



WEST OXFORDSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

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Name and date of Committee	OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 26th MARCH 2026
Subject	WOODFORD WAY UPDATE
Wards affected	Witney
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 will provide an update on the Woodford Way project and engagement with Registered Providers.
Annexes	
Recommendation(s)	That the Overview & Scrutiny Committee resolves to note the update on the Woodford Way project.
Corporate priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Putting Residents First• A Good Quality of Life for All• Responding to the Climate and Ecological Emergency
Key Decision	NO
Exempt	NO
Consultees/ Consultation	Ward Members (CLlr Coles & CLlr Lyon) Development Management Planning Officers Car Parking Officers Conservation & Design Officers Climate Change & Sustainability Officers Registered Providers Homes England

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 At the January Executive Meeting, information on the project was presented to Councillors, which included a verbal update on the most recent set of designs based on a 66-apartment scheme which provided 77 public parking spaces and 72 resident spaces, with under croft parking underneath parts of the proposed building.
- 1.2 Officers have now stress-tested those previous plans to take account of commercial, operational management and design considerations. In addition, the views and sentiments of the public and partners have continued to be an important consideration with the development of the scheme. This paper summarises these considerations and updates the Committee on progress to date.
- 1.3 Since the January meeting Officers have continued to evolve the proposed scheme and have tested the options summarised below:

Option 1 - High Density	Option 2 - Low Density	Option 3 - Medium Density
66 flats	35 houses	55 flats & maisonettes

- 1.4 The latest iteration, option 3, achieves the appropriate balance of commercial, operational and design factors to achieve the right scheme in terms of quality, scale and ability to meet demand.
- 1.5 Option 3 comprises of 55 dwellings (20 maisonettes and 35 apartments) it maintains the appropriate level of parking provision on-site (84 public parking spaces) and it achieves the right balance for the context in Witney Town centre, the community and local businesses. The outline designs, which gives indicative information on where the actual car parking will be sited, rather than actual numbers, is attached in Appendix 1.
- 1.6 The scheme aims to achieve an exemplary standard of sustainable place-making, creating high-quality spaces where residents want to live, supporting a net-zero carbon approach and delivering long-term environmental and socio-economic benefits.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On the 14th January 2026, the Executive received an update on the Woodford Way project which set out a scheme that proposed 66 residential apartments, 72 parking spaces for residents and 77 parking spaces for the wider public.
- 2.2 The architectural drawings were produced following the publication of the report and was tabled at the Executive meeting. These plans included an under-croft parking design which enables additional public parking bays, in response to public comment and the need for overnight parking provision.
- 2.3 The Executive considered the new drawings and accepted the recommendations of the report, acknowledging that Officers had listened to the public regarding parking and responded to this in the latest design for the scheme at that point.

2.4 Whilst the detail of the scheme is still being developed, the general principles of development were accepted. However, it was requested that further work should be done to test the deliverability of the scheme, prioritise keyworkers and consider parking permits.

3. PARKING PROVISION

- 3.1** Given the endorsement from the Executive and the feedback from members of the public, Officers are committed to ensure the final version of the designs would not dip below the number of public parking spaces outline in the scheme presented in January.
- 3.2** To ensure the new scheme provided accessibility for all residents the number of parking spaces for disabled, blue badge users has been reviewed and will be increased.
- 3.3** The existing electric vehicle charging points will be retained and as Officers recognised these are well used by residents and visitors.
- 3.4** Work continues in regard to extending the parking periods in the multi-storey and other car parks to meet people needs who work in Witney along with the option of providing permits to local residents and key healthcare workers who may require out of hours parking.
- 3.5** The latest data from the CCTV cameras at the entrance and exit of the Marriotts multistorey car park, which count all vehicles in and out, showed the average highest occupancy levels recorded between Jan and December 2025 was 62%, thus leaving 224 free spaces.
- 3.6** Further iterations of the scheme will be examined by a working group which includes representatives from the parking team as well as colleagues from the County Council.

4. HOUSING MIX

- 4.1** The original scheme comprised of 66 x 1 & 2 bed flats with a 4-storey block of apartments to the south of the site. Although this configuration matches the demand for 1&2 bed properties from the waiting list, this is a considerable number of flats in one place.
- 4.2** Officers reviewed the housing mix alongside housing team and feedback from partners and advisors to ensure that the mix of properties accurately reflected the context within the town, the demand and also the preferences of people bidding on the housing register.

