

MINUTES of the Parish Council Meeting of North Leigh Parish Council (NLPC) held on Thursday 11th April 2024 at 7:30pm in the Turner Hall, Church Road, North Leigh

Councillors Present: Andy Clements (Chair), Councillors Malcolm Shead (MS), Julie Minch (JM), Sarah Veasey (SV), Carol Frost (CF), Kevin Swann (KS) and Fran Jeffes (FJ)

In attendance: Allison Leigh, Clerk, County Councillor Liam Walker, District Councillor Harry St John

1/24. Apologies for absence: The Council resolved to accept apologies from Councillor Robert Gunn (RG).

2/24. Declarations of interest: None

3/24. Minutes of the following meetings:

Parish Council meeting 14th March 2024: The Council resolved to accept and sign the minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council on the 14th of March 2024.

Planning Committee meeting 19th March 2024: The Council resolved to make the changes to the minutes of the meeting of the 19th March 2024 requested by the Planning Committee. The Chair of the Council noted that minutes should be a record of decisions and not a verbatim record. The Planning Committee will make this clear at future meetings.

Neighbourhood Plan Committee meeting 21st March 2024: The Council resolved to accept and sign the minutes of the meeting of the Neighbourhood Plan Committee on the 21st of March 2024.

4/24. Public Forum: No members of the public were in attendance.

5/24. Reports from the County Councillor and District Councillor

Oxfordshire County Council (OCC)

The County Councillor reported that New Yatt Lane will be closed from the 15th – 26th of July for resurfacing.

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC)

The District Councillor reported the following:

- He has looked at the Interim Travel Plan for Estelle Manor and noted that it indicates there should be a Full Travel Plan and a Travel Plan Coordinator. Neither of these are in place to his knowledge.

- There will be no Lowlands Planning Committee in May.

The Council thanked Harry St John for his service as District Councillor.

6/24. Action items and Clerk's Report:

- The Clerk reported that she has sent letters to the District and County Councils regarding the difficulty in sorting the leases to the Adventure and Children's Playgrounds.
- The Council resolved to have the verbiage "North Leigh Parish Council" on the high vis vests rather than the logo.
- KS reported he has had a few residents get in touch regarding the possibility of the resurrection of the Nor'Lye News.

7/24: Finance:

- **Finance:**

Bank reconciliation

Bank Reconciliation at 31/03/2024

Cash in Hand 01/04/2023			88,393.20
ADD			
Receipts 01/04/2023 - 31/03/2024			82,335.94
			170,729.14
SUBTRACT			
Payments 01/04/2023 - 31/03/2024			115,644.61
A	Cash in Hand 31/03/2024		55,084.53
	(per Cash Book)		
Cash in hand per Bank Statements			
Petty Cash	31/03/2024	0.00	
Unity Bank	31/03/2024	12,004.52	
Lloyds	31/03/2024	0.00	
Unity Instant Access Account	31/03/2024	43,629.61	
			55,634.13
Less unrepresented payments			549.60
<i>Citizens Advice</i>	<i>200.00</i>		
<i>NP Expenses</i>	<i>52.50</i>		55,084.53
<i>Newsletter delivery</i>	<i>240.60</i>		
<i>NP Expenses</i>	<i>56.50</i>		
	<i>549.60</i>		
Plus unrepresented receipts			
B	Adjusted Bank Balance		55,084.53
	A = B Checks out OK		

Date	Description	Supplier	Cost (including VAT)
19/03/2024	Neighbourhood Plan Consu	Community First Oxfordshire	6,120.00
31/03/2024	Unity Bank service charge	Unity Bank	18.00
07/03/2024	Pension contribution	NEST	60.18
11/03/2024	Office supplies	Amazon	7.99
11/03/2024	Paper	The Midcounties Co-operative	5.00
11/03/2024	Council mobile phone	Lebara	6.95
11/03/2024	Postage	Appleton Community Shop	1.25
11/03/2024	Office supplies	North Leigh Store	12.46
11/03/2024	Postage	Appleton Community Shop	2.50
11/03/2024	Parking	Oxford City Council Parking	2.00
11/03/2024	Paper	Tesco	5.80
11/03/2024	Lloyds monthly fee	Lloyds Bank	3.00
11/04/2024	Scribe annual license	Starboard Systems Limited	414.72
11/04/2024	Web hosting and WordPres	Dark White Digital	35.00
11/04/2024	TVERC Data Search	Oxfordshire County Council	90.00
11/04/2024	North Leigh Cemetery Hed	BGG	360.00
11/04/2024	OALC Subscription	OALC	500.78
11/04/2024	Reimbursement to Andy Cl	Andy Clements	40.35
11/04/2024	Clerk mileage and home al	Allison Leigh	44.00
30/04/2024	Clerk salary	Allison Leigh	1,149.87
11/04/2024	Cemetery bin management	Grundon	65.68
11/04/2024	Arnold Baker Book	Society of Local Council Clerks	137.00
11/04/2024	Bus shelter cleaning	Multi Hands	110.00
11/04/2024	Website assistance and .or	Dark White Digital	40.00
11/04/2024	Clerk PAYE	HMRC	53.99
11/04/2024	Installation of poles for spe	Oxford Direct Services Trading LTD	1,755.24
11/04/2024	Training course	National Assoc. Local Councils	51.71
11/04/2024	Room hire	North Leigh War Memorial Hall	36.30

- **Confirmation of recurring expenses for 2024/2025:** The Council resolved to confirm the following subscriptions/services for 2024/2025:

<u>Organisation</u>	<u>Function</u>	<u>Duration/Review date</u>	<u>Approximate Cost</u>
Donation expense allowable per S137 of the Local Government Act 1972	Allowable donation spend (per the regulations set out in legislation)	Quarterly/April 2024	£10.81 x 1840 (electorate) = £19,890.40 (NOTE: This is not the amount budgeted, but the amount allowable.

