

Neighbourhood Plan Village Briefing 2nd April 2016

Introduction

The Steering Group and I would like to thank all of you for giving up part of your Saturday afternoon to come along to this briefing. A particular thanks to those of you who have stayed on after giving up your morning to help with Village Community Day clean up. You can spot them quite easily; they're the ones with a smug look on their faces and bacon between the teeth!

As chairman of the Steering Group, I would like to introduce the other members of the committee who are present today being Richard Folkes, Maureen Atkinson, Graham Lloyd, Charles Penn, Barry Lake. There are other members who due to other commitments cannot be here today; they are, Peter Biggins, Dan Steedman, Mark Laver and Christopher Campbell-Jones.

Our role is to develop on behalf of the residents of this parish a Neighbourhood Plan. We hope that we will not be doing this alone, that members of the community will assist in all or part of our work. To be really successful this must be a community effort and not just another piece of bureaucracy being imposed from above. Neighbourhood Plans came out of the government's Localism Act of 2011 that, among other things, places greater control over planning decisions at the local level - within limits naturally!

Where We are Now

The steering group has been working on developing a Neighbourhood Plan for some time now. We have reached the stage where we have:

- **Received Neighbourhood area designation.** At the village meeting on 21st March last year a decision was taken to make the parish boundary the neighbourhood plan boundary. This was submitted to Wiltshire Council for approval, and following the necessary bureaucratic procedures our area designation was approved in December. The significance of this is that the Winterbourne's neighbourhood plan project is recognised by the council; we formally exist.
- **Housing Needs Survey.** Over last summer the Winterbournes took part in a housing needs survey, which was done on behalf of Wiltshire Council. Although not specifically part of the neighbourhood plan process the results will be very useful in the steering groups deliberations and to the community when it comes to vote on the plan's proposals. Some interesting statistics resulted from the survey:
 - Over 80% of residents said they were owner-occupiers. This figure should be taken with some caution, there may have been a bias by owner-occupiers to complete the survey.
 - Over 60% of respondents have lived in the parish for over 10 years. We are a pretty stable community.
 - 66%, or two thirds, of respondents were over 45 years old, with nearly 35% being over 65 years old. We are an ageing population. We need to attract more young people into the village if we are to avoid problems in the future.
 - 84% of respondents said they supported some new houses being built in the village. Therefore 16% did not.

- The type of new housing supported were:
 - Starter homes: 67%
 - Older peoples accommodation: 38%
 - Homes for rent and other schemes: 55%
 - None: 15%
 Respondents could chose more than one category hence the total is greater than 100.
- People were asked if they were looking for housing within the village and if so what type. Of those who were, 56% said they were looking for one or two bedroom houses.
- The high cost of housing, the limited availability and high cost of rental accommodation is the greatest hurdle for people wishing to move into the village.

It is important to remember that the survey was completed by people who are already living in the village. Therefore there may be people living outside the village who wish to live here. Their views are not reflected in these figures.

Review of the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. At the last village meeting we displayed maps with all the SHLAAs within the village. I'll remind you what a SHLAA is, apart from being one of the ugliest acronyms I have ever heard. The SHLAA database holds details of any land that has been suggested as being available for development. Anyone can propose a SHLAA to Wiltshire Council, one would hope that is it the landowner but this is not always the case. Last year I quoted the Spatial Planning Officer at Wilshire Council saying that SHLAAs were simply starting points to any possible planning process and that they have no status in that process at all. He went on to say that the Neighbourhood Plan should consider each SHLAA site for possible new builds and could rule some or all out and could identify sites that had not been designated as a SHLAA. To quote him, "the community knows their area better than the council".

At the meeting we received some very useful comments and criticisms about individual SHLAAs from the community and we put them together in a report for the Parish Council to send to Wiltshire Council. I understand that the publication of the updated list of SHLAAs has been put back until autumn this year. Therefore, if you live in Summerlug you will be interested to know that fields around you are listed as "land adjacent to Salisbury Hospital" and the field at the top of Figsbury Road is in fact "26 Endless Street, Salisbury".

