



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and date of Committee	EXECUTIVE MEETING – 9 JULY 2025
Subject	WOODFORD WAY UPDATE
Wards affected	All
Accountable member	Cllr Geoff Saul Executive Member for Housing and Social Care Email: geoff.saul@westoxon.gov.uk
Accountable officer	Phil Martin, Director of Place Email: phil.martin@westoxon.gov.uk
Report author	Michael David, Housing Delivery Programme Manager Email: michael.david@westoxon.gov.uk
Summary/Purpose	This report outlines the initial work involved in exploring options to deliver social rented homes with a Registered Provider (RP) on part of the Woodford Way Car Park, recognising that there is a surplus of car parking capacity in Witney. The next step is to have formal discussions with local RPs and earmark relevant funding to support a future scheme.
Annexes	None
Recommendation(s)	That the Executive resolves to: 1. Earmark £215,000 S106 developer contribution funding to support the provision of social housing in Witney 2. Authorise the Director of Place to start formal discussions based on developing up to 70% of the Woodford Way Car Park with local Registered Providers in consultation with the Executive Member for Finance and Member for Housing and Social Care.
Corporate priorities	• Putting Residents First • A Good Quality of Life for All • Working Together for West Oxfordshire
Key Decision	Yes

Exempt	No
Consultees/ Consultation	Director of Place, Director of Finance

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1** This report provides an initial update to the Executive on the early stages of activity taking place to bring forward affordable housing on Woodford Way Car Park in Witney.
- 1.2** This project represents an opportunity for the Council to utilise its land asset to deliver affordable housing, a key corporate objective.
- 1.3** The redevelopment of part of the Woodford Way Car Park offers a number of potential benefits such as delivering much-needed affordable housing, enhancing the street scene and better integration with the surrounding area.
- 1.4** Equally, there are several risk factors to be aware of including the loss of parking spaces in Witney, making sufficient parking provision for long stay and overnight parking, the associated costs of re-developing the site. All these factors can be mitigated, and this paper will explore how the Council can minimise risk.
- 1.5** Work has been undertaken to identify the optimum proportion of the car park area to viably maximise the amount of social housing and also continue to provide car parking spaces and existing electronic vehicle charging points (EVCPs).
- 1.6** The result of this early-stage work is the proposed development of up to 70% of the space available, which would enable approximately 70 one and two apartments to be built with associated car parking, as well as approximately 70 car parking spaces for existing users of public parking spaces (retaining the existing EVCPs).
- 1.7** The initial plans to re-develop Woodford Way are estimated to leave a funding gap, prior to any further subsidy. However, in order to cover the bulk of that funding gap, it is proposed that officers formally approach Registered Providers (RPs) to begin a detailed financial appraisal of the proposed scheme and apply to Homes England (HE) for a grant.
- 1.8** Grant from HE and any S106 contributions will close the financial gap and return a modest margin to make the scheme financially viable.

2. BACKGROUND

Housing Need

- 2.1** The Council is committed to maximising the delivery of truly affordable homes across the district. Corporate and Political leadership have reiterated just how important affordable housing delivery is, and this filters throughout the entire organisation.
- 2.2** It is important to acknowledge that Local Plan Policy WIT3 states *“Land at Woodford Way Car Park to accommodate around 50 new homes either as part of a residential or mixed-use scheme with other compatible town centre uses whilst retaining an appropriate amount of public car parking.”* This demonstrates that the site is allocated for the delivery of residential housing. In the past, temporary planning permission was granted to utilise the land as a car park as an interim use. The site does not have permanent planning permission for use as a car park.

- 2.3 Information from the waiting list demonstrates that there is strong demand for 1 bed accommodation which accounts for 59% of the entire waiting list, 2 bed accommodation is also in high demand:

Table 1

Total Applicants on the Waiting List at June'25	Accommodation Requirements	
	1 bed	2 bed
2239	1336	557

- 2.4 Social rents (typically 50% of market rents) are the most affordable rents for households on median and lower quartile incomes. This constitutes truly affordable homes for this cohort and will have a great impact on the waiting list. For these reasons, the proposals in this report intend to develop 1 & 2 apartments to be let at social rents.

Car Parking Requirements

- 2.5 A recent review of car parking capacity across the district identified that there is capacity at the Marriotts multi-storey car park, which provides daytime users of Woodford Way car park with an alternative parking option.
- 2.6 A survey of overnight car park use showed there was a need for up to 69 car parking spaces for evening / overnight parking use whilst Marriotts is closed.
- 2.7 The proposals within this report will provide 70 spaces for overnight parking as part of the re-development proposals to mitigate evening/overnight use.