Edge	Cemetery database/mapping	Annually/October 2024	£326
Mailchimp	Mailing list	Monthly/October 2024	£26
Parish Online	Mapping software	Annually/October 2024	£100
SLCC	Annual Membership	Annually/October 2024	£95.20
OALC	Annual Membership	Annually/October 2024	£417.32
Dark White Digital	Webhosting and WordPress Updates	Annually/October 2024	£35/month
WODC	Bin emptying (4 bins)	Quarterly/October 2024	£652.86
Multi-Hands	Bus shelter cleaning	Quarterly/October 2024	£110 per visit
Turner Hall or North Leigh Youth Project	Room Hire	Monthly/October 2024	£25 per hire
Tetbury Accounting	Payroll Accountant	Annually/October 2024	£240
Grundon	Cemetery bin emptying	Monthly/October 2024	£60
Scribe	Accounting software	Annually/October 2024	£350
Institute of Cemetery and Cremation Management	Membership	Annually/October 2024	£100

The Flying Press	Printing needs: Newsletter, Neighbourhood Plan, Consultations	Monthly and as needed/October 2024	£500 per newsletter Other printing costs agreed via quote with The Flying Press as agreed supplier for projects up to £500
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- **Training:**

- There were no training courses requested.
- The Chair would like the Clerk to book a place at Talking Tables with a view to cancel, if possible.
- No councillor is available to attend the Councillor Forum on the 14th May.

- **Memorial Hall:**

- The Council asked the Clerk to ask the Memorial Hall to cancel the meeting on the 16th of April and ask if there could not be a charge.
- The Council resolved not to book the Memorial Hall the third Tuesday of the month.

- **Quote for Tree Works:** The Council acknowledged the revised quote from JAG Trees and resolved to proceed.

6/24: Planning:

- ***Planning matters for consideration:***

- 24/00596/S73
North Leigh Football Club, Eynsham Park, North Leigh
Variation of condition 1 of permission 23/01778/FUL to extend the use of the temporary car park on the existing football pitch for a further 12 months until 31st March 2025
 - Comments: The Council resolved to echo the comments of the District Councillor. SV will send comments to the Clerk for submission.

- 24/00654/S73
Eynsham Hall, North Leigh
Variation of condition 3 of Planning Permission 23/03413/FUL to allow the permission to be implemented in addition to planning permission 22/01268/S73
 - Comments: North Leigh Parish Council has no comments on this planning application.

- 24/00482/OUT
North Witney Strategic Development Area New Yatt Road Witney
Outline planning application for a residential-led mixed-use development (Use Class C3 / C2), a 2.2ha primary school (Use Class F1), and up to 400m2 community use and/or co-working hub and/or shop (Use Class E and F2) and Northern Distributor Road with creation of new vehicular access off Woodstock Road, New Yatt Road and Hailey Road and provision of public open space with associated infrastructure and earthworks. (All matters reserved except accessibility to the site, for vehicles in terms of the positioning and treatment of access to the site)
 - Comments: The Council resolved to object to the above planning application. The Council resolved for the road to be closed at Merryfield Farm. SV will send comments to the Clerk for submitting.

- **West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041 allocated site – Land East of the Green, East End**
 - The Clerk reported that many comments had been received in opposition to the above. The Council will object to the above and the other sites put forward for allocation.

- ***Planning responses from previous meetings:*** The following responses were written and submitted following the March meeting:
 - Manor Oak Appeal:
APP/D3125/W/23/3333133
Land South Of 1 New Yatt Road North Leigh Original Application Number: 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 (amended plans)

See Attachment 1.

- Botley West Solar Farm. See Attachment 2.

- **Planning Decisions:**

[Internal and external alterations to include erection of a single storey rear extension to main dwelling. Conversion of first floor garage room to annex. - Wilcote Grange Wilcote Chipping Norton Oxfordshire OX7 3EA](#)

Ref. No: 23/02427/LBC | Status: Approve | Case Type: Planning Application

[Temporary change of use of land to provide a car park to serve Eynsham Hall. - North Leigh Football Club Eynsham Park North Leigh Witney Oxfordshire OX29 6SL](#)

Ref. No: 23/01778/FUL | Status: Approve | Case Type: Planning Application

[Erection of raised decking/platform in rear garden along with addition of trellis to existing garden walling \(retrospective\) - 1 Gough Close North Leigh Witney Oxfordshire OX29 6AE](#)

Ref. No: 24/00190/HHD | Status: Approve | Case Type: Planning Application

7/24: Committees:

- **Neighbourhood Plan (NP) Committee:** The NP Committee sent a report. See Attachment 3.
 - KS reported that the questionnaire should be completed in the next 4 weeks and that the Committee is working on the Character Assessment.
 - The Council discussed the NP expenditure for 2024/2025. It was noted that the Council has £3,000 in the budget. KS reported it is uncertain whether Locality will provide grants in 2024/2025. If there are no grants available, the NP budget could yield approximately £17,000 in shortfall. The Council will continue to monitor the situation.
- **Staffing Committee:** The Committee will hold a public meeting the 18th of April at 9:30am in the Committee Room of the Memorial Hall.
- **Planning Committee:** It was noted that a date for the Manor Oak Appeal has not been received as of yet. A date for the 22/02740/FUL & 22/02222/CLE - Land North Of A4095 At E437664 N211817 North Leigh (Hailey Dog Kennel) has been set. The District Councillor will be speaking at the appeal and KS will read NLPC's Planning Committee comment at the appeal.

