



Otley BID statement on East of Otley development proposals

Otley Business Improvement District is elected on a 5 yearly cycle by the businesses located within a delineated boundary of central Otley and acts to conserve and improve the appearance and business climate of the central business district of Otley.

The East of Otley scheme, as identified in the Leeds Unitary Development Plan Review (2006), pretty much all falls within the delineated boundary of the Otley BID area so would make the following observations:-

- The planning application and subsequent development should accord with the Otley Neighbourhood Plan written by the town and adopted by Leeds City Council in May 2020
- The scheme delivers 4 main considerations; 550 new dwellings, a relief road, 5 hectares of employment land and a school.
- Potentially 1,000-2,000 new residents should therefore deliver daily and weekend footfall to the town centre, albeit with accompanying traffic and parking challenges from the attendant vehicles of the new dwellings, no doubt between 500-1,000. Pressure already exists on Otley's historic town centre road layout and current parking provision
- However, the new road would also bypass east/west through traffic round the town centre, which wouldn't intend stopping to use our businesses and amenities, so is probably on balance beneficial. (n.b. it is unlikely that the new road would relieve the currently heavy north/south traffic, including the steady stream of problematic aggregate waggons)
- Apart from ASDA most town centre services, shops and amenities are potentially too distant to benefit from significant numbers walking in from the new employment and housing. Public transport needs to recognise this and make provision
- A range of sizes and values for the new dwellings is needed to make the demographic of the new housing dynamic and assist the town centre, compared to the risk of the area simply becoming a dormitory for residents simply not interested in the town centre. In short, the new development needs to be integrated into the town and its functions rather than a satellite of it and a drain on its infrastructure
- The 5 ha designated for employment is probably in the fairest location, where it won't impact existing residents too much and also adjoins an existing business use in Stephen H. Smiths garden centre and its concession businesses

- **Otley BID's most significant concern is that the housing scheme could be built out immediately with the employment land left undeveloped, potentially returned to years later for more housing infill. The housing and employment schemes should be submitted for planning and built out contemporaneously**

(One can identify an office site on a recent large scale development site in Otley that, although featuring as an appealing element of the planning application and consent, was never built out and is seemingly no longer offered by the developer or their agent)

- The 5 ha designated is modest. A clear demand for new employment accommodation has been identified; advice received from local commercial property experts is that 5 ha would be a minimum requirement. The imbalance of new housing built in and around Otley over the last 10 years compared to the large number of employment positions lost for the want of modern commercial accommodation is both striking and alarming (a recent report on this is available on request)
- The developers planning application could designate the adjacent 'self-build opportunity' sites as supplementary or alternative employment uses. If the self build opportunities are not taken up in due course, especially the one adjacent to the 5 ha employment zone, the self-build site(s) could be built out as shops or offices instead
- We believe the new primary school is intended to serve the new housing in addition to the catchment of the existing school on the Cambridge estate that it will replace. It would be nice to think it would be made easily and safely walkable for pedestrian access, rather than dragging the inevitable school run traffic through existing dense housing and parked up streets
- **The developers are encouraged to consider and include in tenders Otley's local suppliers, tradesmen and contractors, legal and estate agency services etc**

On balance, and as its progress now seems inevitable, Otley BID is cautiously supportive of the development. Given the increasing challenges to the High Street, especially post Covid, the need to support the town centre and its businesses with new customers is apparent.

Equally, Otley BID is keenly aware of the need to respect local residents' sensitivities given Otley's rural setting and the effects of the significant increase on the town's currently manageable scale, multiple local leisure and recreation uses, propensity for flooding and predominant green credentials.

Yours sincerely,

Tom Hatley
Chair - Otley Business Improvement District

12th February 2021