That aside, SHLAAs will play a part in the steering groups deliberations. Wiltshire Council have said that proposals in a neighbourhood plan for development on an existing SHLAA will be viewed more kindly than on a site that is not so designated. That does not mean that we can only consider developing on SHLAA land. Remember what the Spatial Planning Officer said "the community knows best".

Relationship with Planning Process

I want to restate what I said at the village meeting last year. It is important to emphasise that the Neighbourhood Plan is not a NIMBY's charter. It cannot be used to try to halt any further development within a community. Central and local governments have development policies and targets, particularly at this time of housing shortage. Just as Wiltshire's policies have to meet central government's policies, so the Neighbourhood Plan has to conform to the county's policies. One of the things that the independent examiner will check is that the Neighbourhood Plan is

compliant and if it is not it will be rejected. I have heard that there have been cases around the country where neighbourhood plans have been submitted that did not meet their county's core plan, or even accepted no development in their community at all. These have all been rejected by the independent examiner, meaning that many people have wasted their time on nugatory work.

However, where a community has a neighbourhood plan in place it will be the first check that the planners will make when considering a planning application. If the application is against the provisions of the neighbourhood plan, it will be rejected.

Within the Wiltshire Core Plan the Winterbournes are grouped with five other villages in the Amesbury Community Area and between us we have to take 345 new dwellings. This plan covers the period 2006 to 2026, so after those houses that have already been built or are due to be built, the Winterbournes will have to accept about 30 houses by 2026.

There can be advantages to allowing development within your community. A developer has to pay what is unofficially called a "roof tax" for every house they build. Normally the local parish council gets 15% of this but if you have a neighbourhood plan in place this rises to 25%.

In addition, communities can negotiate with developers for "goodies" in return for the community allowing the development to take place. We desperately need a school car park so that could be a useful "goody" to negotiate.

The final point to make is that the neighbourhood plan will state where the community is prepared to accept development and what type of housing it will be. All developments will still have to go through the normal planning procedures.

One issue we have begun to investigate is the level of "goody" we can expect for the amount of development that will take place in the village. It may be that our ambitions are unrealistic or we may be offered an amenity that would be a tremendous asset to the community. Were that to be the case then it may be felt that the community could allow for more development in the village than the current allocation demands. The neighbourhood plan will address this issue and contain an upper limit above which the community would not accept further development, however attractive the "goody" on offer was. Any proposal to increase the number of houses above the allocation would have to be put to a village meeting where the community would vote whether to accept the increase or reject it.

Way Forward

So where have we got to? The steering committee have drafted a Vision statement for the Winterbournes for 2026. The statement gives an aspiration of how we wish the village to be by that date. Like all Vision statements it is very high level, lacking in a great detail and ambitious. That said, we hope that it is not unrealistic or unrealisable. Anyway, here it is.

"In 2026 the Winterbournes will still be a predominately agricultural community conserving its natural and built heritage whilst promoting a safe, family focused and invigorating environment enabling growth and quality of life for all, including both the young and the elderly. The Winterbournes will continue to flourish as three conjoined villages in a rural setting that will offer the advantages of easy access to the cities of Salisbury, Winchester and Southampton. Local developments will have been carefully managed so as not to disrupt the heart and character of the community.

Overall, the Winterbournes will be a sustainable, vibrant and thriving community in harmony with its environment.”

From the Vision statement we have extracted a number of objectives that must be satisfied before the vision is achieved. This is the start of putting flesh on the bones of the vision. These objectives are grouped under various headings, which are: Housing; Countryside; Transport and Access and finally Business.

