



WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL **OPEN SPACES STRATEGY**

April 2021





Foreword by Councillor Luci Ashbourne Leader, Witney Town Council 2021 / 2022

FOREWORD

Our open spaces and parks are important places to be protected, cherished and enhanced. They take great effort - and money - to maintain, but they give back so much to our community.

Witney is lucky to have some wonderful open spaces - from the beauty of the Lake and Country Park to the tranquillity of its cemeteries, and from our well-used sports grounds and allotments to the vibrancy of The Leys, which has been at the heart of the town for generations.

This strategic document, developed alongside stakeholders and the wider community, sets out this Council's ambitions to manage our open spaces, working closely with the people of Witney.

The document highlights the strengths and weaknesses of our current offer and looks at opportunities for the future - particularly to encourage better health, ensure greater accessibility, and increase Witney's biodiversity and carbon reduction.

The plan is also mindful of the financial challenges we will face in delivering our aspirations and meeting the needs of the community and will give us a direction of travel for future investment decisions.

Crucial to our long-term efforts will be the involvement of the local community and its various interest groups. Whilst there is already a good degree of public engagement in our services, there is so much more that could be achieved with more interaction, and by building close working relationships between the Council and those that it represents.

Working together, we can accomplish so much more, and I'm excited to begin this journey to creating better open spaces, that the whole of Witney can enjoy and be proud of.

"There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about."

Margaret J Wheatley

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Witney Town Council is delighted to have put together this Open Spaces Strategy for the town of Witney, we hope you will find it both interesting and inspiring as well as intuitive in being able to identify the Council's aspirations moving forwards.

The document covers a wide range of information and highlights the outcomes from a great deal of feedback from all manner of local clubs, associations, societies, users, professional advisors and, of course, the general public.

Based upon what we have been told, it is our intention to address the points made and work together to ensure that Witney is set up as best as it possibly can be to meet the challenges ahead.

In broad terms this document highlights:

- a) The large amount of feedback was uncomfortable to read at times but that is exactly why we commissioned the project initially – to get honest, constructive feedback from those on the ground who are the users of the Council's services and, by inference, our customers.
- b) Whilst some things are working quite well, there are clearly a number of areas where they are not, most notably in the provision of sporting facilities and options.
- c) Our challenge is to translate all this information and identified need into actions. The action plan at the end of the strategy is split into five primary themes – each with a number of actions required underneath.
- d) We will assess each of these and seek out ways to address them. This will be a challenge, we are very aware of that, but we offer up a heartfelt promise to do all we can to ensure that over the next few years we create a Witney where facilities and standards are as high as is practicably possible.
- e) There appears to be great confusion around why there are three local authorities all doing grounds maintenance work within the town – why is this the case, who does what, why isn't it all done by one agency, who do I contact and so on. It is our aim to do all we can to improve this situation for everybody.
- f) It is clear that some of the actions highlighted within this strategy may come at a considerable cost. We will seek to investigate all avenues available however to mitigate the impact on the local taxpayer. However, it would be naïve and somewhat disingenuous to say that everything can be done without a possible increase in the Council's income streams.

The journey we are about to commence will not necessarily be easy or straightforward, but it will, without doubt, be very worthwhile.

Should you have any queries about this strategy then please do contact the Town Council:

By Telephone – **01993 704379**

By Email – **Info@witney-tc.gov.uk**

By Visit – **Town Hall, Market Square, Witney, OX28 6AG**

Or view more information via our website at – **www.witney-tc.gov.uk**

CONTENTS

Foreword	2
Executive Summary	3
Contents Table	4
1 Introduction	5
2 So Why Produce an Open Spaces Strategy?	5
3 Scope of the Strategy	6
4 Who Has Been Involved?	6
5 Open Space Availability	7
6 The Strategy Lifecycle	8
7 Policy Context	9
8 How We Will Measure Success	10
9 Developing a Vision for the Open Spaces	11
10 Delivering the Vision	12
11 Partner Organisations	15
12 Funding Opportunities	15
Parks & Open Spaces Strategy – Action Plan	16
APPENDIX A: WTC Land Area, Open Space & Land Ownership	21

1. INTRODUCTION

Great parks, open spaces and streets make for a better quality of life. A network of well-designed and cared-for open spaces adds to the character of places where people want to live, work and visit. Open spaces also provide the vital green infrastructure that enables us to deal with all sorts of issues or mitigate and adapt to climate change while providing wildlife habitats, sporting facilities or beautiful recreational areas.

Open space is now a firm part of the statutory and community planning process. Comprehensive planning policies for open space are fundamental to social inclusion, community cohesion, health and well-being.

Open spaces in Witney are widespread and diverse and the majority of them are open and accessible to all members of society.

This document sets out the opportunities as well as the challenges facing parks and open spaces in Witney. It builds on the priorities and many helpful ideas and suggestions identified by all those who fully engaged and contributed to the consultation.

