

WOLVERCOTE NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

Guidance Notes for Project Funding Applications

Background

The WNF Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan) came into effect after it was voted on by residents in a local referendum on 6 May 2021, and subsequently approved by the Council on 23 June 2021. Starting from June 2020, 25% of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds will be allocated to WNF as the “neighbourhood portion” by Oxford City Council.

The trigger for payment of CIL by developers (assessed on the whole development, not just on the housing element) is currently the commencement of the development. Oxford City Council holds the CIL funds and will notify WNF and the relevant Ward Councillors, at the end of October and the end of April each year, how much has been received. The Council will also provide this information upon request at other times of the year.

The amount of CIL money generated depends on the amount and type of development taking place in the area covered by the WNF Neighbourhood Plan.

What can CIL funds be used for?

WNF’s aim is to use CIL funds to deliver community projects in the WNF area (Upper and Lower Wolvercote and parts of North Oxford and Cutteslowe, as shown on the area map on the Forum website) with a particular emphasis on delivering value for money for the community as a whole. These projects will include those designed to meet the objectives of the Plan, as well as projects discussed and agreed with community groups and others in this area.

The neighbourhood portion of the CIL (25% of the total) can be spent on projects that meet the requirement to “support the development of the area” (see regulation 59C of the CIL Regulations for details). Although there are many potential projects which could be supported by CIL funds, the funds are limited, so not all possible or even desirable projects can be supported. Examples of potential projects could include: traffic-calming measures; equipment for community centres; tree planting; picnic benches; solar panels; improving access to and refurbishment of community facilities; and landscaping public spaces. Projects which mitigate the impact of an adjacent development will be particularly welcomed.

Project proposals, particularly the larger ones, require consultation with relevant people and bodies — these might include residents’ associations, community groups such as the Commoners’ Committee, local businesses, immediate neighbours and statutory authorities.

CIL funds cannot be used for scoping/feasibility studies in case the project does not proceed. However, these costs can subsequently be covered if the project does go ahead. Funds can only be used for capital expenditure, not staffing or maintenance, and will not be allocated retrospectively.

The purpose of the award of CIL funding is to benefit and enhance public places in the WNF area for the area’s residents and workers, by providing facilities or services that are: 1) additional to what already exists; 2) stimulating by providing new awareness or enjoyable experiences; 3) welfare-enhancing by being accessible to the widest spectrum of the residential population or assisting deprived segments of the population.

The overriding consideration in assessing applications will be consistency with the vision and policies of the Neighbourhood Plan. Projects must be located within or serving the WNF Community, and must be environmentally sustainable.

The following criteria will also be taken into account:

- The project will be managed by a recognised body with a nominated bank account;
- The project has agreement in principle from the property or asset owner;

WOLVERCOTE NEIGHBOURHOOD FORUM

Guidance Notes for Project Funding Applications

- The project represents value for money;
- Consideration has been given to health and safety requirements.

The WNF website (<http://www.wolvercotenf.org.uk/>) has much further information, including a list of “Aspirations” for the area, resulting from earlier public consultations, which might be helpful in suggesting specific project topics and in framing project applications. This “Aspirations” list is not exclusive, and applications for any projects that meet the selection criteria are welcome.

Application Process

All applications for funding are to be submitted and processed in accordance with the application timetable and supported by a completed project description. The WNF steering committee is happy to offer advice on the application process. Contact details can be found on the WNF website.

The timetable for Round 1 applications will be:

- 30 September 2021: Deadline for project application submissions;
- 7 October 2021: Project applications will be published for comments;
- 14 October 2021: Deadline for comments to be submitted;
- 28 October 2021: Recommendations will be made to WNF Area Councillors on projects to be funded in this round;
- (Expected) Early 2022: funding becomes available to approved projects.

The Steering Committee will not consider applications for sums greater than £10k in the first year of the operation of this CIL policy unless there are exceptional circumstances – this limit will be reviewed in the first quarter of 2022. Two quotes are normally to be provided for projects over £1k, together with reasons for the preferred quote.

Applications will be considered by a CIL meeting of the Steering Committee and, if approved, forwarded to Oxford City Council with a request for funding from the CIL portion allocated to WNF (sums greater than £10k require formal Council authorisation by its City Cabinet). Decision types will be:

1. Project is approved, as applied for.
2. Project is not approved, due to lack of funding in this round, but will be carried forward to the next round, optionally with modifications if the applicants wish.
3. Project is not approved due to failure to meet one or more criteria; the project could be resubmitted after suitable modification to the next round, if the applicants wish.
4. Project is not approved due to failure to meet one or more criteria, and is thought unlikely to find CIL funding in future rounds.

All decisions by the WNF Steering Committee will be recorded to produce an audit trail. If funding is approved, WNF Steering Committee will nominate a member as project liaison who will be responsible for monitoring the project, including the management of expenditure and the submission of invoices to the City Council for payment.

WNF is committed to ensuring this process is transparent and applicants will be kept informed throughout. Any Steering Committee member who has a potential conflict of interest involving a particular application will be excluded from the decision-making process for that application.