

Wellington Road planning application

Open Space Provision Statement

The proposed development of flats on the corner of Wellington Road and Station Road will provide 21 social rented homes. Five flats on the ground floor will provide supported accommodation for ASC clients and a further four flats will house care-leavers. The current cost to the Council of housing these client groups in privately-owned and run accommodation or facilities outside the borough, is significant. The remaining flats will be allocated to residents on Wokingham Borough Council's housing waiting list. This is a 100% affordable development and there will be no market sale or private rent flats.

To fund the scheme, the council borrows against the future rental income. However, the low rents charged for the flats in the development mean that the council can only borrow a limited sum. The amount that can be borrowed is not enough to fund the construction. To make up the shortfall the development requires funding from S106 developer contributions, Homes England grant funding and BLRF grant. Without these, the development is financially unviable. The BLRF grant has already been allocated and Homes England have a limit to the amount they will give. The shortfall will be funded with developer contributions, and the higher the cost of the project, the bigger the amount of developer contributions required.

Where the Local Planning Authority have secured S106 developer contributions in lieu of on-site affordable housing, the Council are legally required to spend those contributions on the provision of affordable housing. This development is creating the opportunity to spend the developer contributions secured by the Local Planning Authority, and these are a significant contributor to the overall budget.

It is important to note that even with all the funding sources in place, the development will not make a profit. It is entirely for public benefit. Any S106 contributions associated with the planning permission for this project are increasing the cost of the project, which in turn requires additional developer contributions.

As applicant, we note the consultation response from the Council's Green Infrastructure Team requesting financial contributions towards various open spaces.

In response, it should be noted that Cantley Park, with football and hockey pitches, 3G pitches, tennis courts, changing rooms and toilets, is only 1 mile away (24-minute walk). In addition, within a five to ten-minute walk of the proposed development, residents would also be able to visit several other parks and open spaces including Latimer Road Recreation Ground, Elms Field, Shute End, Banbury Close, and Woosehill Meadows – see appendix. In this instance therefore the site is already well served by existing parks, green spaces, outdoor sports facilities and play areas in the vicinity. It is considered that these existing spaces could reasonably accommodate the recreational needs of future residents without significant impact.

The statutory tests for planning obligations are set out in Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010. A planning obligation must be:

1. Necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms
2. Directly related to the development
3. Fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development

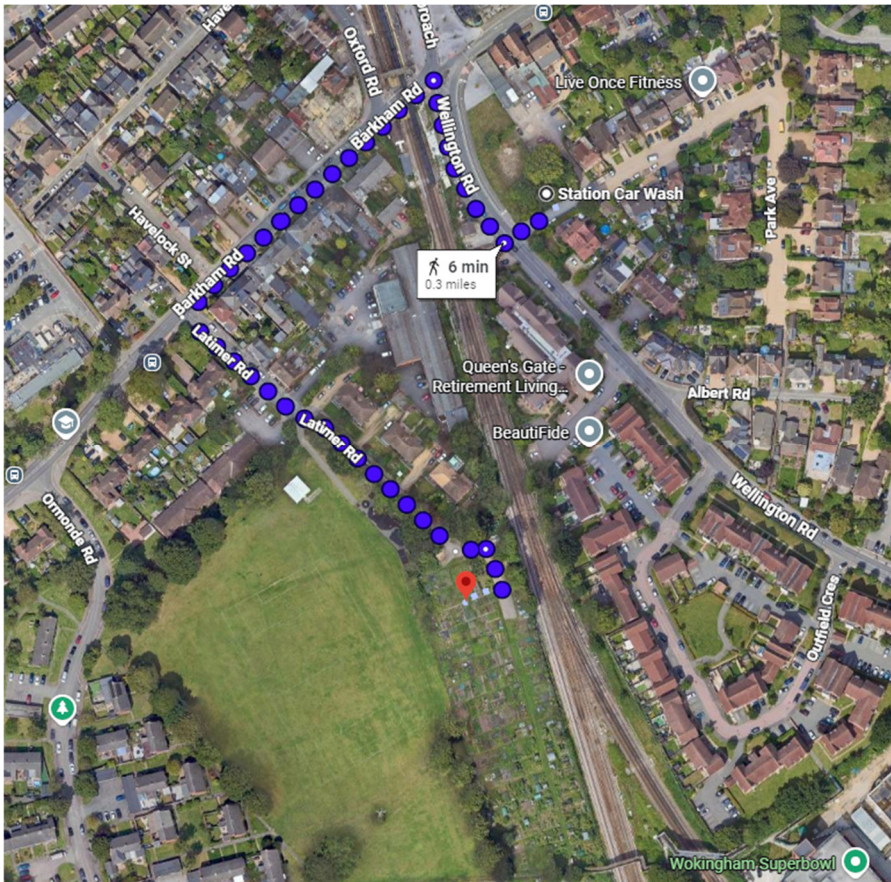
The Wellington Road scheme will deliver significant social and housing benefits in a highly sustainable town centre location. In this instance the development is being delivered entirely for public benefit and is reliant upon a combination of borrowing, grant funding and affordable housing developer contributions in order to proceed.

