

Wheatley Neighbourhood Plan Report. July 2018

John Fox, Chairman WNP Committee

The aim is that by the autumn of 2018, the Final Draft of Wheatley Neighbourhood Plan will be presented to Wheatley PC, (Qualifying Body) and copied to Holton PC, for submission to SODC and an independent Examiner. An Open Day will be held before that Presentation, and a second between the Examiner's findings and the Referendum

The Plan in outline is what was presented for Public Consultation in May 2017, but in much more polished form to include our consultations with the community. It includes the Strategic Site allocation at OBU in Holton, and WNP-proposed Enhancement in Wheatley (Littleworth and sites in eastern Wheatley). Traffic is the leading community concern, but beyond the WNP brief of Land Use. However, once Land Use proposals become serious, Infrastructure discussion (including traffic) can take place. OCC would collapse if it had to talk through everyone's bright idea or complaint as soon as floated. Our first meeting with OCC was in January 2018, after our two years work on Land Use came near to being completed.

In December 2017, Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England secured an order on us for an Environmental Report, prompted by concern about flooding behind Ms Tomb's Field, Holton Park history and the SSSI at Littleworth Claypits. We contracted the work out to experts. It is a positive delay which strengthens our Plan. We also use the extra time to refine our documentation - and to continue to learn from it.

The same experts are looking at our Wheatley 'enhancement sites', asking 'Why here, and not there?' Again, it is time well spent, reinforcing our reasons for choices, and making us more confident about Examination. To their immense credit, Roy, Mike and Simon have spent at least 12 afternoons at SODC, 36 miles round trip away, in talks with our Adviser Ricardo Rios, who has long ago secured our respect.

A statutory Consultation Statement has been composed showing how we have tried to listen to the community since January 2016, and confirming what we have heard. WNP is a rare opportunity for a community voice to be heard on the use of local land and to be given legal weight. In sum, we have a secondary voice in the Strategic Site at Brookes, while OCC (in principle) and SODC (via the Local Plan) support our 'Enhancement' proposals to include a small amount of housing both at Littleworth and on Ms Tombs' Field, a new burial ground, some much-needed Green Open Space and some village business relocation. These enhancements have been facilitated by the proposals for Green Belt release published in the SODC Local Plan which WNP supports. The potential benefits to Wheatley for enhancement and rationalising outweigh the disadvantage of loss of a small part of the Green Belt.

We have complied with the new Data Protection Regulation (May 2018), contacting volunteers and personnel. Our Basic Conditions document will soon be completed by outside experts. A new clear series of maps is being produced and will include traffic hotspots. In September, Wheatley PC will inaugurate its new Infrastructure and Capacities Committee with the crucial role of liaising with OCC and other statutory bodies with whom WNP have worked.