

Annual Parish Meeting, Wheatley 20 April 2016.

Keynote Speech

John Fox,

Chairman,

Wheatley Neighbourhood Plan

Our first correspondence was from the Windmill Society.

Wheatley Windmill, fully restored, is a 'considerable amenity' with 'visitor numbers rising year-on-year'.

However, a working windmill depends on 'a clear view from and to it' and above all on 'an unobstructed flow of wind'.

In 3 months we have generated a year's wind and thank Roy for his encouragement

Our Neighbourhood Plan Committee is up and running. We are one of many Communities claiming a voice in Local Planning. After strict inspection and safeguards, Wheatley's voice will become a statutory part of District and National Planning.

We are 21 local residents, all volunteers from open meetings. We have drawn up Terms of Reference, a Budget and a Road Map clear to follow, flexible to include snags. We have divided into 5 Teams – see SLIDE later.

It is large, but openly recruited. It has expertise, experience and most importantly, wisdom. 8/21 are still in full time work. All are Wheatley / Holton residents expert on being resident ! In January most of us were strangers, and we have moved a distance in that time. I find the good will impressive and I'm proud of the Committee. We also argue hard !

Our core business is new Housing which the Neighbourhood will be required to accommodate. The lack of homes is a national anxiety. The cost of homes is a national scandal. *Not in My Backyard* NIMBY and anti-development campaigns are understandable when people feel anxious and ambushed.

The Neighbourhood Plan is banned from being a protest platform or campaign. It has to record what it hears about allocated new housing, positive and negative. Between April and approximately the end of the year, we are ready to listen, using every channel.

I came here 43 years ago. London Rd was governed by the national speed limit. Two neighbouring children died on it. There was anger but demand for limits was rejected. 'Not enough lamps' was the big reason. A political party formed called Village Concern I did four years on the WPC. Finally 40 mph came and later 30. In 1986 they moved the primary school from Church Rd to present site. The inhabited area of our linear village is 2 miles. Those living on the eastern end – including our my youngest - had to walk a mile instead of half a mile in a village short on pavements and paths. Then came the M40 extension 25 years ago. We all use it. Public meetings were then warning of traffic suction / osmosis and it has happened, along with a massive increase in HGV weights and loads.

I say that because the evidence we hear from the village will not be censored, if you express it. There are several elephants in the room, traffic not least. At the same time we submit it to the Planning Authority not the roads authority, District not County.

I come back to the core of our Plan being about new housing. Our job is to listen and put out the biggest ears we can contrive. We will then report on how **sustainable** that new housing proposal may be and what may need doing to make it so. You will hear much about

. SUSTAINABILITY

Here's a glimpse

Slides

- *Leaflet Front - Prison, not Windmill !*
- *5 support and focus Teams*
- *Neighbourhood Map including built-on Brookes site.*
- *Core Focus Teams and Issues as They are Now, pre-Housing allocation*
 - *Housing at the Centre*
 - *Infrastructure*
 - *Community and Business*
- *Ways to get in touch*

Have you ever fought a hostile planning application ? The shock of work to be done yesterday. The shock of ambush. The feeling of being an amateur lone voice up against consultants. Having to get up before District Council or even Whitehall Inspector. And the writing

I repeat, new Housing will be allocated. Before we report back to SODC in 2017 to claim our place in the Local Plan, we will have listened to and talked through with the community on the sustainability of that new housing. This is a calm, measured coming to terms with reality, but also an opportunity to help change our Neighbourhood for the long term good. Wheatley had fewer than 1000 residents in 1921. Today it has 4000. In 1970 it was still part of the road to Birmingham. Today it is a two and a half mile long ribbon (some would say a slip-road) alongside and linked to a 24-hour national highway 25 years old .

SOCIETIES & GROUPS – PLEASE INVITE US IN TO LISTEN !