

Report of public meeting to as part of the public consultation for Long Wittenham's Neighbourhood Plan (NP).

Long Wittenham Village Hall on 19/1/2017.

The meeting was convened by Steve Brown (Chair, Parish Council) and Peter Rose, (Chair, Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee) 38 residents attended

A presentation was made explaining the history of the NP and the current plan:

- The previous plan went to consultation in July 2016. There were a number of comments received, including from SODC. We received several opinions about the way to proceed. Sue Lawson (District councillor) and John Cotton (Leader SODC) facilitated the discussions with SODC planning department to enable us to agree a way forward.
- The baseline evidence for the NP showed that Long Wittenham was currently unsustainable (no bus, no shop, aging community facilities). Therefore no additional housing can be contemplated unless sustainability is improved: this could be achieved with improved infrastructure such as new community facilities.
- AECOM were commissioned to look at these issues. They confirmed our previous assessment of sites and the general lack of sustainability of the village with current infrastructure.
- The aims of the current plan are unchanged, but we have been advised to proceed through a Community Right to Build Order or planning application for the development of a community hub and houses should a suitable site come forward that is economically viable.
- We were advised by SODC to revise the green buffer area to make it clear that it is identified as an ecologically sensitive zone. The objective for a village green remains, but not as one of the NP policies as this is within the control of the parish council in any case if the rest of our objectives are achieved. The policy on car parking also remains, but this may be challenged as it is at variance with Oxfordshire County Council policy
- The idea of renovating the school rather than rebuilding it had again been assessed but it was confirmed that this is not a viable option
- The public consultation ends mid February. Providing there are no major objections, we hope to submit the plan by the end of February. The plan will be assessed by SODC and then sent to an inspector for final approval. This process takes at least 3 months and will be followed by a referendum.

Questions were taken from the audience, mainly clarifications of the above points. One person asked for a vote of those in favour of the current plan and a large majority were in favour. It was pointed out that the pre-school had established a building fund previously but this might not be available for other purposes. Once the final plans are approved, additional funds to build and equip the new village hall would be available through grants. Ongoing running costs of the new village hall would be covered by an endowment or community trust fund set up with some of the profit from the sale of market housing.