In considering the scale and nature of planning obligations that can reasonably be supported by the development, regard should be had to both the significant planning benefits arising from the scheme and the funding constraints under which it is being delivered. Given the extensive range of parks, open spaces, play facilities and outdoor sports provision already available within easy walking distance of the site, it is considered that the recreational needs of future residents can be appropriately accommodated through the existing network of provision.

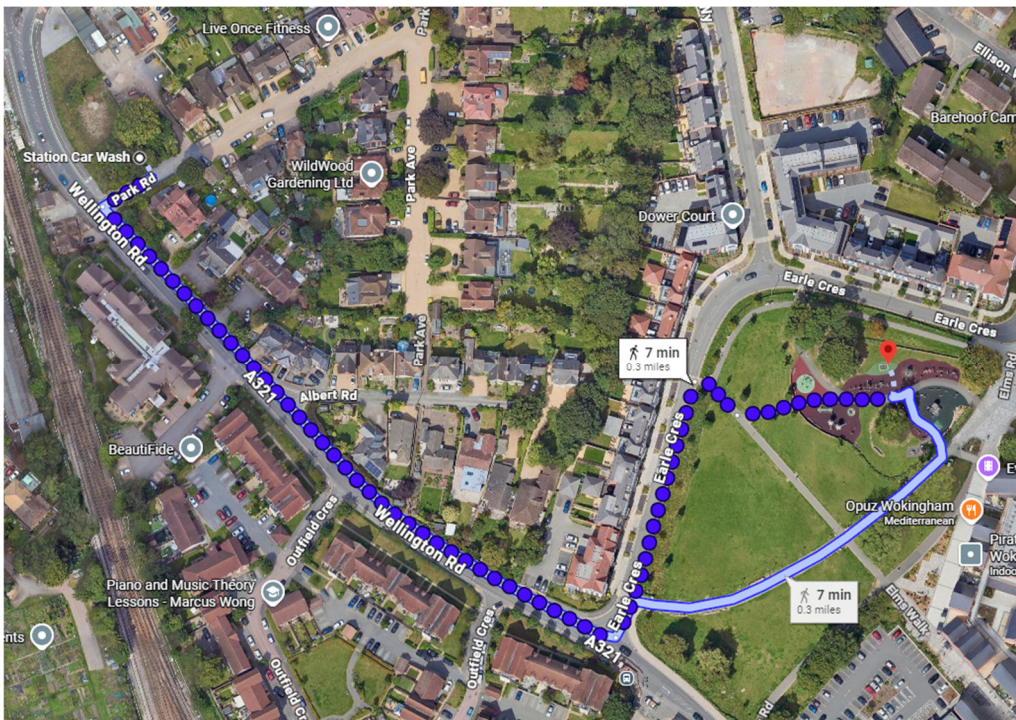
In these particular circumstances, and having regard to the tests set out in Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010, it is considered reasonable and proportionate to rely upon the existing open space offer serving the town centre, rather than to seek additional financial contributions towards off-site open space provision.