2. SO WHY PRODUCE AN OPEN SPACES STRATEGY?

- 2.1. The benefit of preparing a strategy is broadly the protection and creation of a network of high quality open spaces and facilities that can, amongst other things:
 - 2.1.1. Reinforce local identity and civic pride.
 - 2.1.2. Enhance the physical character of an area, shaping existing and future development.
 - 2.1.3. Improve physical and social inclusion, including accessibility.
 - 2.1.4. Provide for children and young people's play and recreation.
 - 2.1.5. Boost the economic potential of tourism, leisure and cultural activities.
 - 2.1.6. Provide cultural, social, recreational, sporting and community facilities.
 - 2.1.7. Contribute to the creation of healthy places, including quiet areas.
 - 2.1.8. Provide popular outdoor educational facilities.
 - 2.1.9. Promote opportunities for local food production.
 - 2.1.10. Help mitigate and adapt to climate change.
 - 2.1.11. Improve opportunities to enjoy contact with the natural world.
 - 2.1.12. Boost social cohesion and family life.
- 2.2. The strategy's action plan should chime with the vision set out, promoting community involvement, greater use of public open space, and more effective partnership working.
- 2.3. The strategy sets out a detailed action plan outlining actions that are required to achieve shared objectives.
- 2.4. It is also an essential management tool and the basis for producing promotional materials. Without a clear strategy, it is difficult to prioritise, spend and plan resources and, crucially, to show how much open space is valued and make the case to funders for increased resources.
- 2.5. Outline the challenges that we face if we are to realise the vision.
- 2.6. The strategy should be seen as the start point of a process which attempts to address the challenges for Witney Town Council parks and open spaces in the coming years. It is crucial that both the staff and the elected Councillors understand the strategy and buy into its ambitions.

- 2.7. The document should be viewed as a catalyst for change and will require several years, and many updates and re-assessments to reach all the outcomes aspired to.
- 2.8. The strategy should not be seen simply as a Witney Town Council strategy - it's a strategy open to everyone who loves Witney and the open spaces it currently, and aspires, to provide.
- 2.9. Open space usage is increasing, and communities are becoming more and more involved in their day to day maintenance and their evolution. The Covid-19 pandemic emphasised beyond doubt, if any were needed, that people turn to their local open spaces in times of need and that open spaces of all types play such an important role in their lives. If ever there was a reason to produce a strategy, identify needs and then seek to commence along a road of continuous improvement, then the unfortunate events of 2020 and 2021 have emphasised it.

3. SCOPE OF THE STRATEGY

- 3.1. Open space in all its various guises is multi-functional so the strategy should reflect a widely shared vision. It is not just focused on the open spaces but should take in the wider spectrum of facilities such as allotments, sports facilities, cemeteries and so on. Many stakeholders have been consulted and involved.
- 3.2. The basic aim is to understand supply and demand for open spaces, to identify deficiencies, to secure new provision, and to improve quality through better management. The spatial elements of the open space strategy will also feed into the local development framework (LDF) and can be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.
- 3.3. The strategy will try to ensure that all types of open spaces (except private gardens!) are considered, irrespective of who within the public sector is the owner or has responsibility for it.
- 3.4. The strategy should also link to other key, connected corporate documents adopted by the Council such as the communications strategy, community engagement strategy and any green strategies for instance.
- 3.5. At the end of the document is an action plan which sets out when outcomes will be developed, along with parameters around timelines and who will take ownership.

4. WHO HAS BEEN INVOLVED?

- 4.1. It is a critical driver of the strategy that it is the result of a collaboration of as many partner organisations, local clubs and associations, other agencies and other tiers of local government as is possible.
- 4.2. Above all, the community's needs and aspirations must be at the heart of any open space strategy and it is important to ensure that they are engaged to identify and deliver local priorities.
- 4.3. In respect of this strategy, the consultee list has included:
 - 4.3.1. General Public
 - 4.3.2. All Witney Town Council Councillors
 - 4.3.3. Key Witney Town Council staff
 - 4.3.4. Witney allotments association
 - 4.3.5. Tennis clubs
 - 4.3.6. Football clubs
 - 4.3.7. Football association
 - 4.3.8. Cricket clubs

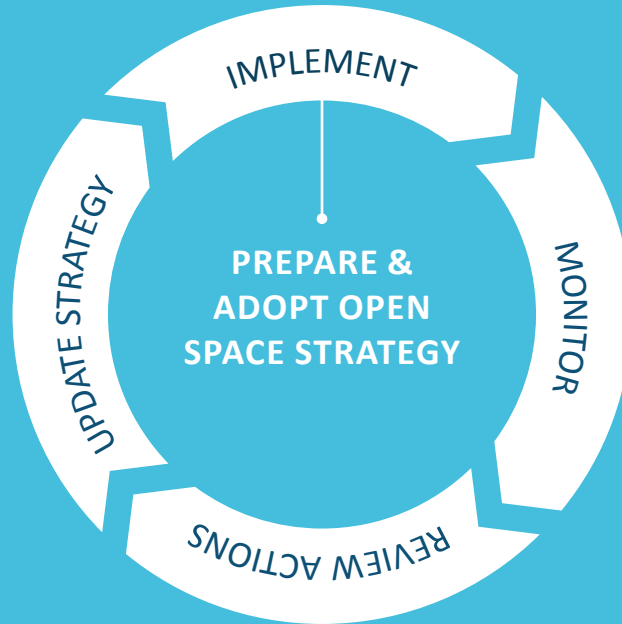
- 4.3.9. Witney TC MP
 - 4.3.10. Friends of cemetery sites
 - 4.3.11. Witney Country Park and Lake area
 - 4.3.12. Angling club
 - 4.3.13. Bowls clubs
 - 4.3.14. Police service
 - 4.3.15. Existing grounds contractor
 - 4.3.16. Relevant West Oxfordshire District Council staff and key Councillors
 - 4.3.17. Tree Officer
 - 4.3.18. Relevant Oxfordshire County Council staff and key Councillors
 - 4.3.19. In Bloom group
 - 4.3.20. Ancillary volunteer groups
 - 4.3.21. West Witney Social Club
- 4.4. There were 346 responses to the general public questionnaire which, it is suggested, is a sufficient response to ensure that the outcomes from the various questions are a true reflection of views.
- 4.5. All the Clubs, Associations and third parties who were sent a questionnaire responded. In almost all cases the responses were comprehensive, honest and constructive in their manner.

