the parkland at Viewpoint P, however, the dense nature of the tree belt will ensure that the intervisibility between the site and the parkland is limited and the proposals will not be perceived from within the WHS. Photograph Z is taken from within the site and illustrates the tree belt which characterises the north eastern edge of the WHS and ensure that views between the site and the WHS are contained.

10.5.6. As is demonstrated by this additional visual assessment, the concerns raised by English Heritage and ICOMOS are not realised. The established landscape structure associated with the WHS and its setting ensures that views of the site from the parkland are contained. Therefore, as concluded within the submitted LVIA, the landscape setting of the WHS will not be adversely affected by the proposed development. A detailed appraisal of the viewpoints within the WHS is included within the LVIA Addendum.

## 10.6 Conclusions

10.6.1. In conclusion, this briefing note covers the comments and concerns in relation to landscape and the visual environment, as raised by WODC, Historic England and ICOMOS.

10.6.2. As set out above, it is considered that the proposals are entirely in accordance with the local landscape character, and indeed, the high quality landscape led

scheme will be of significant merit and will make a positive contribution to the landscape character of the receiving environment. In particular, the proposed planting along the south western boundary, adjacent to the A44 will extend the rural character of the approach to Woodstock to the south east, creating a balanced, landscaped route. The proposed landscape treatment has also been informed by the landscapes of the Blenheim estate and key landscape features have been integrated into the proposed scheme to ensure an appropriate and considered response. The proposals meet, and generally exceed, the aims and objectives set out within the Kirkham Review. The proposals adopt a comprehensive and high quality landscape scheme which makes a significant contribution to making this a sustainable development. The proposed development has been informed by the prevailing landscape character and is suitable for this location. It is therefore considered that the proposals are in line with the aims and objectives of the NPPF.

- 10.6.3. Concerns were raised regarding the possible increased visibility of the site during the winter months. A winter visual assessment, together with an additional assessment of views within and adjacent to the Blenheim WHS, demonstrate that these views will not experience a significant change. The more sensitive south western boundary has been acknowledged from the outset of the design process, resulting in the proposed woodland belt along this edge. This feature is entirely in keeping with the local landscape character and will also soften the existing settlement edge, assist in integrating the proposals and create a balanced, landscaped approach to Woodstock. It is considered that this assessment addresses these concerns and demonstrates that the proposals are in accordance with the NPPF and are supportable from a landscape character and visual perspective.

## 11 LIGHTING

### 11.1 Comments from WODC

11.1.1. West Oxfordshire District Council have highlighted that light pollution should be minimised in the countryside and on edge of settlement sites to avoid unnecessary and excessive light spillage.

11.1.2. West Oxfordshire District Council also consider that:

*“due to the mix of uses and with particular regard to the sports facilities, the development is likely to significantly increase light pollution”*

### 11.2 Lighting Masterplan

11.2.1. The lighting masterplan for Woodstock East has been developed taking into account best practice guidelines for the reduction of light spill and light pollution, which included the Society of Light & Lighting “Guide to Limiting Obtrusive Light” 2012 and the Institution of Lighting Professionals “Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light” GN01: 2011. Our proposals have also been developed with due regard for the PPG which states that:

*“Artificial light provides valuable benefits to society, including through extending opportunities for sport and recreation, and can be essential to a new development. Equally, artificial light is not always necessary, has the potential to become what is termed ‘light pollution’ or ‘obtrusive light’ and not all modern lighting is suitable in all locations”* (Paragraph: 001 Reference ID: 31-001-20140306).

11.2.2. High efficiency dimmable LED luminaires are proposed which will dim down after an agreed curfew time and during times when pedestrian and vehicle activity on the site is reduced. The proposed street lighting luminaires have efficient optical design which concentrates the light distribution onto the road surface with minimal light spill into surrounding areas. In addition, the landscape design on

the site often serves as a physical barrier designed to prevent light spill into surrounding areas.