8/24: Biodiversity:

- **No Mow May:** The Council resolved to carry out No Mow May where it is safe to be left. The Clerk will circulate a draft of suggested areas to the Council.
- The Clerk will create a biodiversity policy to be reviewed at a future meeting.

9/24: Churchyard: The Council resolved to send a letter to the Parochial Church Council with regards to the Parish Council's position on churchyard maintenance. The Council will state that it has no record of a letter asking for NLPC to maintain the Churchyard. Due to this fact, the Council will note it does not have responsibility for the Churchyard, but as a gesture of goodwill, will continue to cut the grass.

10/24: Donation Policy: The Council resolved to move the review of the Donation Policy to the May meeting.

11/24: Correspondence:

- The Council acknowledged the correspondence since the last meeting.

12/24. Matters for report:

- CF noted the PC should send a card to the District Councillor thanking him for his loyal support.
- CF reported the litter pick had been successful. She thanked the Chair, FJ and the County Councillor for attending as well as the Beavers, Scouts and the leaders from those groups. The whole village was covered with 12 bags of rubbish being collected. WODC was very helpful.
- MS thanked Andy and Kevin for erecting the 4 speed indicator devices.
- MS would like the feedback from residents on the S106 query on the May agenda along with an agenda item as to a decision to spend.
- JM reported that she may have a volunteer interested in taking charge of Speedwatch.
- JM reported that Proludic has not been forthcoming in repairing the wetpour at the Children's Playground and the Council may need to escalate. JM noted the zip wire may require some attention. She and MS will go and have a look at it carefully to ensure safety.

- SV reported that North Leigh parish has springs causing drainage issues. These issues aren't covered by current flooding information, so she suggested a survey is done for more information which may assist with future funding needed/planning matters.
- In requesting information from residents, KS would like the Clerk to note that anyone sending an email to the Clerk should consider it sent to the PC and may be sent to Councillors.
- MS reported he will be going on training to be a Highways superuser around June.
- CF sent apologies for the May meeting.

The date and time of the next meeting, which will be the Annual Parish Council Meeting, were confirmed as Thursday, 9th May 2024 at 7.30pm, Turner Hall

The deadline for items for the May agenda is the 25th of April 2024.

The meeting closed at 9:35pm

Attachment 1

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. Appeal Ref. APP/D3125/W/23/333133. WODC Ref. 23/00794/OUT

The North Leigh Parish Council's appeal comment contains a number of new and updated issues which have come to light. It should be read in conjunction with the 2 original comments submitted by the Parish Council on the original planning application dated 9th May and 20th July 2023 respectively.

Firstly the Parish Council would like to refute the appellant's baseless assertion that the Parish Council's comment should be disregarded because the Neighbourhood Plan is at an early stage (Hearing Statement Jan 2024 Para 5.9). An appeal is a democratic process and the Parish Council is representing the carefully solicited views of approximately 2,000 residents of the Parish and is quite entitled to give feedback to this appeal as a consultee and interested party and have it taken into account.

IN SUMMARY

In summary the Parish Council **STRONGLY OBJECTS** to this application. This is an speculative, generic application (with actual details left for the eventual developer to resolve) submitted by a non-local land promoter who is unfamiliar with the site. The site is a highly inappropriate greenfield windfall site never listed in the WOLP 2031. It is a highly unsustainable development put forward purely on the premise that it can be pushed through on appeal if it can be demonstrated that the WODC land supply is currently less than 5 years. The appellant has focussed their appeal on this point rather than any demonstration of positive attributes of the proposal. The Parish Council has received an enormous amount of correspondence and had very high attendance at consultation meetings in consideration of this site. Residents feel strongly that this application should be rejected and the Parish Council has not received a single comment in favour of this application. This application should be **REFUSED** at appeal.

5 YEAR LAND SUPPLY

There is no mention in the appellant's appeal submission of any merits or benefits of the application beyond its minimal contribution to the 5 year land supply. At the time of writing WODC has a stated a 5 year land supply of 5.4 which to date has not been successfully challenged and also an updated figure is due to be released by WODC in April 2024. Even if it is discovered that sites are required to shore up some small and temporary shortfall in the 5 year land supply, WODC are currently evaluating 4,500 acres of land put forward in the call for sites under the WOLP 2041 (equivalent to at least 45,000+ homes) and this offering comprises many housing sites that are more sustainable and suitable than this one. Therefore it seems premature to push through this highly

unsuitable site, which has such obvious drawbacks and which would be delayed anyway due to constraints such as the Grampian clause on sewage treatment works, rather than wait for more sustainable sites.

The Parish Council notes that the WOLP 2031 envisages LIMITED SUSTAINABLE development in villages such as North Leigh. However the Parish Council believes that this is not a sustainable development as detailed below and in fact the lack of sustainability meant that the original application was refused by WODC Lowlands Committee in September 2023 even though the 5 year land supply at that time was agreed at 4.1 and there was a “tilted balance towards approval”. This is a very strong indicator that the harms of the scheme so far outweighed the benefits that this site could not be contemplated even in a shortfall scenario. Also as discussed below North Leigh has taken more than its fair share of the development envisaged in the 34 villages of West Oxfordshire.

Additionally, it should be noted that even if this application was approved at appeal, due to the Grampian Clauses that would immediately be imposed on the sewage treatment capacity, the site would be highly unlikely to be available for occupation until at least 2026/2027 or even later and consequently other sites that could be chosen from the vast array of sites put forward under the WOLP 2041 which will be approved in late 2025 are far more likely to be built out and come on stream ahead of this site and therefore make a much more timely contribution to the 5 year land supply.

