

Moat Street and Villiers Street Outline Planning Application Proposals – Summary of Responses to Public Engagement

Public engagement was undertaken with local residents, businesses and community representatives to seek views on the proposals for Moat Street and Villiers Street prior to submission of the outline planning application. Exhibition material was available online from 28th November to 11th December 2022, with two face to face events held at the Willenhall CHART Community Hub as follows:

- Tuesday 6th December, 4pm to 7pm
- Thursday 8th December, 10am to 1pm

The exhibition was accompanied by a short questionnaire which enabled people to provide feedback on the proposals. This note provides a summary of the responses made.

At-a-glance findings

- Overall, 22 respondents completed the questionnaire.
- The majority of respondents (82%) were local residents / members of the public. Four respondents were either representatives of local business or community organisations.
- Respondents were generally positive about the proposals, highlighting benefits associated with developing derelict sites and benefits associated with the provision of new housing.
- Other frequently mentioned comments related to parking, provision of green space and comments relating to the cemetery (for example appropriate design given location in proximity to the cemetery, and maintenance of the cemetery).

Summary of Respondents

- A breakdown of the characteristics of respondents in terms of their relationship with Willenhall is as follows:
 - 18 respondents (82%) of respondents stated they are a resident/member of the public
 - Two respondents (9%) stated that they operate or run a business/organisation
 - Two respondents (9%) stated that they are responding on behalf of a community, voluntary or charitable organisation
- 19 respondents (86%) provided postcode information, the vast majority of which were from the local area, with 16 respondents were from WV12 and WV13 postcodes (which relate specifically to Willenhall), and the remainder being WS2 and WS8 postcodes, relating to areas slightly to the east of Willenhall.

Feedback by Theme

Feedback across the five sites can be grouped under the following themes:

In relation to social housing:

'Looks nice but we need social housing'

'Ensure higher proportion of social and affordable housing on this area'

'Good, hopefully the flats are affordable'

'Needs to be done with careful thought for people who are waiting to get on the property ladder along with people who require social housing'

'Glad to hear a social housing quota is included in these desperate times'

In relation to derelict buildings

'The redevelopment of the proposed site is welcomed given the condition of the buildings which have blighted the area for over a decade'

'I think it is a brilliant idea to get rid of the old buildings which are an eyesore and clearly will never be used again. It will make the town more inviting to visit without having to pass by these unwelcoming sites'

'It will be good to have the abandoned sites repurposed, quite a eyesore, that attracts vandalism and anti-social behaviour'

'Current land looks a mess great way of developing it and improving the house needs of the local area'

In relation to parking:

'All houses should have a minimum of 2 off street car parking spaces'

'Insufficient off street parking when you consider most households have at least 2 cars these days'

In relation to development scheme and layout:

'Very well planned out and great improvement to the area'

'Glad to see the cemetery site is being protected'

'Please give consideration to alternative schemes that facilitate the on-going viability to business which allow local areas to thrive and be part of the community'

'Homes look perfect, nicely spread out and good size gardens / parking'

In relation to green space:

'Beautiful! Green spaces are so needed in this area!'

'More wildlife planting e.g. bushes, flowerbeds and retain all existing trees on sites especially if scarce varieties'

'More trees and flowerbeds for wildlife, suitable for low maintenance, i.e. Holly, Silver Birch, Hawthorn, Pyracantha etc. No plastic grass and strict pet control'

'These areas will be vital reclamation of brown field sites for housing for families etc, but must as we look to future be designed for wildlife as well as humans to coexist in harmony. Green spaces are beneficial to health'

Response to Feedback Received

Respondents were given the opportunity to provide comments relating to individual sites A to E. A summary of specific comments received in relation to each site is given below; comments relate to responses made by a single respondent unless otherwise specified. The table also includes commentary on the feedback from the Delivery Team at Walsall Council, including where any amendments to the design have been made in response to feedback.

Site	Summary of Feedback Responses	Response to the Feedback
Site A – land south of Moat Street: the creation of 22 new homes.	<p>17 responses related to Site A. Site-specific responses related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concern over the size of homes and inclusion of 4-bed properties. Opportunity for Site A and adjoining land to accommodate a mixed-use scheme. Potential opportunity for more intensive housing development on this site (e.g. apartment blocks). 	<p>The soft market testing feedback and the residential market assessment supports housing of this nature in the area. Although soft market testing feedback was mixed, the general view was that there should be a greater emphasis on 2- to 4-bed family housing in the area.</p>
Site B – land north of Moat Street: the creation of up to 50 new homes plus retention & conversion of locally listed building.	<p>15 responses related to Site B. Site-specific responses related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aspects of design relating to the local environment – for example ensuring that properties are appropriately protected from traffic noise. Potential opportunity for the site to form part of a wider mixed-use scheme (employment or retail), rather than housing only (two respondents). 	<p>Detailed design development will mitigate concerns related to traffic noise.</p> <p>The area is outside of the town centre and so retail use is unlikely to have policy support.</p> <p>The soft market testing and desktop residential market assessment supports housing of this nature in the area which supports the Council's vision under the Willenhall Framework Plan.</p>
Site C – land to the south of New Hall Street: creation of greenspace.	<p>15 responses related to Site C. Site-specific responses related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possibility for the proposals to include additional landscaping or on-going care / maintenance of the cemetery (two respondents). Inclusion of benches within the space. Possibility of including a small number of homes within this site in addition to green space. Opportunity to include parking spaces for existing properties in New Hall Street (two respondents). 	<p>The proposals include for public open space (POS) that will enhance the cemetery. The maintenance of the cemetery is outside the scope of the scheme. Detailed design development will review the street furniture requirements in the POS as the current landscape proposals are indicative.</p> <p>Given the relationship with the cemetery and adjacent trees, the site is constrained and less suitable for homes.</p> <p>A layby with parking spaces will be created adjacent to the POS (corner of New Hall St and Cemetery Road).</p>

