

Held at Wheatley C of E Primary School (Academy), 2pm to 3.30pm

Present: David Mancey and Simon Shew (Wheatley Neighbourhood Plan members), David Locke (Chief Operating Officer and Finance Director, Oxford Diocese) and Karen McKenzie (Headteacher, Wheatley Primary School)

After introductions, a wide-ranging open discussion followed, during which the following areas were explored:

1. School capacity

Karen said that the current roll was 345, and that the school capacity would be 420. It was recognised that, with the likely large housing development on the Brookes site, the school would need to plan for a greater number of primary children than this. Wheatley Neighbourhood Plan were working to a figure of 300+ new houses; Brookes had mentioned 750 new houses.

2. Parking Issues

It was agreed that parking outside the school was a problem, and needed to be resolved. With likely increased housing, especially on the Brookes site (Wheatley Campus), the problem will get far worse without action. A few ideas were explored.

3. Possible Future Developments

Looking to the future, it was agreed that any changes to the school and its environment should be for the better. It was recognised that the current buildings were designed for a secondary modern school in 1950's, and probably not conducive to the needs of a modern primary school today, for example, some classrooms are twice as large as they need to be.

David Locke did not want to close doors to future ideas for change. He referred to Barbara Chilman (OCC Service Manager for Pupil Placements) who was responsible for demographics and strategies for new schools in the county, and that he was working with her on new developments, as it affected the Diocese. He recognised that the current site was not an easy one, and sharing it with Social Services and three other users was a further difficulty.

Simon Shew (Architect, WNP) outlined possible ideas for a possible new school. These included a new joint usage community hall to meet the needs of an enlarged village community; the Merry Bells is small, inflexible and inferior to village halls in other local villages. The current school has been used by the local drama group over many decades

for their productions, and a new hall would enhance this facility and further community engagement. If any new school development could include space for the current youth club and registry office, this could create space for a small housing development for the elderly, not far from a bus stop.

David Locke did raise the possibility of a redesign within the 'shell' of the existing building, which may enable phased development, and cost less than a completely new structure.

The desire of the community to maintain access to the playing fields for sporting activity, may limit redevelopment potential.

The idea of a new school on the Brookes site was discussed, but Simon Shew and David Mancey said that the vision within WNP was that we should encourage less car movement around the village. (In an earlier discussion with Karen, DM had sought support for a new green walking route to the primary school, and a small survey of parents had supported this idea).

4. Financial Implications

David Locke stated that much of the money for Academies came from DfE, but the risks would be borne by the Diocese. Karen stated that in the current climate, only whole classes were financially viable to a school's finances.

David Locke considered how we can put all this together. We all agreed that there was a window of opportunity for creative change, and that funding may be available from other sources eg. Community Funding from building new houses David Locke did, however, point out that development funding (CIL and Section 106) tends to look for the cheapest way in which additional accommodation can be provided. Simon Shew wondered if Heritage Lottery Funding may be available for Community elements

More information would be sought: David Locke would discuss further with Barbara Chilman and then with Karen McKenzie, to move the ideas forward.

5. Wheatley Neighbourhood Plan

The draft WNP is currently with south Oxford District Council, for comment. Before final draft, content from this meeting can be incorporated. Consultants are currently developing their plans for the Brookes site. WNP will be completed this year (2017), following a village referendum and handed back to the Parish Council. DM and SS were keen to continue the dialogue through this period, and beyond, to seek a positive outcome with the Diocese.

David Mancey (WNP) (30th March, 2017)