5. OPEN SPACE AVAILABILITY

- 5.1. Appendix A at the end of this document highlights the various publicly available open spaces, sports and green spaces available in Witney and who maintains them.
- 5.2. Using nationally utilised policies in regard to open space provision (see heading 6 below), the local Planning Authority will utilise this data in determining open space deficiencies within the area and will then seek to remedy this through the adopted Local Plan process when negotiating and discussing development with housing providers locally.
- 5.3. Witney Town Council will ensure that it takes an active role in all discussions and negotiations with housing providers seeking to develop within, or on the periphery of the Town, alongside the Planning Authority to ensure that Witney achieves the most beneficial outcomes possible for the residents of Witney.
- 5.4. Appendix A also highlights a quirk of local government that, in this case, there are three local authorities each looking after open space within the Witney area, sometimes side by side. Witney Town Council will seek to do all it can to resolve this confusion to ensure residents are both best served and clear on which agency is responsible.

6. THE STRATEGY LIFECYCLE

- 6.1. All strategy documents are living entities, changing as each month passes by. It is imperative therefore that this strategy document is reviewed and updated regularly by the Council – twice per annum is suggested.
- 6.2. As a guide the lifecycle is as follows:



7. POLICY CONTEXT

- 7.1. The overall national policy context is set out in the Sustainable Communities Act 2007 (amended in 2010) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2007/23/contents>) which, in its most basic form, promotes the sustainability of local communities through a broad agenda for working at the local level. It states that “Local people are the experts on their own problems and the solutions to them. They should, therefore, be driving the help that central government gives”. The Act is designed to be a bottom-up process, stated as “This process is ‘bottom-up’ - because what people want at community level drives what government does”.
- 7.2. Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/section/40>) places a duty on all public authorities to conserve biodiversity. An open space strategy that incorporates biodiversity as a key, overarching theme will enable the local authority to demonstrate that it is complying with the act. In the context of this strategy please see point 9.6 below.
- 7.3. Whilst Witney Town Council is not a planning authority, the impacts of development are obviously most keenly felt in Witney by the residents and, by extension, the Town Council. The primary legislation is the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Government updated this most recently in February 2019 (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework>). This outlines the national approach to delivering sustainable development in any given area. Insofar as it relates to open spaces, parts 8 and 15 of the Framework can be summarised as follows (this is the successor to Planning Policy Guidance 17 – often known as PPG 17). As a broad outline, local authorities are urged to:
 - 7.3.1. Avoid any erosion of recreational function and maintain and enhance the character of open spaces.
 - 7.3.2. Ensure that open spaces do not suffer from encroachment (from traffic flows, etc.).
 - 7.3.3. Protect and enhance rights of way.
 - 7.3.4. Consider the impacts of development on biodiversity and nature conservation.
 - 7.3.5. Promote accessibility to open space and the countryside.
 - 7.3.6. Carefully consider safety and security in open spaces.
 - 7.3.7. Improve their quality.
 - 7.3.8. Meet regeneration needs through the provision of open space.
 - 7.3.9. Consider using surplus land for open space purposes.
 - 7.3.10. Consider the needs of visitors and tourists through open space provision.
- 7.4. The National Playing Field Association, which used a 6 Acre Standard guide for many years as an indicator to local authorities as to open space requirements, has now been superseded by the Fields in Trust organisation (FIT) (<http://www.fieldsintrust.org>). Their revised open space standards are now used by most local authorities when assessing open space needs. FIT quality guidelines for open space includes:
 - 7.4.1. Quality appropriate to the intended performance, designed to appropriate standards.
 - 7.4.2. Located where they are of most value to the community to be served.
 - 7.4.3. Sufficiently diverse recreational use for the whole community.
 - 7.4.4. Appropriately landscaped.
 - 7.4.5. Maintained safely and to the highest possible condition with available finance.
 - 7.4.6. Positively managed taking account of the need for repair and replacement over time.
 - 7.4.7. Provision of appropriate ancillary facilities and equipment.

- 7.4.8. Provision of footpaths.
- 7.4.9. Designed so as to be free of the fear of harm or crime.
- 7.4.10. Local authorities can set their own quality benchmark standards for playing pitches, considering the level of play, topography and necessary safety margins etc
- 7.4.11. Local authorities can set their own quality benchmark standards for play areas using the Children’s Play Council’s Quality Assessment Tool.

For more information, please go to:

<http://www.fieldsintrust.org/Upload/file/guidance/Guidance-for-Outdoor-Sport-and-Play-England.pdf>.

- 7.5. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/community-infrastructure-levy>), most recently updated in 2019, is a method of collecting funds from development to pay for necessary delivery and maintenance of infrastructure. Local authorities have the freedom to set their own priorities for what the money should be spent on. A portion of the CIL funds (up to 25%) will be payable to local communities with Neighbourhood Plans in place, for the purpose of localised spending on priority projects. CIL funds are capable of being used to fund local sport and recreation facilities. It is noted that two strategic development sites within Witney are believed to be zero rated for CIL but will be eligible for s106 arrangements.
- 7.6. In April 2017 the Government introduced the National Cycling and Walking Strategy (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cycling-and-walking-investment-strategy>) which outlines the Government’s ambition ‘to make cycling and walking the natural choice for shorter journeys, or as part of longer journeys by 2040.’ This strategy aims to improve safety for cyclists and walkers and increase levels of physical activity, and complements Government’s long running ‘Change 4 Life’ programme.
- 7.7. Current national levels of physical activity in the UK are low, recent studies suggest that only 40% of men and 28% of women achieve the minimum recommended 2.5 hours of moderate physical activity per week. Physical activity has been demonstrated to improve both physical and mental health and reduces the likelihood of serious diseases including heart disease and cancers. It is suggested that by improving the quality and provision of open spaces in an area, WTC can make a positive impact on the overall health and physical activity of its residents.
- 7.8. The strategy presents opportunities to improve levels of physical activity within Witney and to seek to address disparities in open space provision and satisfaction. The strategy enables this by offering opportunities to improve the types, quality and design of both new and existing open spaces to ensure they meet the needs of the residents and users.
- 7.9. The Localism Act (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/localism-act-2011-overview>) paved the way for planning powers to be passed down to local communities through the production of Neighbourhood Plans. Neighbourhood Plans are prepared by community groups, guided by Local Planning Authorities, and plan for a range of land uses, including outdoor sports and recreation uses.