However before I discuss these objectives with you there is an important fact that you should be aware of. Neighbourhood planning is all about land usage, what we want built and where, what type of houses do we want, what open spaces do we want to protect, how we want our village and countryside to look. The point of neighbourhood planning is to give communities a degree of control over such issues. However, there are some issues that we, as a community, wish to see addressed. Traffic through the village, frequency of busses and the quality of the Internet and other communications issues spring to mind. Sadly, these are issues over which we have far less control so we can raise them in the neighbourhood plan as an aspiration but with far less clout than over land usage. Clearly bus frequency and routes and Internet speeds are the responsibility of Salisbury Reds and the Internet providers who will take a hard commercial view. Likewise traffic is the responsibility of Wiltshire council. The neighbourhood plan will give some democratic authority behind our demands but the final decision rests elsewhere.

Let's look at the Housing Objectives first.

“Respond to the housing needs and County Council requirements of the Winterbournes and Hurdcott through sympathetic development on greenfield and infill sites.

- The Winterbournes plan to expand by a minimum of 30 houses between now and 2026 as laid down in the Wiltshire Core Plan.
- Seek to extract the maximum community benefit from these houses.
- Any additional housing development beyond the minimum requirement above will only be accepted should there be significant benefits to the community.

Promote a mix of dwellings, through affordable housing, to enable young first-time buyers, the single and the elderly to remain in the village.

Build all new dwellings to ‘Lifetime Homes’ standards so that they are capable of adaptation as people’s needs change through their lives.

Ensure all new development is in keeping with the character of the Winterbournes.

Ensure that historic buildings and their settings remain protected.

Lifetime Homes Standard is a series of 16 design criteria intended to make homes more easily adaptable for lifetime use at minimal cost.”

Now we move onto the Countryside objectives. Since about 90% of the parish area is countryside we must ensure that this is protected by the neighbourhood plan as rigorously as the villages. The objectives are:

“Care for and protect the farmland.

Retain the Winterbournes as three villages with a distinct identity sitting in a rural setting.

Preserve Hurdcott, with its historical identity as a separate hamlet.

Retain and enhance the character and appeal of the existing conservation areas and unique assets of the parish, including the water meadows and the wildlife that thrive there.

Protect the countryside, and access to it, surrounding the Winterbournes from inappropriate development. *(For example low lying land at risk of flooding eg the River Bourne and up to Figsbury Ring.)*

Protect public green space in the following areas: []”

You will see that the public green spaces referred to in the last bullet point have been left blank. This is a very important area and we wish to get residents help in identifying them. You know where the green spaces are and you know how important an asset to your part of the village each particular site is. Therefore we will be seeking your views to ensure that no space is omitted by mistake.

Some of the countryside matters may be subject to scrutiny beyond the independent examiner. Any proposals contained in the neighbourhood plan covering, say, the flood plain, will have to be passed by the relevant authority and anything which could possibly impact on historical sites will have to be passed by Historic England. Speaking to some other NPSG members these are not mere formalities. They can be quite irksome, indeed some have caused considerable delay and reworking. To quote one, hopefully extreme, example, Historic England told the Idmiston NPSG that they were not so concerned with the historic sites in their parish that they knew about, it was the ones they didn't know about that they were worried about! How do you answer that?

Let's move on to Transport and Access. Here we are getting into the area where we may have limited influence. The objectives are:

“Address and implement a solution for the provision of parking and drop-off facilities at the local primary school.

Maintain a safe network of access for pedestrians, cyclists, motorists and horse riders throughout the Winterbournes.

Maintain a safe network of footpaths and bridleways into the countryside to the neighbouring villages and City of Salisbury.

Improved bus services and cycle links.

Improve traffic management with enhanced traffic calming measures.

Improve pedestrian safety and amenity.”

The resolution of the awful traffic problems associated with the drop off and pick up of the school children has got to be a priority for the village and hopefully the neighbourhood plan will assist in that. The parish council are responsible for

footpaths within the parish but other issues are outside the parish's, and therefore the neighbourhood plan's authority or direct influence, as I have said. We can demonstrate our democratically arrived at demands but the decisions are for others.

