



WNF Comments on Water Eaton Development Proposals 23/01233/OUT June 2023

The Wolvercote Neighbourhood Forum (WNF) seeks to represent the views (in relation to planning matters) of residents in the Wolvercote Neighbourhood Plan area.

The development at Water Eaton is just outside the Plan Area, but is immediately adjacent to it. Any development on that site is likely to have an adverse effect on the Wolvercote Plan area.

The Wolvercote Neighbourhood Plan (WNP) was approved overwhelmingly by our residents in a referendum in May 2021 and was subsequently 'made' by Oxford City Council.

Comments

The developers are looking at PR6a, an area of 113 acres. They are suggesting up to 800 dwellings, 534 houses and 266 flats, plus a 2-form entry Primary School, and a convenience store, a cafe and a community building.

The original number in the Local Plan Partial Review, was for 690 dwellings. The developers argue that the increase will help Cherwell District meet its own targets more quickly.

We do not support this increased number, which is not justifiable. It will create an even greater need for increased access to medical facilities, already overstretched in the area.

The area immediately adjacent to the Oxford Road would have a development of mostly 4 storey, but some 5 storey flats. (In addition it becomes clear later in the document that the developers expect to share this particular design feature with the development on PR6b, so there would be a complete change from the current green wooded edges, giving a canyon effect along Oxford Road).

We do not support this. It is not the sort of introduction to the historic city of Oxford that is appropriate. Is it possible that much of the affordable housing will be in the flats, shielding the market houses from the road? No information is given about the position of affordable housing on the site.

50% of the housing is intended to be affordable, which is to be welcomed. However, as mentioned above, affordable housing should be integrated with other forms of housing. This commitment to 50% affordable housing should be binding and non-negotiable. The privately owned housing should be integrated with the affordable housing.

Thames Water have been consulted by the developers, and it appears there is currently no foul sewer facility on PR6a, and the potable water supply would only be sufficient for 50 dwellings. Clearly considerable work needs to be done prior to any occupation of the development. There are concerns in the area over the capacity of the foul sewers.

Almost 50% of the site is planned to be green space, managed for amenity use and biodiversity. The majority of this space is proposed to be in the south eastern corner of the site, meaning quite a walk for some residents. It will form an extension to Cutteslowe Park. A variety of green spaces are proposed on the site as a whole, including community gardens/allotments, children's play area, and Multi-use space.

This is to be welcomed, but some amenities will not be in easy reach of all residents. It is also not clear how much of the green space will be shared with PR6b.

The ecological assessment of the site as it is now includes a hedgerow network, a strip of woodland on the west boundary 25m wide, and small areas of scrub. There are foraging, roosting and commuting bats. Their roost is in the Pipal Barns, which are to be demolished. There are breeding and winter farmland birds including ground nesting species, barn owls, grass snakes and brown hairstreak butterflies.

Of the current hedges and trees, most will be destroyed, including the woodland on the boundary, and "semi-natural habitats will be introduced – wildflower and tussocky grass, scrub and wood planting, and new ponds".

The developers claim that after 15 years, there will be an increase in biodiversity of 20% - double the required increase of 10%. The problem with such a claim is that it's too late to assess once the existing land has been built on and 15 years has passed. It seems unlikely that the full current range of flora and fauna will re-establish once the housing is built and occupied.

The existing wildlife corridors should be maintained, including the woodland immediately adjacent to Oxford Road.

Cycle path – it is really important that cycle paths connect up properly with others in the area to assist in the development of mostly traffic free paths. This is particularly important

where a path is intended to access Cutteslowe Park, where currently cycling is not permitted.

It seems very likely that traffic on Oxford Road will increase substantially as a result of this development. There is already considerable congestion at peak times, and this will not be improved by the building of 800 new dwellings. Air pollution is already a serious problem in this area.

On sustainability, there are no definite statements about renewable energy being used. The use of renewables is being considered - "Air source heat pumps are likely to be the predominant source of energy" ...

This should be a much more definite aim. Also, there is no mention of the definite use of solar panels on housing. These are two aims which should underpin a commitment to sustainability.

From Wolvercote Neighbourhood Forum Steering Committee, 9th June 2023

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