THIS IS AN UNSUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

This development proposal is totally unsustainable in contradiction of national and local planning policy which dictates sustainable development and there is inadequate infrastructure in North Leigh to support a development such as this. An approval would result in serious long term harms incurred to procure short term gains. In WOLP 2031 Policy OS1 there is a clear definition of what constitutes a sustainable development and this proposal does not meet these criteria for the following reasons:

- There are very limited amenities in the village as discussed below. In the Hearing Statement Jan 2024 para 1.4 the appellant states that “future residents would not be wholly or even primarily reliant on private car to meet their day to day needs, this is COMPLETELY UNTRUE. The village “shop” is effectively a kiosk within the village hall, which doubles as the post office. It sells milk, newspapers, alcohol, sweets and some processed foods, and one would be hard pressed to prepare a meal as no ingredients such as fruit or vegetables are on sale. Village residents are forced to travel by car to reach the nearest shop/supermarket in Hanborough or Witney.
- There is only 1 half-hourly bus which is not within a reasonable walking distance of the site (600m approx.) along dangerous unlit roads with no pavement in some sections

- There is minimal employment in the village and approximately 75% of residents work outside the village, this will inevitably be a car-led development resulting in another 75+ cars in the village and on the roads of West Oxfordshire and result in congestion as well as pollution from vehicle emissions
- In the Hearing Statement Jan 2024 Para 3.10 the appellant states that the site is located within convenient reach of various facilities. However the shop is de minimus as described above, the library, another room in the village hall, opens 11 hours a week, one of the public houses has changed hands 4 times in the last few years and is rarely open, the other doesn't open at lunchtime. The football club is a private members club rather than a public facility, and the "business centre" presumably refers to the business park that is used by private businesses and has no amenities for the village at all. The school is at capacity in certain year groups. Most of these are not 10 minutes but more like a 15-20 minute walk from the site and the appellant contradicts themselves by confirming that it is 20 minutes in the Hearing Statement Jan 2024 Para 6.31
- Parking in the village especially around the school is already at capacity and dangerous to children and pedestrians
- This is the destruction of a greenfield site in open countryside.
- Construction on this site will destroy the biodiversity in this area (red kite, kestrels, turtle doves, barn owls, newts, amphibians, reptiles, deer etc) and also block an important wildlife corridor linking Eynsham Hall estate to the Wychwood Forest.
- There will be sewage pollution of the Evenlode due to insufficient sewage treatment capacity at Church Hanborough Sewage Treatment Works
- There will be sewage pollution at the site due to an inadequate sewer network with constant spills due to 40% infiltration of the sewer network by the local springs in wet weather
- There will be constant surface water drainage problems building on a field of springs as has happened in the adjacent Shepherd's Walk development and SUDS are likely to be inadequate
- There will be light pollution in an area of "dark skies" where there is no street lighting
- There will be a loss of visual amenity from the footpath of views over the AONB
- It destroys the tranquil setting in the vicinity of the Wychwood Way and Quicken Copse (both part of the Wychwood Project) 280 metres from the site
- It will permanently coalesce two villages
- The appellant admits that the development would be "a logical EXTENSION to the village" (Hearing Statement Jan 2024 para 1.4) hence accepting it won't be a PART of the village – and this will make it harder for new residents to integrate into the community

It should also be noted that the Settlement Sustainability Report (referred to in Hearing Statement Jan 2024 Para 6.30) on which the suitability of North Leigh as

a development location is based, inaccurately reflects the amenities in North Leigh and hence the ranking of North Leigh should be lower than as portrayed in the table. It should also be noted that this document was produced in 2016 and is therefore 8 years old and out of date and therefore much reduced reliance should be placed on this document.

PLANNING POLICIES AND THE HOUSING CAPACITY OF NORTH LEIGH

As stated in the WODC Lowlands reasons for refusal of this application dated 14th September 2023, “the proposal is unsustainable and contrary to policies H1, OS1, OS2, T1, EW10 and EH2 of the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2031, the West Oxfordshire Design Guide 2016 and the relevant paragraphs of the NPPF”.

OS1

Under policy OS1 it is stated that there is a “presumption in favour of sustainable development”, “locating development in the right places” it is quite clear that this proposal does not meet either of these key objectives. Policy OS1 goes on to say that there should be a “timely provision of supporting infrastructure – without appropriate investment existing services will come under pressure and may be unable to cope”. North Leigh is in this situation right now and it does not make sense to just waive through yet another housing proposal (on top of the 40% increase in housing already approved) without giving serious thought to the upgrade of local infrastructure FIRST.

Policy OS1 also mentions that “other sensitive areas such as those that are prone to flooding” should be avoided for planning. Whilst North Leigh is not on a flood plain, the Parish Council does not believe that sufficient weight has been accorded to the fact that North Leigh is a village of springs and there are many areas where further building will exacerbate the effects of this surface water as detailed below.

OS2

If this proposal for 43 houses is approved, the housing stock in North Leigh will have increased by an astounding 42% in the last 6 years (701 to 1000 houses in the village) of which 220 new houses have been built (of which 78 are affordable) and a further 79 have planning approval. (of which 24 are affordable). In the current adopted Local Plan Policy OS2 seeks to ensure new homes/development takes place in the right place. It spells out a settlement hierarchy(Table 4b of the WOLP 2031) where North Leigh is defined as one of 34 villages which are suitable for LIMITED development respecting the village character and local distinctiveness. In the WOLP 2031 the total windfall housing in the Eynsham-Woodstock Sub-Area was envisaged to provide 289 houses across the 34 settlements classified as villages in the plan over a 20 year period. Including this Manor Oak proposal, North Leigh alone will have already provided 299 houses ie more than 100% of the windfall allocation of the entire Sub Area in 6 years, surely North Leigh has now had its share. At the current rate of development the entire village will become a suburb of Witney and be subsumed under concrete.

