

**Response by the NORTH WITNEY ACTION GROUP (NWAG) to questions 11 & 12 of the WODC 2043 Local Plan Consultation document**

The North Witney SDA should be removed from the 2043 Local Plan Consultation for the following reasons:

1. **The West End Link Road (WEL2)** is enshrined in the 2031 Local Plan. It was ratified by the Government Inspector in 2018 who confirmed that this infrastructure should be **fully funded by the developers**.

If the 2031 Local Plan is the foundation of the 2043 narrative, then the unwillingness of the developer to fund infrastructure and maintain that WEL2 is not required, undermines the strategic importance of this site as an SDA and thus **invalidates** the reason to include it in any future Local Plan.

2. It should be noted that the **original 2009 premise** on why such a controversial site was even allowed to come forward for discussion was **predicated on a commitment**<sup>1</sup> by the North Witney Consortium to “***fund in full the West End Link...Affordable housing...a new road link between Hailey Road and Woodstock Road...provide new frequent bus services around the town....new public transport links to Long Hanborough railway station...A new primary school, community centre, doctors' surgery and improvements to Wood Green Secondary School***”

(1) ‘*New Housing Development for Witney – The North Witney Consortium’ Leaflet & Submission to WODC, 2009.*

3. The **NWSDA is not viable on audited costs**<sup>2</sup> of strategic infrastructure alone. Even reducing the allocation to 1,250 from the short lived bumped up 1,400; the SDA’s required major infrastructure, using 2024 Building Cost Infrastructure Service (BCIS) data, along with their inflation figures, is £91.3m, resulting in a **build cost levy per house of £73,000**. And that is before any town or parish CIL request.

(2) *WODC - Viability Assessment to inform the CIL Charging Schedule. May 2024 (NWAG update)*

4. Given the **highly critical comments**<sup>3</sup> by both statutory bodies, Thames Water and the Environment Agency, along with the **impasse of WEL** and the **unwillingness to pay** for infrastructure, there is no certainty that this **unviable site will ever contribute to WODC’s five year land supply** and thus, if it continues to be included in the overall numbers could well **undermine the robustness of the Local Plan**. Thames Water has informed the developers they can “*build the homes but not occupy them...*” because of both sewage disposal and potable water supply. The EA has to date thrown back all proposals for flood mitigation requesting greater infrastructure requirements.

(3) *NW SDA Planning application 24/00482/OUT, Statutory Consultee comments*

5. The **uncertainty of any commitment to infrastructure costs** so critical in WODC's approach to undergirding a new Local Plan, is further **thrown in to doubt** by the **exposure of the NW consortium's legal entity and fragmentation of the SDA**.

This was revealed by Rupert Warren KC, representing A2 Dominion, owners of **Parcel 3** in the SDA, at their Planning Appeal in January 2024 <sup>4</sup>. Mr Warren KC told the Appeal Inspector A2 Dominion **do not communicate** with those who control **Parcels 1 & 2**. Questioning Tim Burden, a Director of Turley, the land agents of **Parcels 1 & 2** during the Appeal, Mr Warren KC was told that there is **no Equalisation Agreement (legal entity) between the five separate developers of Parcels 1 & 2**. In his July 2024 determination the Inspector did not allow A2 Dominion's Appeal on the basis that, as an SDA, the **site must be considered by WODC together in one Masterplan**. Signs of fragmentation has been evident before. Previously, Taylor Wimpey, one of the five developers in the Consortium, has tried twice, in 2017 and again in 2019, to move forward **singularly as owners of Parcel 2**. Like A2 Dominion's single application this too was deferred.

*(4) WODC 23/00025/APPEAL*

CONCLUSION:

Because of these multi layered, fundamental, factual, and critical issues WODC cannot move forward with what is already the most complex, non-viable, damaging site in West Oxfordshire and undermine a robust Local Plan.

WODC cannot place any assurance that the uncertainty of these myriads of significant issues will be resolved.

This hugely controversial North Witney site began its troubled journey only because of a promise to "fund in full" a menu of dreams at a time when promises of infrastructure delivery were never held accountable.

North Witney Action Group (NWAG)

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