Finally we move on to Business objectives. The Winterbournes need a vibrant commercial community to provide us with services and attract new people to the village. Business is a many varied thing, from visible enterprises such as shops and pubs to the hidden, people working from home. They all have one thing in common, they need the right infrastructure to support them in their work. Hopefully the neighbourhood plan can contribute towards this. The Business objectives we have drafted are:

“Maintain successful local businesses such as the village post office and the two pubs.

Attract new, start-up businesses and make the Winterbournes a thriving hub for small businesses

Lobby for provision of superfast broadband and enhanced communication tools for home workers

Build in ‘Hot Office’ facilities to developments for those seeking small office and workspace facilities on flexible terms.”

At this stage I want to make a plea for members of the Winterbournes business community to assist us with the neighbourhood plan. Our steering group lacks people with experience of running a business in the village and I think that this is a real gap in our knowledge. So please, could one or more of you join us, either on the steering committee or else offer to develop ideas about how the neighbourhood plan can help the business community.

Now you have seen our draft Vision and Objectives I would like to say “over to you”. We are doing this work on behalf of the community, hopefully for the community's gain. To succeed we need your help, we need your thoughts and dare I say it, we need your brickbats. If you think that what we have shown us is rubbish please tell us, politely please, but tell us. If you think that there is something that we have missed then tell us what it is. Don't be afraid, we have no pride of authorship, and are the first to acknowledge that we are fallible and need your advice. I am not looking for suggestions now, although they would be very welcome. If you could take some time to mull over what you have seen and heard today and wish to comment later then the various websites and contact details are displayed here. The script for this talk and the PowerPoint slides will be put up onto the neighbourhood plan website shortly so that you can re-read what we have drafted at you leisure. The more we get from you the better the end result will be.

[Call for Assistance](#)

Up to now we have been working out what we have to do, not an easy task with something so new and whilst our advisors at Wiltshire were facing the same challenges. After that we have been thinking about what we want the community to look like in ten years time and how to achieve it. That is what we have presented to you today.

The next stages will require much more detailed work. As well as more detailed we expect it to become much harder and controversial. I have said that we will be

required to accept about 30 new dwellings in the village over the next ten years. Where are they going to be built? What type of houses? What are they going to look like? What are the open spaces that we wish to protect?

We will be looking to the residents for assistance in this process. More than that we will be trying to achieve as much of a consensus as possible. We will therefore be asking you if anyone has plans build a house over the next few years in your garden or in any infill land that you may own. We will be asking for your preferences for where you think that larger groups of houses should be sited. Clearly the most important people in this process will be the landowners and their views will be crucial.

I have already put in a plea for help from members of the business community in developing our neighbourhood plan, now I want to ask for more general help. Currently there are ten members of the steering group, most of who have busy jobs and all have busy lives. We cannot, and frankly must not write the plan on our own. We need a broader spread of experience from within the community. We are asking that you volunteer as much time as you feel that you can to help in this very important project.

If you have any planning process experience, particularly from the council side, we would love to hear from you. If you have any architectural or town planning experience, likewise. Anyone with experience in the building trade would, I am sure, be invaluable. If you have experience in environmental or archaeological work we will be able to make use of your skills. Above all, if you have any experience that we have not thought about but you think will be useful, please let us know.

We already have a pool of wonderful volunteers who help with such tasks as leaflet distribution but we could always use some more.

There may come a time when dedicated researchers will be needed to develop the Neighbourhood Plan so a pool of willing researchers will be necessary.

So please help, the more of you who get involved will give us a fighting chance of producing a Neighbourhood Plan that really helps the village develop in the way we require. Please speak to any of us after this talk and discuss how you could help.

Finally I would like to repeat the thanks of the steering group to all of you for giving up your afternoon to come along to hear what we had to say. Thank you also for your interest in the neighbourhood plan. Between us I am sure that we can produce something that will be an asset to the community.

Any questions:

Q&A session.

Thank you very much for coming along this afternoon and showing an interest in the future of our village.

Before you leave I would like to hand you over to Maureen who wish to say a few words about the Best Kept Village competition.