

**Whitchurch on Thames
Neighbourhood Plan Working Group Meeting
Old Stables
14 November 2016**

Attendees:

- Cllr Jim Donahue- PC Chair
- Cllr Keith Brooks - PC
- Cllr Rachel Hatcher - PC
- Sarah Hanfrey
- Charles Cotgreave
- Peter Ferguson
- Jean-Marc Grosfort
- John Bradon

The Whitchurch on Thames Parish Council is sponsoring the development of a Neighbourhood plan for our community. The plan will need support and active participation of members of the community and will likely take at least 18 months to complete. The objectives of this initial meeting was to:

- Discuss the Neighbourhood plan process
- Start initial discussions on our overall objectives and assumptions of the plan
- Agree follow-on steps for members of the WG

The WG is open to any interested members of the community. The initial members expressed interest at the May Village Plan Open Day.

The next meeting will be on Monday 9th January, at 8pm

Neighbourhood planning process

Cllr Donahue provided an overview of the Neighbourhood Planning process in a presentation that is provided as an attachment. The Neighbourhood Plan is a legal document that becomes part of the Oxfordshire Local Plan that would govern where, how much, and what kind of development can happen in our village.

Why have a Neighbourhood Plan (NP)? If we work together to develop a Neighbourhood Plan, then we can have a degree of control over any future development that does happen in our village. And if development happens that is in our approved plan, we stand to receive 25% of a Community Infrastructure Levy that South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) receives from developers (we would get 15% without a plan). We would be able to decide how these funds are invested in our community.

The risk of not having a plan is that new developments would likely continue to be proposed in our area over time that we are unprepared to respond to and have little ability to influence.

The number of houses in Whitchurch hasn't changed significantly in recent years and we may expect that to continue. However pressure to build new housing in the UK is great and will only continue to grow in the future. Whitchurch doesn't officially have any allocation of new homes under the Local Plan, but SODC is now proposing that all small villages look at increasing the number of houses by 5% by 2032. That would mean up to 17 new houses in our small village.

Whitchurch on Thames	2001	2011
Residents	758	824
Occupied Households	324	327
5% increase		17

Initial Thoughts on Locations and Constraints

The Working Group member had a wide-ranging discussion on the process and objectives of the plan.

There are several likely constraints for future development were more information is required:

- Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) – as most, if not all, of the village falls within an AONB, this will limit the development that can happen. What are the rules about developing in an AONB? Jean-Marc has a contact in this area and will investigate.
- Flood Plains – As this impacts large areas of the village – what are the rules and areas affected? John Bradon to look into this.
- Conservation Area – Charles to look into the constraints related to this.
- School places – Whitchurch primary school has already had to build temporary classrooms and there are already challenges getting places for all children in the village. Sarah is a school governor and familiar with the constraints.
- Traffic and parking – This is already an issue on the High Street in particular. The Bridge makes this situation worse, particularly with new developments planned in Woodcote and Goring. Rachel is leading a OC WG in this area and will liaise with us on it.

Candidate sites for development:

Given these constraints, it is likely that there would be limited areas where new development can happen.

Members agreed that it would be preferable that there be a few smaller sites of one two new houses than one or more larger developments.

WG members agreed it would be a good idea to hire a consultant who understands these constraints, and can identify the areas that are most likely to gain planning approval for development in the future.

- Cllr Donahue to contact NP contacts in Woodcote, Goring, and Sonning Common to see what consultants they used.

- The PC can ask SODC for grants once a caseworker is assigned to Whitchurch.
- Peter Ferguson said he had some contacts he could look into.
- John could contact Neil King who is a property Barrister who may have some contacts.

Objectives discussion:

Affordable Housing - Most members agreed that having some more affordable housing to keep our community diverse should be an objective, although the term “affordable” was seen as relative as even the most inexpensive houses in Whitchurch were likely to be above the national average. We need to understand this better, but the intention was that all new developments shouldn’t be large detached homes that are likely to be in excess of £1 million.

Development of the Village hall site – Recent feedback from SODC indicate that they would likely want to develop the site if we were to sell it, as they have the first right of refusal to purchase it until 2027. This means that while we could develop affordable housing on the site and would get credit for the housing count, the money we receive from the development would be limited to the CIL. Based on this, we can’t assume it would be sufficient to fund a replacement Village hall in another part of the village.

CIL - Community Infrastructure Levy – How much money would we be able to raise from the CIL? We need to know this before we can make any concrete plans on what the money could be spent on. Sarah had a document that shows the calculation based on a document that SODC provided, although there are reports in the Henley standard that this could be increased in the future.