

WOLVERTON PARISH COUNCIL

PARISH PLAN CONSULTATION

Summary of public meeting held on 27th February 2014

1. Introduction

Cllr David Stone, Chair of Wolverton Parish Council, opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and thanking parishioners for their continued support. He noted the valued contributions made by Steering Group members and by those who wrote parts of the Plan; and commended parishioners for the excellent response rate to the survey, on which the Plan is largely based.

Cllr Stone advised that the aims of tonight's meeting were to present the first draft of the Plan; to give people a chance to have their say; and to debate ideas, comments and issues arising.¹ This feedback will inform amendment of the Plan, as appropriate, prior to its submission to Stratford District Council in May 2014.

In addition, he hoped to recruit 'volunteers' to help put the Plan into action.

A copy of the presentation made during the meeting, by Cllr Stone and Paul Anthony, and of the draft Plan, are available on Wolverton PC's website. Please see www.wolvertonpc.org.uk.²

2. Priorities for action

There was general agreement that the Plan reflected local priorities, although the means of delivering those priorities was subject to differing opinion, notably around planning and development.

¹ Seven parishioners attended the open session during the afternoon, whilst seventeen came to the evening meeting. Apologies were received from Cllr Payne.

² A hard copy of the presentation and draft Plan are available from the Clerk, clerk@wolvertonpc.org.uk or telephone 01789 730757.

Some considered the Plan too long, blunting its impact as key issues were lost in the wider text.

Having over 54 action points, even if prioritised into 16 key actions, may be too many for people to take on board and for WPC to deliver.

WPC will streamline the action plan; add a snappy Executive Summary; and split the content into a Development section and remaining Appendices for maximum impact and ease of reading.

3. Key areas of discussion

3.1 Planning and development

Development is the critical issue for most parishioners and so was the focus of most concern and debate. A broad consensus is that the imperative is to retain the character and amenities of the parish whilst recognising the possible need for some development – provided it is small scale, sustainable and conducive to the environment.

Councillor Stone outlined that if the Housing Needs Survey (that was already underway) identified a housing need, then the survey could be followed by giving each parishioner the opportunity to mark locations on a parish map where they would be against development and where the housing to satisfy the identified need would be acceptable. There is an established process for this.

There was less agreement as to how to achieve this outcome, strategically and tactically, in the context of the government's national planning framework, apparent 'liberalisation' of planning policy and the absence of a completed District Council Core (Housing) Strategy. Rumours abound at present regarding anticipated planning applications for larger scale development, although no such applications have, as yet been received by WPC.

Differing views were expressed as to the most effective approach to take, which WPC will consider further.

Planning & development - parishioner feedback:

- We are happy with the status quo – but open to change IF in keeping with the openness & amenity of the parish, based on need and small scale.
- How adequate is the WRCC Housing Needs Survey – questions are biased towards development?
- A small amount of social housing may be needed or a couple of bungalows for down sizing- but costs may be prohibitive, outside the context of large scale, market development.
- Where should any development in the village be located?
- We should proactively seek to identify areas where we might consider lifting the green belt & obtain a general view from parishioners. (*The Housing Needs Survey should help here if need for affordable housing is identified*).
- Sustainability is critical, given the paucity of parish amenities – but we are close to local service villages which do have amenities.
- WPC should determine a ‘shopping list’ of critical infrastructure improvements required in return for support of any significant market development. This as a deterrent to developers but, where development goes ahead, it should ensure the infrastructure issues adversely impacting village life, (no gas, poor telecommunications, roads, water supply and sewage etc) are comprehensively addressed.
- Does the ‘shopping list’ strategy risk ‘inviting’ development, as it may imply a readiness to consider scaled market development?
- Do we have to consider Gypsy and Traveller sites?
- Early completion of a flora and fauna study is needed to determine the presence of protected species and subsequent implications for development in the parish.

WPC noted the importance of acting proactively and completing the Parish Plan promptly, so that, once adopted, it is a material consideration in planning applications.

Further consideration will be given to the formulation of a clearer approach/ strategy to planning and development, taking account also of the outcome of the WRCC Housing Needs Survey.

3.2 Services

This was an issue of considerable interest, with strong agreement that action to improve broadband speed and mobile phone coverage is an appropriate priority. Parishioners noted the lack of a bus service and reliance on the car; and the desirability, if volunteers could be found, of re-establishing Wolverton Neighbourhood Watch.

There was strong support for the purchase of a defibrillator for Wolverton village and volunteers came forward to support WPC in progressing this.

Services - parishioner feedback

- Poor mobile phone access..
- Slow broadband speed, with no sign of early improvement, is a major problem – creating digital exclusion. (Improvements to the Snitterfield exchange may not have an impact in Wolverton).
- Poor broadband is a major issue for a community which is so car dependent - e.g. home shopping.
- Home working and the development of local businesses is hampered by inadequate communications infrastructure.
- This is a priority – and should appear on the ‘shopping list’ for developers, should that approach be adopted.
- Poor bus services / public transport and reliance on car – implications for sustainability.

WPC noted the comments made and will progress as proposed in the draft Plan.

3.3 Infrastructure

Broadly, feedback on the draft Plan here would suggest WPC is on the right lines. Concerns related to road maintenance; lack of parking; excessive speed through the village; traffic and congestion at the school; poorly kept hedging

prejudicing pedestrian safety. No areas of disagreement or new solutions were identified.

3.4 Environment

This relates to the parish's general environment, with concerns relating, as suggested in the draft Plan, in particular to nuisance issues, dog fouling, especially around the church and Manor Farm. No new suggestions were made here.

In addition concern was raised regarding fly posting – with the need to improve the parish notice board.

As noted, the meeting endorsed the idea of a review of local flora and fauna, to establish the presence, if any of protected species such as bats, newts, badgers etc - and to identify any resultant implications for development. A parishioner volunteered to assist WPC in taking this forward, via the proposed sub-group.

3.5 Amenities

Parishioners endorsed the importance of the amenities we have – church, church rooms, parish magazine and the school. People welcomed the addition of the parish council website, which is live but undergoing further construction.

The meeting noted that reference to the table tennis club at Norton Lindsey village hall should be included in the Plan; and that the Church Room Committee would welcome ideas from parishioners as to extending the use of the premises, especially where people are able to organise events themselves.

4. Next Steps

- WPC to revise draft Plan, taking account of feedback received (deadline for further comment is 14th March 2014, email clerk@wolvertonpc.org.uk)
- Further steering group meeting in April 2014 to finalise Plan.
- Present final Plan at WPC's Annual General Meeting in May 2014
- Submit agreed plan to Stratford District Council for adoption in late May 2014.

In closing the meeting, Cllr Stone thanked everyone for their contributions and for their comments this evening. Any other volunteers wishing to help deliver the Plan are most welcome!