In Policy OS2 it also states that development in the small villages will be limited

to that which is...appropriate for a rural location”....North Leigh is not a rural service centre, it is a village as defined in Table 4b Settlement Hierarchy of the WOLP 2031 with scarce amenities and minimal infrastructure, there is no possibility that a 40% increase in housing in the last 6 years could be construed as “LIMITED” North Leigh should not have to take any more. It goes on to say that “a number of site allocations are proposed to ensure identified needs are met”. As it stands North Leigh has 79 houses approved but not yet built of which at least 24 are affordable units, in a village of this size this figure definitely covers any unmet needs for housing.

EH2

In Policy EH2 it is stated that the “quality, character and distinctiveness of West Oxfordshire’s natural environment including its landscape, cultural and historic value, tranquillity, geology, countryside, soil and biodiversity will be conserved and enhanced.....proposals which would result in the loss of features, important for their visual amenity or historic value will not be permitted.....” this application would have a significant negative impact on the visual amenity from the footpath at the south of the site, cause a reduction in the tranquillity of the area within 280 metres of the Wychwood Way and Quicken Copse (both part of the Wychwood Project) and erode the nature corridor between Eynsham Park and the Wychwood Forest and destroy the biodiversity of the area. As stated in the refusal by WODC Lowlands of this application **“is not of a proportionate and appropriate scale to its context having regard to the cumulative impact of development in the locality, does not form a logical complement to the existing scale and pattern of development and the character of the area, does not avoid the coalescence and loss of identity of separate settlements of New Yatt and North Leigh, does not protect or enhance the local landscape and the setting of the settlement, involves the loss of an area of open space that make an important contribution to the character or appearance of the area, and does not conserve and enhance the natural and built environment”**.

EW10

Policy EW10 of the adopted WOLP 2031 states very clearly that the majority of the c.5,600 dwellings allocated in the Eynsham-Woodstock Sub-Area will be built at Woodstock, Long Hanborough and Eynsham and plus the Salt Cross garden village to cater for the Oxford City need. Furthermore it states that development elsewhere will be limited to meeting local housing, community and business needs and steered towards the larger villages. It is quite clear that the amount of this need already taken by North Leigh is hugely disproportionate.

T1

Policy T1 puts an emphasis on sustainable transport and it is quite clear that there are scarce local amenities and the local minimal infrastructure is configured in such a way that the potential residents of this development (like the existing residents of North Leigh) would be forced to use cars to access work and for their basic living needs. This development would be ENTIRELY car led with more than 75+ cars being introduced in the area.

IRREVOCABLE COALESCENCE OF TWO VILLAGES

In relation to the EXISTING green gap between North Leigh and New Yatt, the Inspector in the appeal for the adjacent Shepherd's Walk site (Appeal Decision APP/D3125/W/15/3136376) stated "the fields either side of the road here are an important contribution to the sense of separation between the two settlements." and "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 the Manor Oak development was approved, the "hard edge" of the village would be extended beyond Arden and the remaining green gap demarcating the two villages would be completely eroded result in the coalescence of North Leigh and New Yatt for ever, eroding the character of both villages and with no remaining sense of separation between them which is unacceptable.

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.

SEWAGE TREATMENT CAPACITY, WINDRUSH WASP STATEMENT & ENVIRONMENTAL AGENCY PRECEDENT

All sewage flows from North Leigh Parish are pumped to Thames Water's Church Hanborough Sewage Treatment Works (STW). It has been established that this STW currently doesn't have capacity to process sewage from the current housing in North Leigh, Freeland, Hanborough and surrounding areas let alone from any new housing. In fact in November 2022 the STW conceded that it was only operating at 88% of its licenced permitted capacity and has been doing legal surcharging during storm events but also illegal surcharging. In these cases, raw sewage that cannot be processed is dumped into the brook at Church Hanborough which flows directly into the Evenlode River. This is UNACCEPTABLE. Church Hanborough STW is in urgent need of an upgrade which was scheduled to be completed by 1st quarter 2025, slid to end 2025 and now there is serious uncertainty over the revised schedule. Thames Water was the only water company not to secure additional funding in the latest round, and there is speculation that it may not meet its financial obligations on the current phase of capital expenditure and may even be nationalised which would lead to further uncertainty. As there is no confirmed date for this upgrade, Church Hanborough STW cannot take on any more capacity and North Leigh already

has another development in the village, Rectory Rise, for 55 houses which is currently on hold due to a Grampian clause (Attachment 1) which prevents ANY occupation until such time as sufficient capacity can be demonstrated and potential purchasers are informed of this upfront.

It is essential that any approval of any further housing capacity in North Leigh, including this appeal site, must be covered by an identical Grampian Clause for the reasons above and for consistency with the Rectory Rise approval. It should also be noted that this Grampian Clause would prevent any housing capacity from the Manor Oak development from coming online in time to make a contribution to the current 5 year land supply at all.

The charity Windrush WASP which monitor water quality in the Windrush and Evenlode rivers and their tributaries in West Oxfordshire has written a submission to this appeal (Attachment 2a and 2b) specifically opposing this application until the sewage treatment infrastructure is in place to support it.

The Parish Council notes that the Environmental Agency has set a precedent against endless approval of housing developments where there is no sewage infrastructure in place. As a consultee to a development for 1,450 houses on "Land North of Bayswater Brook, near Barton" in Oxford, they have just recommended REFUSE on the basis that there is inadequate sewage treatment capacity saying that the infrastructure needs to be put in place before any further development can proceed (Attachment 3).