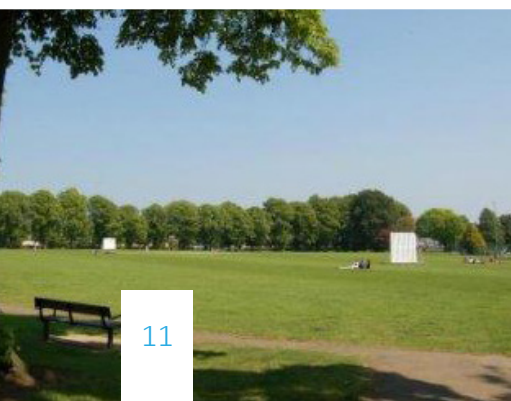
8. HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS

- 8.1. Use an annual survey to monitor residents’ satisfaction with open spaces.
- 8.2. Annual monitoring of progress of this strategy against the action plan.
- 8.3. Increased use of open spaces by all demographics.
- 8.4. Improved satisfaction with open space provision in Witney.
- 8.5. Increasingly varied and biodiverse open spaces.
- 8.6. Improvements in the quality and variety of Witney Town Council owned open spaces.

9. DEVELOPING A VISION FOR THE OPEN SPACES

- 9.1. Open spaces are valuable assets that improve public health, wellbeing and quality of life, and regeneration benefits to communities. Open space is land accessible to the public, with or without payment, that has a primary purpose for recreation and/or leisure.
- 9.2. Open space in Witney is owned and managed by several different organisations but primarily it is Witney Town Council, West Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council. In addition are bodies such as schools, community groups and the private sector. These days, new open spaces are mostly delivered alongside new development.
- 9.3. Witney Town Council’s aim for open spaces in the Witney Town Council area is “to deliver high quality public open spaces that meet local needs and aspirations.”
- 9.4. A development panel of Councillors was convened to oversee the production of the strategy and action plan. The development panel undertook a programme of consultations, via an appointed consultant, to inform the preparation of the strategy and action plan. The programme involved consultation with a wide range of consultees – please see point 4.3 above.
- 9.5. In drawing together the findings of the programme of consultation, five key themes emerged which were considered to be important for the open space strategy to address:
 - 9.5.1. Modernising and upgrading our parks and open spaces.
 - 9.5.2. Improving and investing in our sporting provision.
 - 9.5.3. Improving and investing in our leisure provision.
 - 9.5.4. Improving and investing in our infra-structure.
 - 9.5.5. Working in the most effective and efficient manner.
- 9.6. A further key theme, that of “Managing, enhancing and improving our green credentials” is overarching and is encompassed into each of the other five key themes. It is not referred to explicitly as such, but all aspects of the green agenda, including bio-diversity opportunities, should automatically be enshrined into the thinking and options considered of each and every decision taken.
- 9.7. We have developed the vision to encompass these five key themes and deliver the greatest environmental benefit. This vision will guide the direction of the open space strategy and development plan:

“Our parks, open spaces and public realm will be high quality, well used and provide a modern, sustainable and diverse resource which will improve the health and enrich the lives of the communities at the heart of them; be of significant ecological value; and help to mitigate the effects of climate change”



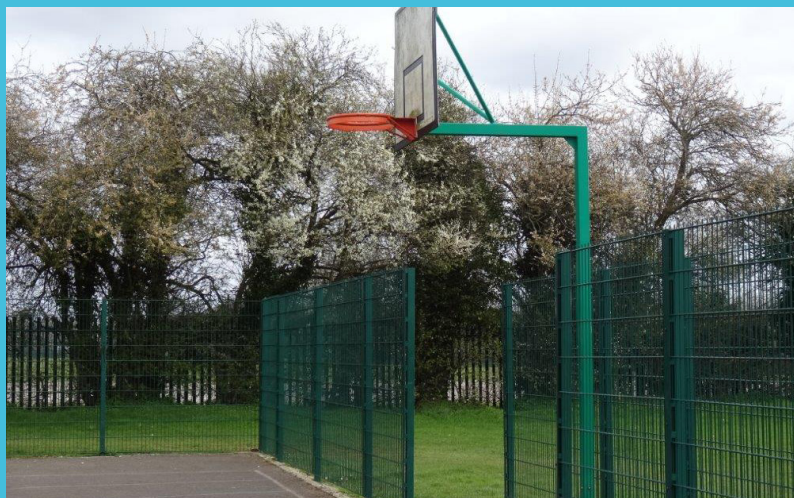
10. DELIVERING THE VISION

10.1. Summary

To deliver the vision of the Open Space Strategy the following proposals are made under each of the five key themes:

10.1.1. Modernising and Upgrading our Parks and Open Spaces:

- 10.1.1.1. We will invest in our parks and open spaces to ensure they are managed and maintained to as high a standard as is possible.
- 10.1.1.2. We will prioritise investment and revenue budgets to the parks and open spaces which serve a more strategic function within the Council area.
- 10.1.1.3. We will make investment decisions which encourage people to improve their health by increasing their use of parks and open spaces.
- 10.1.1.4. We will seek to ensure that all key parks and open spaces have a short, medium and long term masterplan to drive improvement.
- 10.1.1.5. We will ensure that all decisions taken in respect of the management of the parks and open spaces always considers at the forefront the biodiversity impacts of those decisions.
- 10.1.1.6. We will ensure that maximising accessibility to all our parks and open spaces for all is key to investment and development decisions.
- 10.1.1.7. We will seek to ensure that public safety is maximised when using parks and open spaces.