3. WOODFORD WAY OPTIONS APPRAISAL

- 3.1 Four options were created to assess the potential for development of the Woodford Way car park. The following table shows a sliding-scale of development options:

Table 2

Option	<i>Developable Area</i>	<i>Sqm ground floor only</i>	<i>Acre</i>	<i>Development (Sqm) 2.5 to 4 storey</i>
1	25%	1,525	0.38	2044
2	50%	3,050	0.76	4228
3	75%	4,575	1.13	6202
4	100%	6,100	1.51	8246

- 3.2 Work with the Council's planning team tested these scenarios to ascertain how much housing could be delivered on site. Whilst the Local Plan Policy suggested approximately 50 dwellings, this assumed a mix of house types (including family houses and potentially bungalows).
- 3.3 Given the current focus on apartments and the associated smaller footprint required, there is some flexibility in the 50-dwelling policy guideline.
- 3.4 Discussions worked on the assumption of 2.5 storey development to the north of the site and up to 4 storey development to the southern boundary of the site.

Appraisal Outputs

- 3.5 Options 1 - 4 are viable, assuming a blend of S106 and HE grant rates within their range of grant intervention rate tolerances for social rent.
- 3.6 However, wider matters were considered during the alternative options appraisal before a decision on a final recommendation was reached.

4. RECOMMENDED OPTION

- 4.1 The options appraisal and work undertaken by the Council's car parking team have indicated that a modified Option 3, that reduces the developable area to 70% but retains the EVCPs and provides up to 70 properties, which are composed of 1&2 apartments, as well meeting the residual overnight requirements, is the optimum option.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 5.1 All alternative options achieved a modest financial return based on both HE intervention & S106 to make the schemes viable.
- 5.2 However wider considerations such as achievement of the Council's corporate priorities, addressing the parking requirements and maximising site potential were all considered before making a final recommendation.
- 5.3 The results of these considerations are shown below:

Table 3

Development Area	Status	Rationale
100%	Discounted	• Misalignment with Planning advice • Inability to meet the parking requirement • Loss of EV Charging Points • HE grant levels are less likely
75%	To be refined	• Better balance of housing outputs and parking, • Still meets parking requirements but removes the EVCP's
50%	Discounted	• Lack of optimising the site potential given multi-storey development & the smaller footprint of 1&2 bed apartments
25%	Discounted	• Low housing delivery outputs • Lack of optimising site potential

- 5.4 Further work was conducted on the 75% development option to account for retention of the EVCPs and a resulting reduction of units down to 70 apartments. This appeared to strike the right balance and was carried forward as the recommended option.

6. CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The Woodford Way site presents the Council with an opportunity to meet its priority objective of delivering affordable housing, whilst utilising land assets and enhancing the surrounding area, with partners and Government funding.
- 6.2 At this early stage of appraisal modelling, the recommended option is viable, based on the current outline business case.
- 6.3 The next stages of project implementation will be to begin formal discussion with RP's to ensure that they have the capacity to deliver this scale of project. Recommendation 2 of this report seeks approval to do so.
- 6.4 Site constraints and parking requirements will be mitigated with careful planning and collaboration with specialist teams within the Council. This emerging work will take place

in-line with the proposed project plan, taking advice from external agencies where appropriate as the project progresses.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** The commercial delivery model proposed as part of the project places the financial liability with a partner RP and other agencies, this limits the amount of financial risk that the Council is exposed to.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1** The structure of the legal agreement with a partner RP will need to be drafted to protect the Council's interests and enable the delivery of the project.
- 8.2** Provisions will need to be drafted to govern how the council deals with the land value considerations. Procurement rules will apply to commercial activity with an RP partner

9. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 9.1** The current appraisal is reliant on grant from HE to ensure viability, however this risk has been mitigated with engagement and email correspondence, with HE on the assumptions around grant rates.
- 9.2** Officers will continue to closely monitor and re-evaluate identified risks and will provide regular updates on the direction of travel

10. EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 10.1** An Equalities Impact Assessment is not required at this initial stage

11. CLIMATE AND ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCIES IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1** The proposed housing on the site will be of high-quality, energy efficient, and will have reduced running costs for the individuals living in them.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1** None