FOUL WATER SEWER NETWORK

The sewer network in North Leigh is Victorian and antiquated and in urgent need of upgrading with a capital expenditure programme that Thames Water currently cannot finance. Some of the pipes are pitch tar from the 1950s and have collapsed. The pumping system that pumps sewage uphill to the Church Hanborough STW constantly fails. The new housing estates at Shepherd's Walk and Marlborough Gardens have not been adopted by Thames Water at this point in time and there have been problems with bricks and other debris in the pipes. Some pipes have been cracked and leaking. Sewers from the new developments have been linked into the existing network which is also has inadequate bore pipes. North Leigh is a village built on springs and has high levels of surface water, in storm events this results in 40% infiltration of the sewers with surface water - one of the highest figures in the 43 villages of West Oxfordshire. Overall these issues have caused immense problems resulting in more than 100 spillage and backflow incidents in the last 5 years around the village. The Parish Council strongly believes that no more housing developments should be approved until the sewer network has been upgraded and there is sufficient infrastructure to support them.

CLEAN WATER SUPPLY

Thames Water undertakes to provide a good pressure and flow rate of water to this new development but there have been many instances where this has not been the case in the village. In the months since the original application there

have been a number of incidents of low clean water pressure and flow at various locations in the village including New Yatt Road and Green Lane. Thames Water is unable to provide sufficient clean water infrastructure to support existing housing development let alone providing infrastructure for new development.

LACK OF CLARIFICATION ON WATER PIPES CROSSING THE SITE

In the Design & Access Statement of the original application, Manor Oak state: “An existing water main and easement runs diagonally through the site which will be re-routed to avoid the developable area. Our drainage engineers have discussed the proposals to divert the water main with the water company who have not raised any objections.” In fact there is no evidence that the appellant has secured any undertaking from Thames Water regarding how the relocation of these pipes might be addressed. Thames Water’s comment states “the proposed development is located within 5m of a strategic water main. Thames Water do not permit the building over or construction within 5m, of strategic water mains.” Thames Water request that the following condition be added to any planning permission “No construction shall take place within 5m of the water main.” And they invite the appellant to submit information on how this issue might be addressed. As Manor Oak themselves say “this easement would significantly affect the viability of development”.

In the appeal submission there is no further clarification on this point. In fact in the Appellants Statement of Case November 2023, Para 3.5, the two water mains are now confusingly referred to as SEWERS. This lack of attention to detail by the appellant is symptomatic of the superficial and generic way in which the entire proposal has been prepared and submitted. If the water mains is relocated to the south and west of the site it will impact on the footpath running to the south of the site and also new and existing trees will not be able to be planted because Thames Water has specified that trees cannot be planted over a water main easement so that they can access the pipes easily.

NORTH LEIGH IS A VILLAGE OF SPRINGS & SURFACE WATER

In the Flood Risk Assessment commissioned for Manor Oak by MAC in March 2023 (and updated in June 2023), it states that the Risk of Surface and Ground Water Flooding is “very low” but local residents know this not to be the case. North Leigh is built on a hill of heavy clay with springs emanating from an area close to the Woodman Public House in New Yatt Road and the springs run downhill in a number of directions through a number of surface and uncharted subterranean channels and ancient agricultural culverts. The Parish Council is considering commissioning a hydrological study to establish the exact nature and flows of these springs which has not been evaluated before. The Shepherd’s Walk site adjacent to the Manor Oak site was previously known as the Field of Springs and had a constant level of surface water which was raised as a serious concern when the Shepherd’s Walk site was approved on appeal. The construction of 116 houses there, and the resulting urban creep has resulted in severe drainage problems on the Shepherds Walk development, due to the displacement of surface water and the SUDS attenuation ponds have been unsuccessful in mitigating these problems. As stated previously, the houses

have rising damp problems, there are insufficient surface drains, cracked walls, flooding to gardens and the excess water spills on to the New Yatt Road down as far as the Whitehill Bungalow bend and is dangerous for road traffic all year round and worse when the water freezes in the winter months. The water subsequently seeps down onto Green Lane where it annually erodes the road surface and also destroys the lower section of Green Lane that is an ancient “hollow way” that runs within 200 metres of the Shakenoak Roman Villa that is a nationally important Roman Villa complex that also includes a Saxon settlement and cemetery. The erosion of this ancient “hollow way” will be greatly increased by a further development on the proposed site. The surface water also exacerbates all the problems with the infiltration of the sewers and means that sewage spills are also swept down the hills by this flow of spring water too. Thames Water has also expressed concerns that surface water from the site should not be discharged to the public sewer network and to do so would be a material change to the proposal requiring an amendment to the application

The Manor Oak site is similar in geological form to the Shepherds Walk site and houses built would have similar issues to those that Shepherd’s Walk residents have experienced. Water cannot be compressed and when development is built on this land, the spring water just takes a different course. Due to the construction already sustained North Leigh has reached a “tipping point” where urban creep has blocked the flows of spring water to such an extent that the remaining channels available for the water are overflowing. Many gardens and fields around the village retain surface water for many months of each year and are worse in periods of heavy rainfall. A further development at the Manor Oak site would worsen the surface water draining across the New Yatt Road and down Green Lane. The Parish Council believes that there should be a hiatus in construction in North Leigh until such time as these issues can be properly investigated by a hydrologist.