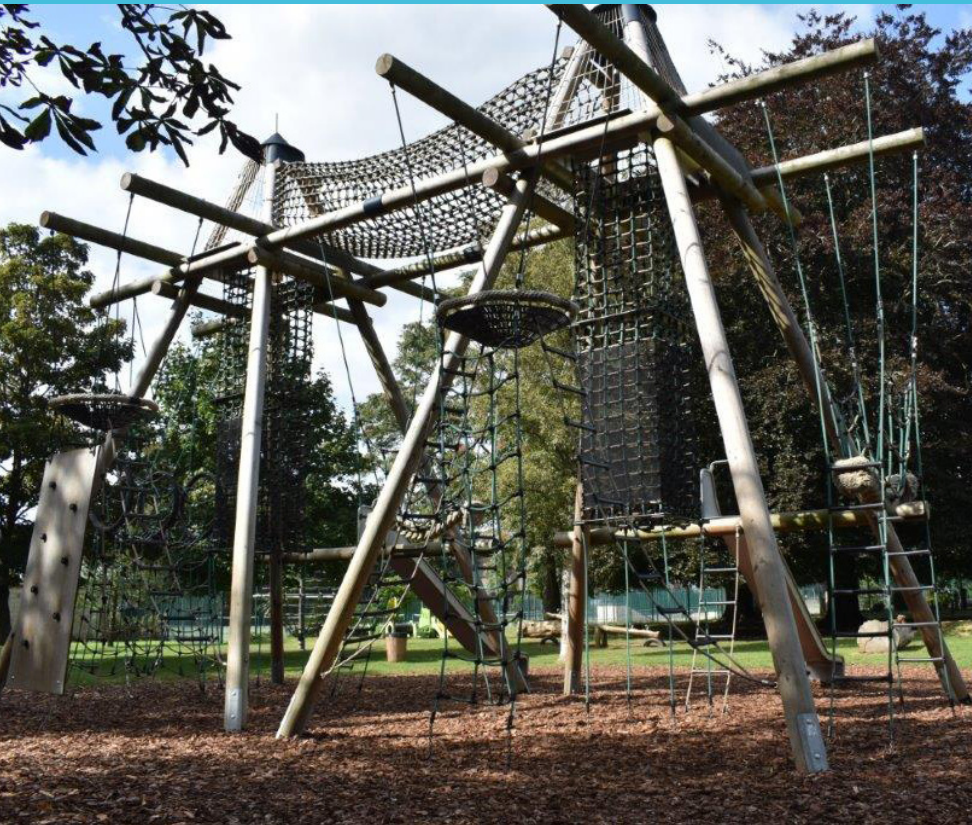


10.1.2. Improving and Investing in our Sporting Provision:

- 10.1.2.1. We will invest in our sporting provision across the Town to maximise participation opportunities.
- 10.1.2.2. We will ensure that the quality of our sporting provision is maximised to the best of our abilities.
- 10.1.2.3. We will seek to work in partnership with local sporting clubs, associations and providers.
- 10.1.2.4. We will seek out funding opportunities to assist with meeting our core aims and objectives where sporting provision is concerned.
- 10.1.2.5. We will ensure that accessibility for all is key to all decisions taken in relation to our sporting provision, be that as participants or observing.
- 10.1.2.6. We will encourage and work to provide wider public access to privately managed sports facilities.

10.1.3. Improving and Investing in our Leisure Provision:

- 10.1.3.1. We will invest in our leisure provision across the Town to maximise participation opportunities.
- 10.1.3.2. We will ensure that the quality of our leisure provision is maximised to the best of our abilities.
- 10.1.3.3. We will seek to work in partnership with local leisure clubs, associations and providers.
- 10.1.3.4. We will seek out funding opportunities to assist with meeting our core aims and objectives where leisure provision is concerned.
- 10.1.3.5. We will ensure that accessibility for all is key to all decisions taken in relation to our leisure provision, be that as participants or observing.