11.2.3. The lighting masterplan for the site identifies the various uses of the site and proposes detailed lighting solutions for each typology. Sample illuminance calculations are included in the Environmental Statement which illustrate proposed illuminance levels and lighting uniformities.

11.2.4. A hierarchy of brightnesses is proposed for Woodstock East, with the more active areas of the site which have greater traffic flow and pedestrian use illuminated to relatively higher levels than areas which are quieter, such as the residential streets at the perimeter of the site. Specific areas of the site are designated as dark zones where no electric light will be permitted. In all instances the use of optically efficient LED luminaires is proposed to minimize potential light spill and light pollution.

### **11.3 Mitigation**

11.3.1. The use of intelligent lighting controls is also proposed to dim the street lighting later in the evening when pedestrian activity and vehicle movements through the site are reduced.

11.3.2. Measures to mitigate the potentially adverse impacts of electric light on the site can be summarised as follows:

- Provide electric light only where necessary for safety, security and amenity.
- Provide light appropriate for the task.
- Avoid light spill and light pollution (Through good design and by following best practice principles).
- Design in accordance with the identified hierarchy of illuminance levels.
- Use efficient luminaires and light sources with controlled downward light distribution.



- Ensure that the dark areas of the site identified in the lighting masterplan are maintained.
- Use intelligent lighting control systems to dim or switch off lighting when not required.
- Ensure that the dark zones of the site required for ecological reasons, such as the bat foraging routes are maintained.

## **11.4 Lighting Impact Assessment**

- 11.4.1. A detailed study of illuminance levels on the sports field was undertaken as part of the lighting masterplan for the site. The sample calculations submitted within the Lighting Impact Assessment illustrate that there will be no significant light spill beyond the boundary of the sports facility if luminaires with appropriate light distribution are installed at the correct aiming angles and if the proposed barrier planting is installed as per the proposed landscape design for the site.
- 11.4.2. West Oxfordshire District Council also consider that the World Heritage Site and Gardens are likely to experience significant increases in light pollution.
- 11.4.3. The potential impact on Blenheim Palace House and Gardens was assessed as part of the baseline survey and Lighting Impact Assessment. Potential lighting impacts were also addressed in the lighting masterplan.
- 11.4.4. The A44 Oxford Road is currently illuminated to higher levels of illuminance than those proposed for the site. Mature planting on the boundary of Blenheim Palace Gardens shields the park from any adverse impacts from the street lighting. In addition, there is a dark boundary proposed around the periphery of the proposed Woodstock East development which will ensure that the existing dark landscape will be maintained.

## **11.5 Summary**

- 11.5.1. Having surveyed the baseline condition and developed a lighting masterplan in close collaboration with the project design team, we do not consider that the

proposed electric lighting installations on the site will adversely affect the existing character, setting, amenity, historical context or views within, into or from Blenheim Palace house and gardens.

- 11.5.2. Since the submission of the planning application, and as a result of an iterative process between the applicant and statutory consultees, the framework masterplan has been revised. An assessment of the lighting impacts of the amended plans has been undertaken and is submitted as part of the addendum to the Environmental Statement.

## 12 OTHER MATTERS

### 12.1 Agricultural Land Quality

- 12.1.1. West Oxfordshire District Council have highlighted the importance of ensuring that the loss of good quality agricultural land should be avoided where possible.
- 12.1.2. The site consists of Grade 3B which is not classified as the best and most versatile agricultural land. The proposal therefore accords with the advice in paragraph 112 of the NPPF, which states that: *'Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of a higher quality.'*

### 12.2 London Oxford Airport

- 12.2.1. We have been in discussions with the London Oxford Airport who are generally supporting of the scheme. Their current holding objection for Technical Safeguarding is based on the requirement for a full technical safeguarding study prior to any development taking place.
- 12.2.2. Full details of the masterplan, materials to be used and other details available at this outline application stage have been provided to the Airport. The masterplan has also been developed informed by any concerns that the Airport may have regarding the proposals. The details required to undertake the technical safeguarding study will not be finalised until the reserved matters stage of the application.
- 12.2.3. The development proposals will not result in any adverse impacts on the Airport's navigation aids and radar equipment. The applicant is keen to work with the Airport throughout the detailed design stage to avoid any adverse impacts on the Airport's function.



