

MINUTES of the Planning Committee of North Leigh Parish Council (NLPC) held on Wednesday, 26th April 2023, 7:00pm, Memorial Hall

Committee Members Present: Sarah Veasey (Chair), Andy Clement (AC), Kevin Swann (KS)

In attendance: Allison Leigh, Clerk, District Councillor Harry St John, County Councillor Liam Walker, members of the public

1/23. Apologies for absence: Susie Cusick (SC)

2/23. Declarations of interest: none

3/23. Public Forum: Several members of the public were in attendance to express their objections to planning application 23/00794/OUT. The Committee took these comments into account and incorporated them into their response on behalf of the Parish Council which can be found in Attachment 1.

A resident was also in attendance to express objection to planning applications 23/00604/HHD and 22/00609/FUL.

The Committee advised residents they are welcome to put their own comments onto the West Oxfordshire District Council portal.

4/23. Planning Applications:

<u>Planning Number</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Proposal</u>	<u>NLPC Comments</u>
23/00786/HHD and 22/00787/LBC	Wilcote Grange Wilcote	Single storey rear extension, conversion of garage room to Annex	NLPC has no comments on this planning application.
23/01043/FUL	Wilcote House Wilcote	The making of new trackways for agricultural use	NLPC has no comments on this planning application.
1. 23/00604/HHD 2. 22/00609/FUL	Rosehill Green Lane North Leigh	1. Erection of side and rear extensions, together with alterations to raise the height of the existing roof to create additional first floor living space and associated works 2. Erection of a replacement dwelling an associated works.	North Leigh Parish Council objects to these planning applications. NLPC notes that 2 very similar applications have been submitted simultaneously for Rosehill and we have not been able to ascertain from WODC why this is the case. Therefore we would like the same comment to be posted on each of the applications. The Parish Council objected to the previous application in late 2022 - 22/03319/HHD - which we note was turned down by

			<p>WODC. There is very little change to the design in these 2 new applications and our previous concerns remain, ie that both of the proposed new designs are of a size and scale that is much bigger than the existing dwelling and are totally out of proportion to the neighbouring houses and others on the same side of Green Lane.</p> <p>The proposed designs would have an impact on the light and views of the immediate neighbours and there are a large number of high level windows which will impact on the privacy of the neighbouring properties and possibly houses on the opposite side of Green Lane</p>
23/00932/ADV	Eynsham Hall North Leigh	Erection of brass rectangular signage to road side entrance piers	NLPC has no comments on this planning application.
23/00734/PN56	Goodmans Yard New Yatt Road North Leigh	Change of use from offices to five residential units	North Leigh Parish Council is concerned that the access to these 5 units would be situated on the New Yatt Road adjacent to the access to the approved "Land West of Ferndale" development 18/01973/FUL and in close proximity to the access road into the 40 house Masons Grove development. This is already an extremely dangerous stretch of road and there have been several accidents documented and "near misses" in the last few years compounded by the one-way traffic "pinch point" close to that location which has also caused a lot of confusion to drivers.
23/00794/OUT	Land South of New Yatt Road North Leigh	Outline planning application (with all matters reserved except for means of access) for the erection of up to 43 residential dwellings, including affordable housing, public open space, landscape planting, sustainable drainage system	See Attachment 1

		and new access arrangements from New Yatt Road	
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5/22. Correspondence: None

6/22. Matters for report: None

Date and time of next meeting: The next meeting will be held/scheduled as needed.

The meeting closed at 8:36pm

Attachment 1

23/00794/OUT Outline planning application (with all matters reserved except for means of access) for the erection of up to 43 residential dwellings, including affordable housing, public open space, landscape planting, sustainable drainage system and new access arrangements from New Yatt Road. | Land South Of 1 New Yatt Road North Leigh Oxfordshire

Note: the yellow notice for this application was originally posted in the wrong location and residents were originally only given 2 weeks (from 13th – 27th April) to comment on the proposal although this has now been extended.

The Parish Council STRONGLY OBJECTS to this application. We have received a large amount of correspondence from residents of the village raising their concerns in opposition to this development. Over 30 residents attended a recent Parish Planning Meeting to make their concerns known to us in person. At least 60 residents of the village have emailed Manor Oak directly to object to the proposal (with none in favour of it).

The residents' and our key concerns are as follows:

Excessive building development in the village

The addition of this application would increase the number of houses in the village, 6 years ago there were 700, this development would bring the total to 1,000 which is an increase of 43% resulting in North Leigh hardly being classified as a village now and losing much of its village character.

There is insufficient infrastructure support such as doctors, dentists, school places and public transport locally to support yet more housing in North Leigh and the additional number of cars on the roads (80+ ?) due to the influx of new residents from this development would increase the already dangerous roads in the village.