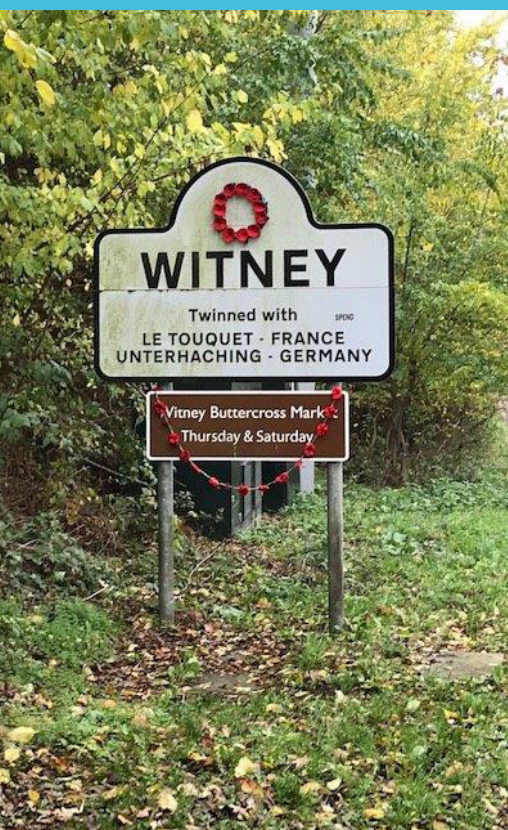


10.1.4. Improving and Investing in our Infra-Structure:

- 10.1.4.1. We will invest in a rationalised, modern portfolio of challenging, diverse play facilities to improve overall play development value for all ages.
- 10.1.4.2. We will seek to provide a range of infra-structure aimed at all age groups and as many differing types of facility as is feasible.
- 10.1.4.3. We will seek to ensure that there are suitable, modern and well maintained pavilions, toilet facilities and associated infra-structure available at all necessary locations within the Witney Town Council area.
- 10.1.4.4. We will seek to rationalise and ensure that there is suitable, corporate provision of supporting infra-structure available such as litter bins, dog waste bins, seating, lighting and signage.
- 10.1.4.5. We will seek to work in partnership with local clubs, associations and providers to maximise improvements and investment opportunities.
- 10.1.4.6. We will seek to provide a community hub with accessible community space.

10.1.5. Working in the Most Effective and Efficient Manner:

- 10.1.5.1. We will constantly assess all that we do to ensure value for money, flexibility and adaptability for the residents of Witney.
- 10.1.5.2. We will seek to set up and work with and alongside as many Friends, Volunteer and Community groups as possible.
- 10.1.5.3. We will explore opportunities to generate income for investment into the parks and open spaces service through:
 - 10.1.5.3.1. Building on partnership working to maximise grant funding from third party organisations.
 - 10.1.5.3.2. Developing a business case, working with partners to commercialise appropriate parts of the parks and open spaces resource.
 - 10.1.5.3.3. Using innovative fund-raising methods.
- 10.1.5.4. We will seek to ensure that maintenance regimes are managed appropriately and set to a suitable standard which is aligned to the individual location and facility.
- 10.1.5.5. We will negotiate with developers and the Planning Authority to promote the provision of sufficient, new, well designed open spaces within new development sites.
- 10.1.5.6. We will seek to ensure grounds maintenance in the Town is undertaken in a way that does not confuse the public.
- 10.1.5.7. We will seek to actively enter into discussions with WODC and OCC to ensure services are provided in the most cost effective, logical and sensible manner, irrespective of “ownership”.



11. PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

There are a considerable number of potential partner organisations with whom Witney Town Council can work, consult with, and seek professional and specialist advice from, such as:

- 11.1. Sport England
- 11.2. Environment Agency
- 11.3. Play England
- 11.4. Natural England
- 11.5. Oxfordshire Football Association
- 11.6. Lawn Tennis Association
- 11.7. Housing Developers
- 11.8. National Allotments Association
- 11.9. English Cricket Board
- 11.10. Local Businesses
- 11.11. Local Residents
- 11.12. Other Tiers of Local Government
- 11.13. Wildlife Trust
- 11.14. Public Health Oxfordshire

Please note this is not an exhaustive list but gives a flavour of the amount of assistance potentially available.

12. FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

Alongside the Council's ability to raise funding via its own Precept setting abilities, there are several other options potentially available such as:

- 12.1. Public Works Loans Board – Government backed loans at extremely competitive low interest rates aimed primarily at the Parish sector.
- 12.2. S106 and / or CIL contributions – Monies collected by the Planning Authority from developers because of development in an area for spending (usually) by the relevant Parish Council.
- 12.3. The Football Association
- 12.4. The Lawn Tennis Association
- 12.5. National Lottery (various differing elements)
- 12.6. Local Enterprise Partnership
- 12.7. English Cricket Board

However, policies and actions developed in the strategy need to account for a range of factors in addition to the consultation, such as the council's medium term financial plan, existing policies and strategies, and external and internal consultations. This broad evidence base should provide the Council with a robust and considered foundation to give the public and other stakeholders greater confidence in the process.

Please note this is not an exhaustive list but gives a flavour of the amount of assistance potentially available.

PARKS & OPEN SPACES STRATEGY – ACTION PLAN

KEY THEME – MODERNISING AND UPGRADING OUR PARKS AND OPEN SPACES SERVICE

Reference	Action	Who Involved?	Commencement?	Completion?
PO 1	Draw up revised grounds maintenance specifications in order to raise standards within the Parks and Open Spaces (See EE 5, SP 3 Below also)	WTC Staff / Appointed Consultants	May 2021	July 2021
PO 2	Consider seeking to attain Green Flag status for relevant Parks and Open Space locations	WTC Staff / Cllrs	September 2022	March 2023
PO 3	Draw up and adopt a comprehensive arboriculture plan	WTC Staff, Tree Officer	September 2021	March 2022
PO 4	Identify and implement possible re-wilding areas	WTC Staff	December 2021	April 2022
PO 5	Undertake a review of participating in the annual In Bloom competition	WTC Staff / Cllrs / In Bloom Group	September 2021	March 2022
PO 6	Draw up long term management plans for each of the main Parks and Open Spaces (to be undertaken post other actions taking place at individual sites)	WTC Staff / Cllrs / Clubs	Dependent upon individual site decisions taken	On-going