5. VIABILITY TESTING

- 5.1** Officers stress-tested the plans by comparing iterations to explore what the optimal configuration of the scheme might be. This includes several matters such as parking, residential units, planning considerations but also, viability.
- 5.2** Registered Providers (RP) have run financial appraisals on each iteration of the scheme to arrive at an overview of viability in each scenario. The outcome of this viability testing indicates that all options are viable with Homes England (HE) funding, however Option 3 requires less public subsidy per unit. In terms of operational management Option 2 was preferred but required more amenity space and clarity around refuse collection was needed. Option 3 provided better amenity space and bin collection points however it would require

keyworker local lettings policies and well-designed communal spaces to be operationally managed.

5.3 On this basis, officers carried options 2 and 3 forward for further scrutiny,

5.4 The viability of achieving a net-zero build will be assessed in the next stage as part of further design development and detailed viability analysis.

6. AVAILABILITY OF EXTERNAL FUNDING

6.1 The RP partners we are in discussions with, have finance facilities which could be utilised to fund a development project of this scale. However, there is inevitably a financial gap between the build costs of a high-quality development and the affordable housing rental values being modelled.

6.2 Homes England have given specific ‘grant to total scheme cost ratios’ which RP’s have factored into their modelling. This gives them a real-world view of the likely grant rates achievable from Homes England.

7. NEXT STEPS

7.1 Officers are continuing to work with the architects to finalise detailed designs, in terms of the unit numbers, specific house types and precise locations of development. This will confirm that all of the physical requirements are met in line with planners’ guiding principles, also that the resulting design is practically deliverable as a well-considered scheme.

7.2 A detailed timeline and project overview plan is being developed to ensure the steps outlined, meet the timeframe set out. However, a summary of key milestones and indicative timings

7.3 are listed below -

- Present an update report to O&S - March 2026
- Completing the detailed design work - April 2026
- Test the viability and commercial considerations - April 2026
- Pre-Application planning discussions - May 2026
- Full planning application submitted around – July / August 2026
- Public engagement - June/July 2026
- Homes England & stakeholder engagement - July 2026
- Development management planning committee - September 2026
- Full financial commitment from RP - October 2026

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Homes	66	35	55
Of which houses	0	35	20
Of which Flats	66	0	35
Public Parking	77	77	84

Resident Parking	72	45	65
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- 8.1** Option 1 presented a good balance between the actual number of dwellings and parking spaces however, concerns were raised about an over-concentration of apartments which may present challenges in terms of operational management, and a lack of variety in the house types.
- 8.2** Option 2 explored the option of building houses rather than apartments, but the financial viability given the under-utilisation of developable space, larger footprint of buildings, no increase in public parking and the reduced level of income generated by such a loss of dwellings did rule it out.
- 8.3** Option 3 built on the benefits of the first option but provides a better-balanced arrangement of house types, and viability. Therefore, further work will be done throughout the planning process to refine the design, appearance and impact of this option.

9 CONCLUSIONS

- 9.1** Based the information above, Officers are progressing further work on Option 3 as the development configuration to be taken forward (Subject to Planning Permission) on the basis that it:
- Optimises the developable space in accordance with Local Plan policy Wit3,
 - Delivers a balanced and locally appropriate mix of dwellings that meets housing needs,
 - Maximises the number of public parking spaces, and
 - Is currently assessed as a viable and deliverable option by partner Registered Providers.
 - Advances a net-zero, climate-resilient development and restores nature in central Witney.

10 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1** The Council will not be committing any funding for the development / construction of the scheme as this will be the RP responsibility, who can leverage Social and Affordable Housing programme (SHAP) grant funding from Homes England to make the scheme financially viable.
- 10.2** A further briefing will be brought to the senior management when the financial costs associated with the final detailed scheme design & associated planning fees are known.

11 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1** 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.

12 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 12.1** The overall scheme is reliant on grant from HE to ensure viability, however this risk is being mitigated by regular engagement and email correspondence with HE on the assumptions

around grant rates. These discussions help ensure that the grant assumptions within the collective viability modelling, are reasonable and within Homes England's guidelines. The overall viability of the scheme will continue to be reviewed with the RP, incorporating the guidelines on grant rates.

- 12.2** The timings of the scheme do overlap with the reorganisation of Local Government across Oxfordshire / West Berkshire, which does present a risk to the project.
- 12.3** Officers will continue to closely monitor and re-evaluate identified risks and will provide regular updates on the direction of travel.

13 EQUALITIES IMPACT

- 13.1** An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required in relation to this report, however, will be undertaken once a final design has been agreed.

14 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1** A Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA) is not required in relation to this report. The architects commissioned to develop the designs were instructed that the scheme must incorporate high-level environmental standards.

15 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 15.1** None.
(END)