WYCHWOOD SITE, QUICKEN COPSE AND PRECEDENT OF FISH HILL FARM APPEAL

The construction of 43 houses on the Manor Oak site would result in a huge loss of amenity in this area of the village. There will be a great loss of visual amenity as the attractive views from the footpath at the South of the site looking towards Wilcote and the AONB are destroyed for ever. The tranquillity will be eroded in the vicinity of the Wychwood Project which has a section of the Wychwood Way footpath going down Green Lane, North Leigh within 280 metres of the site (Attachment 4 – A to B) and is also taking ownership of Quicken Copse (Attachment 4 – E) in Green Lane even closer to the site. The impact on the Wychwood Project is something that was noted in a recent appeal decision (Attachment 5) to REFUSE dog kennels at Fish Hill Farm on Wilcote Road, North Leigh where the kennels were also 280 metres from another section of the Wychwood Way (Attachment 4 – C to D) on Church Road, North Leigh. The Inspector stated that “the effect of the proposed development on the character of the Wychwood Project Area with particular regard to its tranquillity” was the main issue for consideration of the appeal and therefore the main reason to REFUSE it.

In addition there is another important footpath, the Palladian Way, which at its closest is 175m from the proposed site. The Palladian Way runs from Buckingham to Bath.

DANGEROUS NEW YATT ROAD, INADEQUATE PATHWAYS, DANGEROUS PINCH POINT

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". The current footpath proposal would require pedestrians including school children heading from the site into the centre of North Leigh, to cross to the North side of the New Yatt Road and then cross back to the South side further East. It would not be a safe environment for children walking to the village school or other pedestrians from the site. The appellant has not attempted to address the solution suggested by the OCC Highways on delivering a safe footway connection to the village along the south side of New Yatt Road;

Additionally, the pinch point on the New Yatt Road to the East of the site is a very dangerous section of road, with poor visibility and an unclear one way system, with constant traffic near-misses.

CONCLUSION

Given all of the above serious concerns regarding the application, North Leigh Parish Council strongly recommends that the Inspector REFUSES this appeal. In the planning balance, the material considerations indicate that the severe harms of this development quite clearly outweigh its minimal benefits (as was deemed to be the case when the application was originally turned down with a prevailing 5 year land supply of 4.1 at WODC Lowlands in September 2023). There are far better and more sustainable sites available elsewhere in West Oxfordshire and being put forward in the WOLP 2041 which could be available, and much more quickly, to fulfil any shortfall in the 5 year land supply if it arises.

AMENDMENT TO S106 STATEMENT

To be clear, the Parish Council strongly opposes this proposal in every way. S106 funding would be extremely poor compensation for the loss of this tranquil rural site, but nevertheless the Parish Council are compelled to state S106 requirements. Please note the following:

Since the initial submission, the Parish Council has been informed that the cost of installing the MUGA equipment at the Rectory Rise site will be 100% funded by Rectory Homes and the maintenance costs will be met through the Parish Council precept. Therefore the Parish Council request that the £50,000 allocated for this purpose be repurposed "for general recreational uses in the village and/or for the purchase or rental of land in the centre of the village to be used for additional car parking if this can be procured".

The £15,000 of S106 provision for a pathway from the exit of the site into the village is inadequate and should be increased so that a continuous pavement on both the north and south sides of the New Yatt Road can be built so that residents do not have to cross this dangerous stretch of road twice to get into the village. The ditch running along the south side of the New Yatt Road should be made into a culvert and a pavement built over it. This should be embodied in the S278 Agreement to be entered into prior to any development.

The “pinch point” further East on New Yatt Road should be reviewed by OCC in light of the additional traffic that would be generated in the construction and occupation of this development. There have been a high number of “near misses” in this area and it should not be a serious accident that triggers a review of the junction.

The Parish Council requests that the appellant accepts its request to provide 25 allotments on the site. There is clear demand for allotments in the village and they are a sustainable asset. They are unlikely to generate more traffic/parking as by definition the users would be local. Local Plan policies do not prohibit allotments on smaller sites. Allotments would confer wellbeing and environmental benefits to the residents of this development and the wider village too, the Parish Council requests that the appellant to reconsider this issue.

ATTACHMENTS (The attachments can be found.....)

Attachment 1 – Grampian Clause imposed on Rectory Rise development, North Leigh

Attachment 2a & 2b – Windrush WASP Manor Oak Appeal comment

Attachment 3 – Environmental Agency comment on “Land North of Bayswater Brook near Barton”

Attachment 4 – Distances of site from the Wychwood Way, Wychwood Project

Attachment 5 – Appeal Decision Fish Hill Farm

Attachment 2

Requirements around Adequacy of Consultation for projects to be accepted for examination by PINS

1. The consultation has to provide sufficient detail about the BWSF proposal to enable members of the public to understand what is being put forward, and how that may or may not affect the villages, communities and towns closely involved in the use of land for a utility-scale power station.
2. Adequacy requires PVDP to present information and explain their proposal for BWSF in a way which can be understood by people in the communities around the proposed site.
3. It requires PVDP to present their information in a way which is accessible for anyone who attends the consultation events.
4. It requires that anyone who represents PVDP at those events is able to provide clear explanations in lay terms to any questions
5. It requires that the statement is made available for inspection by the public in a way that is reasonably convenient for people living in the vicinity of the land.
6. It requires that the applicant publish, in a newspaper circulating in the vicinity of the land, a notice stating where and when the statement can be inspected.

How did PVDP perform against requirements?

Requirements 1 and 2 Clarity, Ease of Understanding, Coherency

The overall impression - expressed by many people is the apparent deliberate attempt to make it as difficult as possible to find key information - especially that drawing attention to negative findings and therefore putting consultee residents at a disadvantage. The huge size (20 volumes, over 7000 pages and 100 or more maps and photographs) is bulked up by unnecessary repetition. Time and again conclusions of “not-significant” or “negligible” negative impacts are stated without justification. Insufficient time (8 days) was allowed between publishing the PEIR and the first in-person consultation requiring anyone wanting to study it all to read the equivalent of 3 thick paperback books per day for a week.