KEY THEME – IMPROVING AND INVESTING IN OUR SPORTING PROVISION

Reference	Action	Who Involved?	Commencement?	Completion?
SP 1	Undertake an audit and needs assessment of sports provision across the Town and then feed this into WODC's planning needs assessment	WTC Staff / Clubs / Associations	June 2021	October 2021
SP 2	Enquire of landowners to try to seek out opportunities to provide additional pitches where required, including making enquiries to access existing third party owned facilities	WTC Staff / WODC / OCC / Clubs / Associations	On-going	On-going
SP 3	Assess shortcomings in pitch maintenance and identify solutions	WTC Staff / Clubs	January 2022	August 2022
SP 4	Update and negotiate new leases with the key sports providers in the Town, taking account of long term aims and aspirations for enhancing facilities	WTC Staff / Cllrs / Clubs	May 2021	November 2021
SP 5	Undertake a comprehensive condition survey of the WWSSC, then prepare and adopt a maintenance and management plan accordingly to secure the short-term useability of the facility	Appointed Consultants	July 2021	October 2021

KEY THEME – IMPROVING AND INVESTING IN OUR SPORTING PROVISION

Reference	Action	Who Involved?	Commencement?	Completion?
SP 6	Using KKP as project managers, undertake a long-term master plan exercise at the West Witney sports ground in conjunction with stakeholders	WTC Staff / Cllrs / Club	December 2021	October 2022 (plan stage)
SP 7	Undertake a comprehensive condition survey of the The Leys pavilion, then prepare and adopt a maintenance and management plan accordingly to secure the short-term useability of the facility	Appointed Consultants	July 2021	October 2021
SP 8	Undertake a long-term master plan exercise at the The Leys recreation ground in conjunction with stakeholders	WTC Staff / Cllrs / Club	December 2021	October 2022 (plan stage)
SP 9	Undertake a feasibility and cost analysis study into the provision of a further 3G pitch in the Town, subject to discussions with both WODC and OCC	WTC Staff / Cllrs / OFA / WODC / OCC	April 2023	July 2023

KEY THEME – IMPROVING AND INVESTING IN OUR LEISURE PROVISION

Reference	Action	Who Involved?	Commencement?	Completion?
LP 1	Seek out options to increase allotment capacity issues should the additional new plots at Windrush not prove to be sufficient	WTC Staff / Association / WODC / OCC	November 2022	March 2023
LP 2	Identify possible opportunities to provide more, and better fitness trails, cycle routes, park run routes etc, some in conjunction with WODC and OCC	WTC Staff / Cllrs / WODC / OCC	November 2021	March 2022
LP 3	Adopt an annual programme of local events, building on the existing and identifying differing opportunities moving forwards	WTC Staff / Cllrs	November 2022	March 2023
LP 4	Prepare and adopt a comprehensive management and improvement plan for the Country Park and Lake area	WTC Staff, Tree Officer, Natural England, Specialist Advisors	April 2022	November 2022 (plan stage)
LP 5	Prepare an improvement and upgrade plan for angling facilities at the Country Park and Lake	WTC Staff, Angling Club	January 2022	April 2022

KEY THEME – IMPROVING AND INVESTING IN OUR INFRA-STRUCTURE PROVISION

Reference	Action	Who Involved?	Commencement?	Completion?
IS 1	Undertake a condition survey of children's play areas, then prepare and adopt a planned improvement and upgrade plan	WTC Staff	Oct 2021	November 2025
IS 2	Undertake a condition survey of skateparks, MUGA's and other youth provision, then prepare and adopt a planned improvement and upgrade plan	WTC Staff	Oct 2021	March 2024
IS 3	Undertake a full options survey of the unused buildings at the cemeteries	Appointed Consultants	April 2022	November 2022 (survey stage)
IS 4	Seek out a possible solution report to the access and parking issues at the cemeteries (audit recently received)	Appointed Consultants	Underway Now	April 2021 (report stage)
IS 5	Undertake an audit of current litter bins, dog waste bins, signage, seating, fencing, bus shelters and other associated infra-structure with a view to drawing up a corporate replacement and upgrade plan, to include policies relating to the installation and adoption of infra-structure on non-WTC land	WTC Staff	December 2021	June 2022 (plan stage)
IS 6	Undertake a condition survey of existing pavilions and toilet facilities and draw up an improvement and upgrade plan accordingly	Appointed Consultants	September 2021	January 2022 (survey stage)
IS 7	Undertake a needs assessment and, where required, invest in pavilion and toilet provision where none are provided currently	Appointed Consultants	November 2021	May 2022 (report stage)
IS 8	Seek to work with partners to achieve a structured, integrated and fully connected footpath and cycle path network around the town.	WTC Staff, Partners	April 2022	July 2022 (Feasibility Stage)
IS 9	Seek to provide, possibly in partnership with a third party, a community hub building to include accessible community space (See SP 8?)	WTC Staff, Partners	October 2021	March 2022 (Feasibility Stage)

