

WNP Bi-Monthly Report to WPC July-August 2016, [presented 5 September].

‘Acceleration’ is now the new norm, even in August. **The goal posts moved at the end of May.** 200 houses had been required of Wheatley, and the Brookes site was simply a space to be watched. Suddenly no housing was required in Wheatley and SODC focussed on the ‘**Brownfield Site Opportunity**’ offered by Brookes if and when sold. It is one of two B.S.O.s in Oxfordshire, the second being at Culham. SODC stated that the Brookes site offered ‘a likely net capacity of at least 300 dwellings’. On August 11 Brookes confirmed to WNP and WPC that the site was being put on sale.

Listening is the primary WNP brief. The 1860 homes in Wheatley and Holton make it a logistical challenge, but our Evidence Base is certainly growing. Some 750 Straw Polls went out in May-June, and **452 [60.2%] were completed.** Our Open Day on 7 May brought in **40 Straw Poll returns, 100+ visitors and poster-sheets galore filled with scribbled feedback.** At the time, the Brookes site was a blank canvas, open to ideas. Our second Open Day (alongside SODC on 13 July) brought in **46 WNP responses to the new proposals. (Responses sent direct to SODC will also be available for our use.)** We now have a team (? *The Distillery*) in charge of distilling evidence accrued since January. Independent Inspectors will want proof that WNP has tried to listen. David Harverson, a proved and trusted community member, is ‘Chief Distiller’.

A Survey (the BIG questionnaire) went out in August to all 1860 homes. We work with Holton as closely as possible, under the Neighbourhood Plan agreement. Community First Oxfordshire will analyse the Housing section of the *Survey*, but WNP will analyse the localised questionnaire (Part 5) which we appended to it. **So far [1 September] we have 575 [31 %] returns.** The number of volunteers and street reps who have stepped forward / phoned / emailed has been so encouraging. We believe no home was left out. Thankyou everyone out there for the encouragement you give to our effort – new territory for all of us.

I asked in January 2016 ‘**How many homes were built here since 1980 ?**’ Roger Bell and Audrey Parsons researched the answer, which seems to be ‘at least 351’. They now cover the Station site, railway cuttings and other infills in the village. The new site (51 houses) on upper London Rd was granted permission on 31 March 2016, therefore outside the remit of WNP (which starts 1 April !). It was no surprise that SODC agreed in June that Wheatley is full.

It does not mean that WNP work on potential Wheatley sites has been shelved. Our Housing Group (including two architects with lifetimes of

expertise), has spent months analysing 21 village sites for availability, ownership, infill, relocation and more. The Land Register may be venerable, but it creaks. We don't rush to publish, out of respect for landowners' private intentions, but the painstaking work is in progress. In July, using the Primary School email link with parents, a survey was taken about how parents get to the Primary Academy at Littleworth from across the village and further afield. It is being analysed. Pavements are notably lacking in Wheatley. They are 19th century town furniture, not medieval. Now that town traffic has penetrated medieval villages, pavements become an issue. Station Road has a pavement as narrow as 25-inches. Old London Road is mostly unpaved. A car recently hit *The King's Arms* on Church Rd because NO pavement separated them.

On 7 September I have invited senior SODC Planners to clear the air with WNP committee members about the Brookes site. They will be questioned, courteously, but firmly. No *senior* planners attended our village SODC consultation on 13 July. Too many suspicions remain for WNP to ignore: e.g. 300 homes on Brookes, but now they talk of 600 ? Much complaint countywide speaks of failed promises to renew Infrastructure for new developments: will it happen in a development the size of Brookes ? Half-truths and vagueness worry and divide the community. They need scotching. Hopefully the exchange will be frank.

Questionnaires are only part of listening. We are also listening to individuals and organisations. The Chairmen of WPC and HPC have met formally with WNP to help with the next stage of consulting through small workshops representing both villages. We have a slot booked with Wheatley & Littleworth WI, one of the oldest in the country. We are exploring talks with OCC (New Development Infrastructure). We meet Oxford Brookes University Estates staff late in September. WNP also wants to hear from the village churches, CofE, URC, Catholic and Evangelical Their membership crosses the social and age divide, and they often have a finger on the community pulse.

Things are moving and 'accelerating'. **I am already drafting 'Wheatley Today', Section 1 of the WNP 'Report', to be published in later draft for public comment in November-December.** Research shows that Wheatley has been an OCC traffic concern much longer than we realised; uniquely for an Oxfordshire village, its air has also been monitored; its parking has for some time been regarded as problematic. This gives strong backing material for our own more recent evidence.

The volunteer street-rep response to deliver and collect Poll and Survey has been impressive and by the dozen. WNP has encountered much community good will. From the Parish Council too, Roger Bell has given of his time and

experience; Toby Newman, SODC & Parish councillor, sits on the WNP Committee; Jim Reilly and Paul Willmott are street reps and known in the community (their motto, 'How can we help?'). Paula Hood, Ian Roberts and Patricia Bignell have pressed to work more closely with WNP. The Parish Council will still be Wheatley's local authority when NP disperses. Maureen Stephens, the Chairman's wife, has called out her 'mountain reservists' at Littleworth whenever high altitude delivery and collecting is needed. Gareth in the Parish Office makes WNP feel welcome (even when they are frazzling him) and has helped us enormously. My thanks to our supportive community.

John Fox,
Chairman,
Wheatley Neighbourhood Plan

1 September 2016.

John Fox, Chairman Wheatley Neighbourhood Plan