Appendix

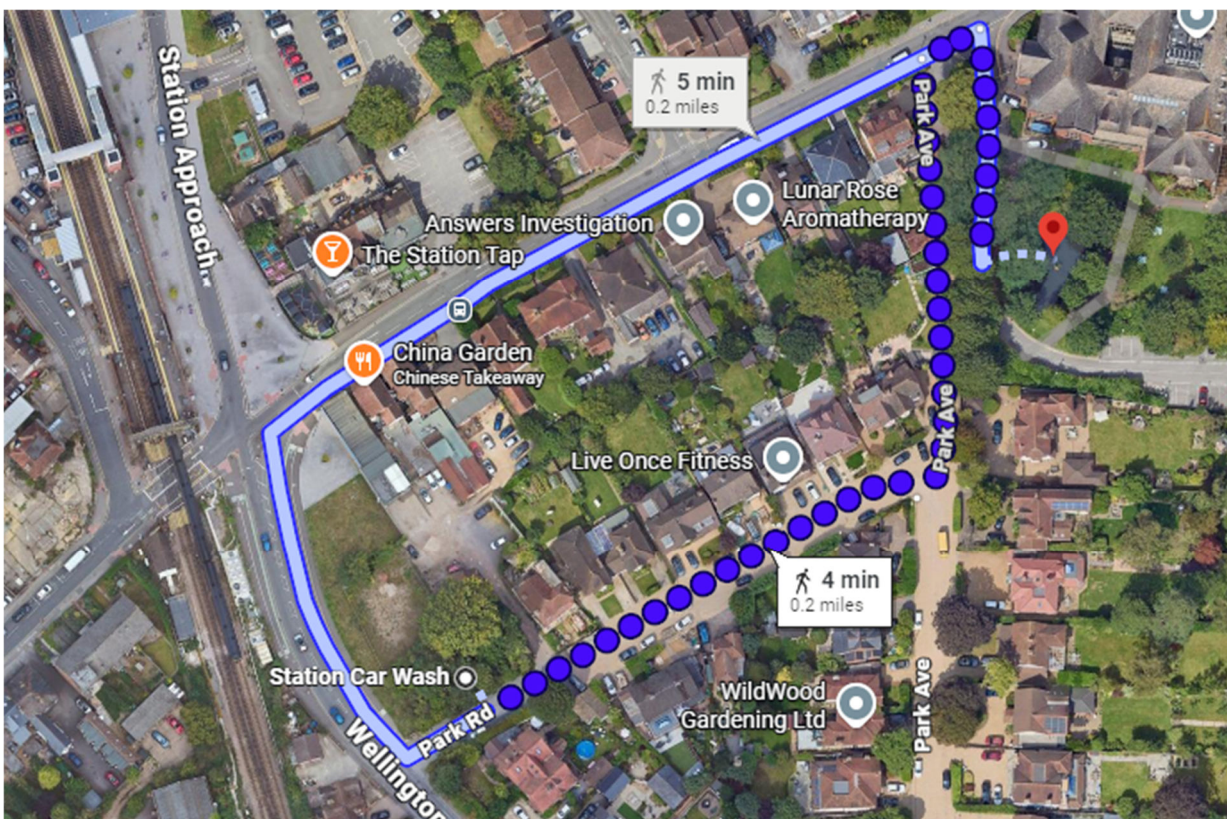
Latimer Road Recreation Ground - Includes a large sports field and children's play area



Elms Field – Includes a large, grassed area for leisure and an extensive children's play area.



Shute End – pocket garden with pond and benches



Banbury Close – green open space for informal outdoor leisure activities



Woosehill Meadows – slightly further to walk to this large natural open space around the Emm Brook, for informal outdoor leisure activities.