There are inadequate sewers, surface water and clean water supplies to support this development and a Grampian clause will be required on this proposal to prevent occupation of the houses until there is sufficient sewage capacity at the Church Hanborough sewage works. This means that the proposal will not be completed in time to make a contribution to the current 5 year land plan in West Oxfordshire anyway.

This is a greenfield site which is not an infill site and was never designated as a possible building site in the adopted local land plan. It is farmland grazed by sheep and horses and acts as a wildlife corridor between the villages for diverse wildlife including barn owls and other birds of prey, birds, hedgehogs, amphibians etc.

Coalescence between North Leigh and New Yatt.

The proposal of a housing development at this location, this would result in the narrowing of the green gap, coalescence of North Leigh with New Yatt, further eroding the village character and the perception of there being 2 separate villages. It would be unreasonable to push this application through purely due to the tilted balance caused by the shortfall in the 5 year land plan, especially as such housing parameters are expected to be amended later in 2023.

In relation to the EXISTING green gap between North Leigh and New Yatt, the inspectorate in the appeal for the adjacent Bellway site (Appeal Decision APP/D3125/W/15/3136376) stated “I am not persuaded that there would be any perception of the coalescence of the two settlements, with a substantial green gap remaining between them and a clear sense of departing from one settlement, walking across open countryside, and arriving at another.” And “North Leigh does not really begin until one is past Arden and The Chalet and has rounded the bend. The fields either side of the road here make an important contribution to the sense of separation between the two settlements.”. If this development is approved, the “hard edge” of the village would be extended beyond Arden and the remaining green gap would be completely eroded with no remaining sense of separation between the two villages and a perception of coalescence between them. This is unacceptable, the existing green gap MUST remain to demarcate the 2 settlements.

The WODC Lowlands Area Planning Sub-Committee on 27th February 2023, refused planning application number: 22/01384/OUT Land North East of Ducklington Farm Course, Hill Lane, Ducklington. A specific consideration in the refusal was the question of whether the proposed development would sit in Ducklington or Witney with the inference being that it would add to coalescence between those 2 settlements.

Design and density of the housing development

This is a purely speculative application for planning permission by a non-local land promoter who is not familiar with the site or location in North Leigh. The proposal shows outline details only and a much more substantial proposal would need to be clarified by any future developer of the site including building materials, layout etc.

The original proposal at Manor Oak’s exhibition in November 2022 indicated 38 houses which was already at a very high density for local standards, we note that this has now increased to 43 houses. As there are no local transport options and residents will need to rely on cars, there are insufficient car parking spaces in the current design. More car parking spaces should be added and the number of houses reduced.

In the November 2022 exhibition held by Manor Oak, it was stated that “an existing water main and easement runs diagonally through the site which will be re-routed on the southern side of the site” and “the water company have not raised any objections” (presumably Thames Water). We would like to understand the proposal for the relocation of the water mains as there are concerns it will impact the footpath to the south of the site and/or the existing/new trees planted there.

Access road, paths and poor road safety

The New Yatt Road in the vicinity of the entrance to the site is already very dangerous. There have been 2 accidents reported by OCC Highways in the last year and at least 3 or 4 more as well as many near misses witnessed by residents who also report that a car was written off near “Arden”. There are also incomplete paths on either side of the New Yatt Road and with the current arrangement residents are required to cross to the North Side of the Road when walking into the village and then cross back to the South side a bit further along. The problems are compounded by cars frequently parking on or adjacent to the pavements here blocking the road for pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders as well as narrowing the road for vehicles.

The traffic survey data being used in this application is also 12 years old and therefore unreliable.

It is not a safe environment for children walking to the village school and if this application is granted there should be an S278 agreement put in place for the construction of a full pavement on both sides of the road for the entire length of this stretch of the New Yatt Road.

There is also a one-way system “pinch point” in operation to the East of the site access of which we have received numerous complaints about poor visibility and OCC should review the safety and efficacy of this arrangement in the light of all of the additional traffic that would be generated by the construction and then occupation of this housing development.

HGV vehicles and construction trucks and disruption due to building works.

During the construction of the Bellway sites, on average 66 trucks per day came to the site and would be driving through the village and we would expect similar levels if this application is approved. This must be considered in conjunction with the predicted 4,000 HGV vehicle journeys required to supply equipment to the proposed Hailey Solar Farm (23/00760/SCREEN) which has designated North Leigh as its access route to the site. This amount of additional traffic is unacceptable and must not be permitted.