<p>Site D – land north of New Hall Street: creation of 12 new apartments and eight new homes.</p>	<p>12 responses related to Site D, of which nine responses were overtly supportive. Site-specific responses related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concern that the apartments look ‘squeezed’ onto the site. 	<p>The apartments meet the local planning authority’s standards and provide surveillance over the footway into the greenway and the greenway itself.</p>
<p>Site E – land to the north and south of Villiers Street: the creation of 15 new homes.</p>	<p>12 responses related to Site E. Site-specific responses related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether more housing could be included within this site. • Inclusion of measures to arrest anti-social behaviour (two respondents). 	<p>The soft market testing feedback and desktop market assessment supports housing of this nature in the area. Although soft market testing feedback was mixed, the general view was that there should be a greater emphasis on 2- to 4-bed family housing in the area.</p> <p>Car parking should ideally be within the curtilages of the dwellings and / or subject to a high degree of natural surveillance. In this case, the majority of the parking is located in a secure, gated parking court, subject to surveillance.</p>

Three respondents commented generally about the amount of car parking included in the proposals and whether this was sufficient. As part of the development of proposals for the sites, research has been undertaken into existing car ownership in the local area. This showed that approximately 32% of Willenhall households had no car/van, with 44% having access to one vehicle and 19% having access to two vehicles. The households with access to three or more vehicles represented only 5% of the total. Based on this data, it is reasonable to assume that the quantity of car parking proposed as part of the outline planning application is consistent with the picture of car ownership locally. Other relevant factors for consideration include:

- the proximity of the application site to the future Willenhall Railway Station, the town centre and other amenities, suggests it is unlikely that a lower level of car parking space provision would cause adverse effects.
- a parking strategy to promote and encourage the use of public transport and active travel targeting the reduction of car trips has been created for the proposed development.

Further Comments

Respondents were asked whether they had any further comments to make in relation to the proposals. Fifteen responses were received relating to the following areas:

- Comments relating to social housing (inclusion of more, or confirming level of local need) (three respondents)
- Positive affirmations of the proposals, including suggestions for work to start ‘at the earliest opportunity’ (six respondents)
- Responses highlighting other needs of Willenhall (for example retail or community services) (two respondents)
- Ensuring the inclusion of appropriate green space in proposals
- Highlighting the potential for alternative schemes to be considered.

‘I hope it is all approved and work starts at the earliest opportunity’

'Beautiful! This area is currently such an eyesore and imagining what it could, and hopefully will look like is pure joy!'

'This needs to be done sooner rather than later'

Respondents were also asked to comment on equality characteristics they feel need to be considered as part of the Willenhall Framework Plan proposals for Moat Street and Villiers Street. Protected equality characteristics include age, gender, disability, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, gender reassignment and maternity. Four responses were made here, relating to accessibility, health and energy efficiency:

'All sites to be disabled friendly. Sites should utilise solar panels etc. Fully up to date with all modern energy savings designs, insulation, lighting etc.'

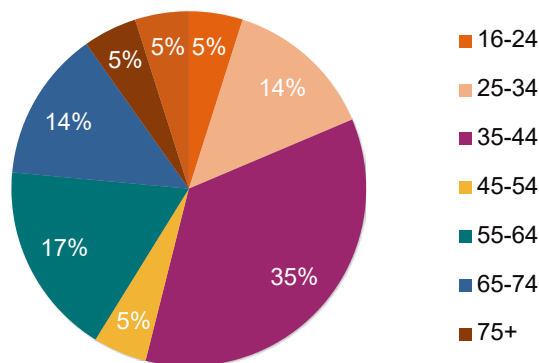
'Just make it accessible and well lit so it is safe to walk at night.'

'It will be important to protect what green spaces there are, for social activities, wildlife, quality of life and air quality.'

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Figure 2 shows the age profile of respondents, with 71% of respondents aged between 35-74.

Figure 2 - respondents by age group



Other characteristics of respondents were as follows:

- The majority of respondents were from a white ethnic background (86%).
- A higher proportion of respondents were male than female (55% and 41% respectively).
- The majority of respondents (82%) stated that they had no physical or mental health issues.