

JPPC ref: DB/5176

Wheatley Neighbourhood Plan Working Group
c/o John Fox- Chairman

SENT VIA E-MAIL
wnpchairman@gmail.com

29th June 2017

Dear Sirs

RE: Neighbourhood Plan for Wheatley- draft plan consultation

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Neighbourhood Plan for Wheatley (WNP). We write to make comments on behalf of our client Mr Dykes who owns land to the west of the Asda supermarket, noted as WHE16 in the WNP.

We applaud the endeavour of the Wheatley community in preparing the draft plan and welcome its positive approach to development in the village. We welcome the proposed allocation of proposal site WHE16 within the WNP which we believe is appropriate and beneficial to the village, we do consider however greater benefits could be achieved through minor refinements to the policy.

The draft policy SP3 is titled 'contingency sites', a term normally used for sites which are reserved for development in the event principal allocations do not deliver. The text of policy SP3 however suggests the allocated sites are expected to be delivered alongside the main residential allocations. We understand reference to contingency is due to their being contingent on South Oxfordshire District Council progressing a Green Belt Review. To avoid confusion a separate term such as 'review dependent sites' could be beneficial to the policy.

In view of the work and enterprise of the working group we would encourage the District Council to progress their work on the Green Belt Review in order that the WNP may advance with certainty.

Policy SP3 states that development will be supported where proposals are 'supported by a consensus of Wheatley residents'. It is unclear how this consensus will be established and quantified, however the WNP and its policies will be subject to a referendum before adoption. The referendum polls community support for the WNP, including site allocation policies. Any allocation in an adopted plan can therefore be held as benefitting from a consensus of community support, it should not therefore be a separate qualifying requirement within the policy.

Draft policy SP3 allocates site WHE16 for light industry and commercial development. We understand the allocation to cover land adjacent to the London Road and that to the rear, however it is not entirely clear from the site identification map (Figure 6.1). For the benefit of clarity we would request a larger site identification map (or maps) in future versions of the WNP.

We wholeheartedly support the proposed allocation of site WHE16 and believe a comprehensive redevelopment can considerably improve the character and appearance of the area while enhancing the social and economic sustainability of the village. While we welcome the suggested site allocation we are concerned the rigidly defined allocated uses could preclude the most beneficial development for the site. It would be preferable to allow flexibility in the policy to allow the best possible employment-led scheme.

The plan correctly identifies at paragraph 7.8 that six bungalows are closely associated with site WHE16. The amenity of existing residents will be a consideration in any development, where possible their setting should be improved. The creation of a limited number of new homes on the development site WHE16 would be beneficial in enhancing the 'critical mass' of dwellings and residents in this area to support and maintain existing services, particularly bus stops serving this part of the village.

We also believe it would be beneficial to Wheatley for policy SP3 to allow flexibility to provide a limited number of starter homes for workers as part of the development of site WHE16. Development of dedicated units for workers in a comprehensive scheme for employment development of the site can provide a buffer to existing residential neighbours to preserve their amenity. Starter homes for workers would be particularly beneficial as residents would be less likely to have children with a need for external play space, and therefore be more compatible with an employment site than existing residential properties.

The homes could also be particularly attractive to workers taking up the new commercial space provided on the site. The WNP identifies a desire to reduce vehicular movements in the village and at key junctions. The incorporation of worker homes at WHE16 is clearly desirable in this regard as it can remove the need for commuting to and from work, reducing vehicular movements, particularly at peak times.

The provision of a small number of homes as part of the employment led development could also act as a catalyst to encourage delivery of high quality commercial units. The opportunity to live and work on site could provide a unique selling point for units encouraging new employers to locate to the area. Higher values could also allow greater investment in higher quality light industrial and commercial development than would be viable as a pure employment site.

In summary we welcome the allocation of site WHE16 for development which we consider to be beneficial for the village. For the above reasons we consider refinements to the proposed policy SP3 to be desirable to secure the best possible development for Wheatley.

Conclusion

We congratulate and commend the working group on reaching this stage with their Neighbourhood Plan. The positive approach of the plan in meeting development needs is welcomed.

We consider the proposed allocated site WHE16 to be a highly suitable development site in line with the aspirations of the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy and emerging Local Plan 2033. We believe the site can be beneficially developed as proposed in the draft plan, however these could be further enhanced through modest amendments to the policy. We welcome your consideration of the suggested modifications and would be pleased to discuss further.

We look forward to acknowledgement of receipt of these comments. If there is any additional information you require please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D Burson', with a horizontal line underneath.

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