Ability to navigate through the PEIR (Preliminary Environmental Information Report)

The 20 volumes of ring files has NO master index so it is time consuming and almost impossible locate a specific piece of information.

Each section has a contents page but no index meaning time consuming scrolling through documents of up to 170 pages for each section. The appendices are even worse with appendix sizes of up to 656 pages. There should be a master index for the whole of the PEIR The maps showing field numbers are misleading because they use different scales for the 3 different sections of the site. Northern and Central use 1:25,000, Southern uses 1:7,500. Some maps relating to geophysical study of northern and southern sites appear to be missing.

Requirement 3 Accessibility and Venues

Consultation period

The consultation period took place either side of Christmas. Those consultations immediately prior to Christmas clashed with many other events.

Timings Many consultation events were held during midweek and during the day when working people could not attend

Northern site

Northern site not consulted. It is large enough to be considered an NSIP on its own but:

- No consultation event in the northern site (includes the villages of Tackley and Wootton)

- No webinar invitation to Tackley parish council

- No information Access Point within the northern site

Bladon consultation Very poor access at methodist hall, dangerous narrow pavement, no parking, very small venue, insufficient for showing the data, particularly maps

Begbroke village hall Very limited parking spaces, (12) most taken up by personnel from PVDP/RPS/Counter Context .

Requirement 4 Clear, consistent and truthful explanations

The Phase 2 Community Consultation leaflet should have been an honest and objective description of the project. However, it was economical with the truth and biased and full of unsubstantiated claims. Some properties did not receive a copy.

Many anecdotal reports about personnel at in-person events unable to answer questions . No Ecology experts present at Begbroke to answer questions, no Blenheim representative at Begbroke who (according to PVDP) will be managing the land.

Photomontages omit the most significant viewpoints and are misrepresentative of the whole site. Photo quality poor, giving a deliberate underplaying of the negative visual and landscape impact. Several people also reported arrogance among “RPS experts” who were clearly biased in favour of the proposal and dismissed questions and objections as irrelevant. A typical example of contradictory and inadequate information given: Traffic and Transport - Conflicting and misleading answers regarding the supply of infrastructure to the sites during construction.

One person was apparently warned by Mark Owen-Loyd, PVDP project leader, in a question about funding to “be careful what you say”.

Consistency of answers

Residents attending events reported contradictory answers
Eg Contradictory answers to the question “How many lorry journeys for the project per day will there be?” Answers at different venues were as follows :

1. 60 per day, peaking at 100
2. 15 per day per site (ie counting north, middle and south as separate sites)
3. 60 lorries making 12 journeys each per day (= 720 journeys per day)
4. HGVs delivering goods to central compounds, then taken on to other sites by tractor and trailer - no total or breakdown of movements provided.
5. Operating a just-in-time system using a central compound in Oxford, no numbers provided

There is, in fact, NO Traffic management plan in the PEIR

Requirement 5 Ability to Inspect the data

Information access points Woodstock Library, Eynsham Library, WODC shop, Witney etc

Woodstock Library Space and location reasonable to inspect the huge amount of data

Eynsham Library Tiny space was totally inadequate for the 20 volumes of the PEIR to be studied Librarian was apologetic, but was told when the data was delivered by PVDP that “you have a legal obligation to house the data”

WODC shop, Witney Closed on weekends and only open 9am to 5pm during the week, so very difficult for working people to examine the data.

Requirement 6 Advertising of consultation events

There was apparently 1 advance notice in a national daily newspaper and 1 in a local paper. This is a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project and consultation dates and venues should have been advertised widely and in sufficient time. The advance advertising was completely inadequate for such a huge project. No advance advertising for any of the 9 individual consultation events was carried out by PVDP.

At every consultation event venue, there were almost no signs to indicate what was going on. At Bladon and Begbroke, there was a single A4 sheet stuck to the entrance door. At Begbroke, this sign fell off after about an hour and was not replaced.

Attachment 3

North Leigh Neighbourhood Plan Committee Update for Parish Council Meeting of 11th April 2024

Meetings

- Since the last Parish Council met, the North Leigh Neighbourhood Plan (NLNP) Committee held a meeting on 21st March.
- The committee meeting agendas and minutes are being posted on the North Leigh Parish Council website.

Membership

Martin Bowsher, Paul Evans, Robert Gunn (resigned 22nd March), David Harris, Steve Legg (Secretary), Suzanne Millar, David Painter, Kevin Swann (Vice Chair), Sherard Veasey (Chair), Judith Wardle, Adrian Watts.

Consultancy Support for the Neighbourhood Plan

Community First Oxfordshire (CFO) of Worton Park, near Cassington are acting as our consultants to assist with the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan. CFO consultant Tom McCulloch designed and led the Public Meeting on 17th February.

Following the Public Meeting the committee has completed a draft of a Questionnaire to capture the views of the residents on a variety of topics and areas. The questionnaire is with CFO at present for checking and formatting for distribution. It is hoped to distribute the questionnaire by the end of April.

Financial Situation

We received a grant of £6,960 from Locality to support our work until the end of March 2024. Any funds not invoiced by that date would have to be returned to Locality. At our request, CFO therefore issued an invoice for this £6,120 on 13th March, which the Parish Council paid prior to the end of the month.

When adding other Neighbourhood Plan costs to the CFO invoice, the total was £249 over the amount of the Locality grant. The Parish Council decided to fund this from a contingency fund.

We will be entitled to apply for a further grant to cover the work from the period from 1st April 2024 to the 31st March 2025. It is expected that the majority of the grant will be spent on consultancy fees.