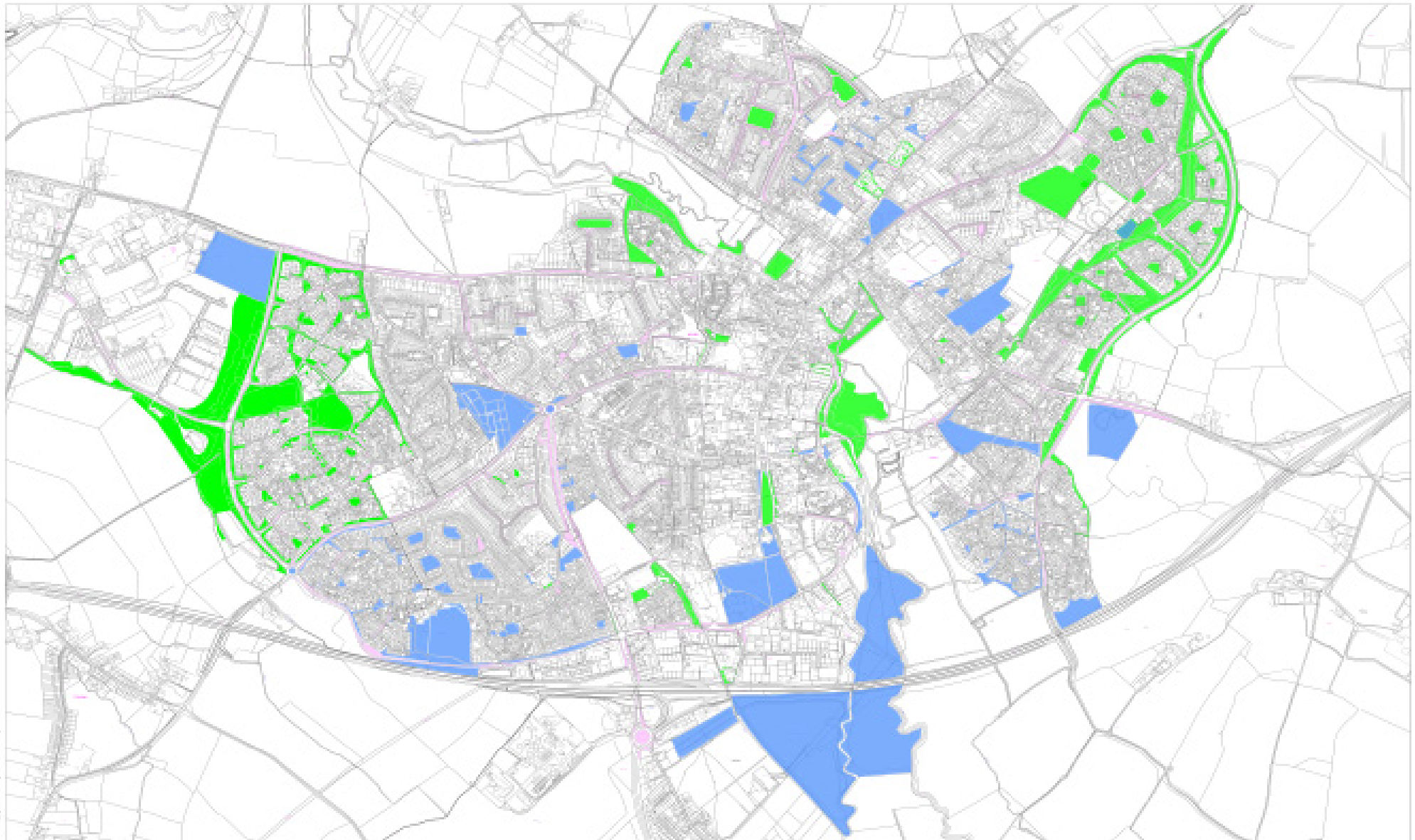
KEY THEME – WORKING IN THE MOST EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT MANNER

Reference	Action	Who Involved?	Commencement?	Completion?
EE 1	Appoint a Park Ranger as already agreed with a clearly defined Job Description and Job Purpose	WTC Staff	June 2021	October 2021
EE 2	Seek to improve working relationships with key stakeholders, including WODC and OCC	WTC Staff	June 2021	On-going
EE 3	Draw up and adopt a communications plan with the aim of raising WTC's profile within the community	WTC Staff	June 2021	November 2021
EE 4	Engage with WODC and OCC in order to consider devolution options in regards grounds maintenance within the town in light of the very high dissatisfaction levels of the confusing current position	WTC Staff / Cllrs / WODC / OCC	November 2021	July 2022
EE 5	Undertake an options review of the most efficient and effective manner to deliver grounds maintenance services	WTC Staff / Appointed Consultants	May 2021	July 2021
EE 6	Draw up and adopt a policy aimed at ensuring that all external and partnership funding opportunities, along with sponsorship options are optimised in all project and development works	WTC Staff / Appointed Consultants	Immediate effect	On-going
EE 7	Ensure that Community Engagement is enshrined into all work and projects undertaken by WTC	WTC Staff	June 2021	On-going
EE 8	Seek to move to a grounds maintenance fleet of electric vehicles, machinery and kit	WTC Staff	September 2021	On-going
EE 9	Undertake a feasibility study into installing a professional mapping service for use by WTC	WTC Staff	June 2021	August 2021
EE 10	Undertake a review of current sports and facility booking systems used and fitnesses to benefit all parties	WTC Staff	May 2022	September 2022
EE 11	Undertake a skills appraisal of the maintenance team, draw up a training and development plan based around grounds responsibilities	WTC Staff	May 2021	August 2021

KEY THEME – WORKING IN THE MOST EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT MANNER

Reference	Action	Who Involved?	Commencement?	Completion?
EE 12	Identify opportunities for volunteer schemes, friends schemes and other voluntary sector options and then enable their set-up and work arrangements	WTC Staff / Cllrs	November 2021	March 2022
EE 13	Undertake a comprehensive accessibility audit, draw up an improvement and implementation plan based around outcomes	Appointed Consultants	April 2022	September 2022
EE 14	Identify options and a more structured approach to providing a more responsive out of hours service / call out service, as well as introducing possible work practices at weekends.	WTC Staff / Cllrs	May 2021	August 2021

WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL LAND AREA – OPEN SPACE AND LAND OWNERSHIP - APPENDIX A



Map of Witney Town Council Land Area



West Oxonshire District Council
Planning
Policy
Development
Open Air

For more information
Tel: 01295 84800
www.westoxonshire.gov.uk



Map Title	Existing Land Responsibilities (2015)
Department	Environmental Services
Map No.	
Date issued	March 2015