

Report of open meeting to discuss Long Wittenham Neighbourhood Plan

September 25th 2014 Long Wittenham Village Hall

Present: Simon Thompson, Peter Rose (Both LW Parish Council), Fiona Mullins (Oxfordshire Rural Community Council), Peter Canavan (SODC Planning Department), Celia Collett (District councillor), Steven Brown, Ian Penberth, Stephanie Martin, Richard May, Dom James, Cherry Neil, Nick Caw, Barrie Henderson, Bob Edwards, Barbara Edwards, Prew Bowtell, David Young, Kate Thompson, Ella Thompson, Ben Thompson, Clifford Bosley, Mike Duff, Isabel Henderson, Bill Symonds, T Foxall, M Willimas, V Edwards, Sue Kirtas.

Introduction

The introduction by Peter Rose, Simon Thompson and Fiona Mullins outlined the nature and scope of a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) and the reasons that the Parish Council(PC) had decided to pursue this. In the last ten years there have been two consultations about the needs of the village in the future and this had resulted in the Wittenham Vision outlining the need for traffic calming measures, cycle paths, a limited need for new housing and the village hub concept to include a new school, village hall and shop. We have made progress in some areas and struggled in others; in particular negotiations with landowners on preferred sites for the hub are still ongoing. However there are now new pressures on the village from proposed developments- the housing development in North Didcot, the Science Vale development and now the new SODC local plan outlining the need for even more housing in the area. The NP will give us a greater say in these developments for the benefit of the village particularly in the areas of sustainable development, managing traffic, recreation and footpaths, floods. The plan would cover the whole parish excluding the land due to be passed to Didcot for the North Didcot development. It was stressed that the NP was the next step in the process and would build on work already undertaken. The presence of the village plan and Vision means that we start from a much higher base than many other villages.

The NP would be community led and has legal force unlike previous village plans. It will help us guide and plan development and can include anything that uses land and requires planning permission. It can include issues relating to environment, community and social issues, economy and traffic where these will be impacted by the proposed developments. The plan will take 18-24 months to complete and is an iterative process with consultation at all stages with SODC, other interested bodies and the local community. Once agreed, there will be a referendum in the village and the plan will only be adopted if 50% of those voting are in favour.

Finally, the development of the NP does not prevent separate work and conclusion of other issues, especially the Village Hub before the NP is complete.

Discussion

Those present were asked to raise all the issues that caused concern currently and could be considered for the NP. Discussion covered a number of topics, including traffic, housing, village hub, flooding the impact on neighbouring parishes.

Traffic

Both the speed of traffic going through the village, the volume of traffic and level of traffic noise were still causing concern. There were calls for more traffic calming procedures (This was a recurrent topic of discussion at the PC and the PC has recently undertaken a new traffic survey). The Culham and Clifton Hampden bridges were both perceived to be at capacity and the need for a new bridge and LW bypass were expressed. Parking in the High Street is a problem especially around the chicanes.

Housing

There was discussion about the need for starter homes so that young people bought up in the village would not have to move away to cheaper housing areas. The need for affordable housing would be covered in a survey that would form part of the NP

Village Hub

The need to support a school as an integral part of the village was discussed. Some children attend the school from outside the village and this might be threatened when new schools are built in North Didcot unless school buildings are upgraded. The Vision had identified sites for the Hub other than Challis Farm but these all had significant drawbacks and would not be pursued until negotiations on preferred sites were complete.

Flooding

The floods in the last two years had caused significant disruption and this is one of the most pressing environmental challenges for the village

Impact on neighbouring villages

Several other villages locally including Clifton Hampden and Brightwell cum Sotwell are developing NPs and improvements in, for example, traffic flow through LW could impact on worsening traffic flow through other villages. We will need to address this through discussions with our neighbours and co-ordination of plans by SODC

Next steps

Development of the plan will be led by the PC but a steering group of representatives of village organisations has been convened. Volunteers to join this group were requested. We also need offers of help to develop the plan especially from anyone with expertise in the area of planning, traffic flow, environmental issues etc.

A survey will be developed in conjunction with ORCC to ask all villagers their views on these issues. This will be circulated before Christmas.

The meeting ended with all present writing their wish list for the village on post it notes and all these ideas will be assessed and form a valuable contribution to the NP development.

Observations from 23 villagers on the good things about our village and the things that need attention

Good things	No responses	Comment
Good caring community	4	
Access to countryside	3	
Cycle track to Didcot		
Historic landmarks		
Small size- good integration		
Large enough for diverse activities	2	
Blessed with people who make things happen		
Influence in local matters		
Safe		
Quiet		
Things that need attention		
Traffic/transport		
Better bus service (Didcot to Oxford via LW)	9	
Bypass/new bridge	5	
Traffic calming (whole village, speed cameras, 20mph, remove humps,	9	
Gridocked		
Most important issue		
Enforce HGV weight limit	2	
Parking on pavements (assume meant less!)	3	
Additional parking bays		
Amend Sire's Hill junction (visibility/safety)		
New river service		
Linked traffic lights at CH bridge to entry chicane/A415 junction	2	
Roads and pavements		
Better footpath/cycle path to CH	4	
Traffic noise	2	
Zebra crossing for school		
Re-level road at Maddy to reduce floods		
More traffic calming at Saxons' Heath junction		
Gateway and extend 30mpd towards Didcot		
Bus shelter opposite Saxons' Heath		
Re-surface Sustrans route Poplars to Moor Ditch		
Improve cycle safety at Cross		
Improve pedestrian safety Fieldside/Didcot Road		
Resolve Northfield Lane right of way claim		
Create circular walks		

Housing		
Small houses for young/those downsizing (ring fence for locals)	5	
Retirement apartments with warden		
Cap on extensions		
Shared ownership		
Village Hub		
Tennis court		
Support for local businesses/home workers including parcel pick up/office facilities/meeting point/banking		
Like Standlake Village Hall		
New village hall		
Shop	3	
All weather courts		
Play area		
Other issues		
Broadband speed	7	
Mobile phone reception	3	
Youth club	2	
Sports coaching for children		
Baby/toddler group		
Aircraft noise	2	
Public parking and slipway at Maddy		
Better facilities at Bodkins		
Improve allotments- access and water		
Public open space		
River play area (Ward's field)		
Flood alleviation projects		
Riparian owners to clear ditches		