

Meeting of Flitwick Town Council Planning Improvement Working Group with Optimis Consulting on 22nd February 2023

Concerning development potential for land between Trafalgar Drive and the planned Flitwick Country Park

The Planning Improvement Working Group has been established by Flitwick Town Council to seek to improve outcomes from the planning system for the town. Occasionally, as part of this work, we will be meeting with promoters of potential development sites to discuss them, raise concerns, and potentially identify areas for improvement. Whenever we do so, we will publish summary notes from those meetings. These are not intended as full minutes, but to summarise the discussions that took place. All participants take part in the meetings in the knowledge that what is said may be shared publicly. Also, no decisions taken at this meeting are binding on any party.

This document contains some links, which were correct at the time of writing (23/2/23)

Present:

Planning Improvement Working Group	Developer or Agent	Other Town Council
Nick Dugard (ND) Patricia Earles (Councillor) (PE) James Gleave (Councillor and Chair) (JG) Tamara Goodyear (TG) Martin Sheehan (MS) Robert Wilsmore (RW)	Leila Mann (Optimis Consulting) (LM) Justin Wickersham (Optimis Consulting) (JW)	Stacie Lockey (Acting Town Clerk) (SL)

Notes:

JG welcomed everyone to the meeting, and introductions were made by all.

JG explained the role of the Planning Improvement Working Group in the Town Council. The discussion then moved onto the site in question.

LM stated that they were willing to collaborate on developing the site in a way that is beneficial, particularly in relation to the Flitwick Country Park and whether the site can be used partly to extend the Country Park. They want to understand what is important and how the Country Park might be delivered.

SL stated that the plans for the Country Park had changed from the previous planning application. They are in the public domain, and so we are happy to share them.

JG stated that the Town Council's involvement in this development site is on two related matters. The first is the planning merits of the site and seeing if the site overall benefits the community. On the issue of the Country Park, there may be a discussion to be had but that would need to be with the wider Town Council.

JW said that there are numerous ways by which open spaces on the site could be managed or delivered – for example through management companies or working with local town and parish councils.

RW asked about the details of the planned development on the site. How many houses would be put on the site?

JW said that the precise number of houses is yet to be determined as technical assessments have yet to be done. But early thoughts are looking at a mixture of medium to low density residential development areas consistent to planning policy. There would also be an access through to the country park to create integration with the existing residential areas.

Concerns were raised by all about the impacts of development on local services. This included the impact on local schools, doctors surgeries, and the loss of the Post Office and the bank. JW said that the role of any developer is to provide a conduit for delivering such improvements, which are ultimately up to agencies responsible for those services. Though developers can work with communities to identify opportunities for delivering community facilities on sites and these are provided through S106 or CIL.

There was then a general discussion around the viability of public services. It was noted that some 'public' services are commercial organisations, such as banks, post offices or pubs.

There was also a general discussion around public consultation. PE and RW said that it was likely that there would be significant local objections, as there were to [the previous planning application](#) for the site. JW said that they are willing to work with the local community and to listen and understand those concerns.

MS asked if this development could be used as a way of understanding what people of the town want (e.g. facilities). JW said that there is a possibility to do this.

A question was asked on the timescales of this development. This is currently unknown as the priority has been to engage with the Town Council.

JG then closed the meeting, saying it was a useful discussion, and hopefully the first of many.