Figure 20: London Oxford Airport

## 12.3 Energy

12.3.1. Officers at WODC stated that:

12.3.2. *We should strongly encourage any proposed dwellings to be designed to meet the requirements of Lifetime Homes and in terms of energy efficiency; the dwellings should aim to meet the Government's objective to achieve a zero carbon future. The Energy Strategy and Code for Sustainable Homes Strategy submitted states that the target is to achieve an equivalent Code for Sustainable Homes Level 4 for residential elements and a BREEAM 'good' rating for non-domestic elements.*

12.3.3. The Code for Sustainable Homes has been abolished since the submission of the planning application. The applicant fully recognises the opportunity to provide a highly sustainable development and has every intention to provide energy efficiency measures and reduce the carbon footprint on the development proposals. The applicant is currently committed to meeting the policy requirements for energy efficiency and will investigate ways of improving on this through detailed design.

## **12.4 Phasing**

- 12.4.1. The Planning Policy response from WODC questioned the proposed phased construction of the development, whether the services and facilities would be available to serve the new households in a timely manner and whether the entirety of the western section of the site should be phased ahead of the larger section to the east of the Scheduled Monument as this integrates more readily with the existing fabric of the town.
- 12.4.2. The proposed phasing has been adjusted (see Appendix E) so that the whole of the western section of the site will be delivered first, which will ensure that building work on this part of the site will be completed over a relatively short period of time. The infrastructure is also being front loaded so that it will be available to serve the development as it progresses.

## **12.5 Utilities**

- 12.5.1. WODC Planning Policy team identified that the application has assessed the capacity of various services including gas, electricity, mains water and telecommunications.
- 12.5.2. All utility providers were contacted as part of the application process and have confirmed that there is adequate capacity available for the proposed development subject to some infrastructure upgrades and installation, or further analysis at detailed design stage.

- Southern Gas Networks identified that the existing Medium Pressure main infrastructure can accommodate the anticipated load of the proposed site.
- Scottish and Southern Energy identified that capacity for the proposed development is available subject to the installation of Distribution Substations and associated infrastructure.
- OpenReach (telecommunications) has a license obligation to provide service to any end customer requiring a connection; therefore there is sufficient capacity for the proposed development.
- Vodafone had no objections to the development and did not identify any capacity issue.
- Thames Water Utilities Ltd undertook a flow and pressure test capacity investigation and identified that sufficient capacity for Phase 1 is available and that a Water Capacity and Infrastructure Assessment should be undertaken for the remainder of the development once the detailed design stage has been reached.

12.5.3. WODC also commented that superfast broadband is often overlooked by developers, and that the proposals will require the infrastructure to support access to superfast broadband.

12.5.4. Openreach has a license obligation to provide service and are committed to providing 95% of UK addresses with superfast by 2017. Regarding provision of superfast broadband (download speeds in excess of 24Mbps), the service provided depends on the nearest Exchange to the proposed development. The nearest exchange to this development site is Fibre Broadband with a download speed range estimated between 58Mb – 78Mbps (therefore classed as superfast broadband).

## **13 APPENDICES**

**Appendix A:** Five-year housing land supply statement

**Appendix B:** Transport Addendum

1: Traffic survey/forecasts

2: Road Safety Audit

**Appendix C:** Correspondence between WSP and Natural England re: Air Quality

**Appendix D:** Landscape

1: Summer-Winter Views

2: WHS Additional Views

**Appendix E:** Phasing Plan