The construction trucks for Bellway did not have a turning facility within the site resulting in dangerous manoeuvres on the road and there were inadequate washing facilities for the vehicles so that the roads became covered in mud and dangerous and the road surface was destroyed. The village residents in this area have only just recovered from the impact of 4 years of the noise and mess of construction at the adjacent Bellway site and would find it difficult to tolerate a repeat of this situation (it would be nearly a decade for them of living by a building site). Given the increased trend for “working from home” they have requested that construction hours are restricted from 9am – 4pm on Monday to Fridays and there is no working on Saturdays at all.

Sewerage capacity and clean water supply

The Rectory Rise development in North Leigh has had a Grampian Clause imposed so that no house can be occupied until sufficient Sewage treatment capacity can be demonstrated at the Church Hanborough Sewage Works. The same Grampian clause of no occupation must be imposed if this application is approved also. Otherwise sewage from this site will result directly in a proportional increase in sewage flows into the Evenlode river.

We understand that the sewer network in the adjacent Bellway sites on both sides of the road have not been adopted from the developer by Thames Water at this time and the responsibility for maintenance of the sewers in this vicinity has fallen into the void. There have been many documented incidents of sewage leaks around this end of the village including in gardens of houses on the New Yatt Road, outside Verdant House in Green Lane and in the field beyond, in the garden of Ferndale and the adjacent Goodman’s Yard, in various houses on Masons’ Grove and also in Church Road. There have been blockages caused by nappies and waste paper but also builders’ rubble. Thames Water must urgently address these problems before they sign off on providing any additional capacity in the area.

Elsewhere in the village there are many reported problems with low pressure and low flow rates of clean water, again Thames Water must address these problems before signing off on yet more housing capacity.

Surface Water problems and springs

The fields in this area are at the top of a hill with clay soil and many springs run through them. Whilst the flood risk assessment filed on the WODC portal concludes that the flood risk is “low impact” local residents know this not to be the case. There is a constant problem with surface water draining out of Bellway and down to Green Lane (an old Roman road) eroding its surface, there is run off along the New Yatt Road past the Whitehill Bungalow. Paving over this site will mean that a lot of surface water will be unable to soak away and will be displaced. It is unlikely that the SUDS arrangements will be sufficient to contain the flows of water in heavy rainfall which will result in overspill onto the New Yatt Road and beyond, further worsening traffic issues there. The surface water drainage also flows into the local sewers worsening all of the sewerage capacity problems detailed above.

The MP Robert Courts wrote to the Environment Agency in March 2023 on behalf of residents of Breakspear Way to determine the responsibility for permitting housing on the adjacent field. This adjacent estate has ongoing subsidence problems, problems with foundations and cracked walls, flooding to gardens, water seeping through walls through the pointing and damp. Remedial work is ongoing. This new development is proposed on very similar terrain and will no doubt experience similar problems.

Views & footpath

There are attractive views from the footpath at the South of the site towards Wilcote and construction on this site will destroy the view in this direction for ever. It is also not clear from the plans how the development will impact the footpath itself, clarification is needed.

Biodiversity

There are remnants of ancient woodland (Wychwood Forest) to the east of the site and these are not identified as such in the biodiversity assessment, hence the compensation calculation does not start at the correct baseline level when making calculations.

Archaeology

No archaeological remains have been found at this site but we note it is very close to Green Lane (a Roman road) and the Roman villa located at Shaken Oak. The map that has been submitted in the archaeological assessment has been submitted back to front and is impossible to draw conclusions from it..

Pollution

We note that the pollution consultation has requested an “intrusive investigation” and request clarification of what this is for

Light Pollution

North Leigh residents support a “dark skies” policy and this additional development would add substantial light pollution to the village.

In summary this is an opportunistic and ambitious application proposed at a highly inappropriate location and it should be REFUSED both at Lowlands Committee and again at the inevitable appeal hearing.

If this proposal is however approved, the Parish Council would request the following remediation measures in the form of S106 contributions and other conditions:

S106 contributions for:

- 25 allotments on the development site
- The rental or purchase of land plus refurbishment costs for additional parking in the centre of the village
- an S278 agreement should be put in place for the construction of a full pavement on both sides of the road for the entire length of this stretch of the New Yatt Road so that children can walk to the school safely
- £50k contribution to the MUGA now confirmed at the Rectory Rise site in the village
- £50k contributions to the cycle path between Park Road and Common Road along the A4095

In addition:

- a Grampian clause will be required on this proposal to prevent occupation of the houses until there is sufficient sewage capacity at the Church Hanborough sewage works and problems in the local sewer network adjacent to the site have been addressed
- A review of the safety and efficacy of the one-way system “pinch point” in operation to the East of the site access by OCC Highways department