

# Wheatley Neighbourhood Plan Committee, Annual Report, April 2021

## 1. Events of the last 12 months

a) Following the examination of the Wheatley Neighbourhood Plan, the Examiner issued his Report in February 2020. He required modifications to the original submission version of the WNP by altering the Enhancement proposals in Sections 10 and 11. On 2 April 2020, SODC accepted his modifications as unavoidable in view of the long delay in progressing South Oxfordshire's Local Plan [LP]. In the absence of a Local Plan, the Examiner used the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy 2012 document instead. Of the three elements in the Enhancement proposals, only that relating to potential *change of use* of a brownfield site in Littleworth was retained. The Examiner noted however that once the South Oxfordshire Local Plan had been adopted, some or all of the work undertaken on the proposed Wheatley allocations for Enhancement could be consolidated and updated in a post-Referendum review of the neighbourhood Plan. It should be pointed out that the Examiner could not have anticipated the current 15 month delay between Examination (concluded February 2020) and the postponed Referendum (now due 6 May 2021) due mainly to the epidemic.

b) The Examiner warned of a second issue beyond our control, beside the lack of an SODC Local Plan, namely the Secretary of State's response to the OBU Appeal for 500 houses. In April 2020 this appeal was upheld and outline planning permission granted. *'Among other reasons'* cited for allowing the appeal, was that *'it helps maximise the potential of the Cambridge-MK-Oxford Arc.'* Today, (April 2021), no development timetable has been published for the OBU site. On 18 March 2021, the Dept of Transport announced the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway project cancelled, as *'benefits were outweighed by costs ... [with] no cost-effective option for the taxpayer.'*

c) The SODC Local Plan (LP 2035) was finally adopted in December 2020, 10 months after the WNP Examination. In January 2021, SODC began Consultation on a proposal to *'deviate'*, i.e. to reinstate the text and policies in Sections 10 and 11, which the Examiner had required to be deleted. After this Consultation, SODC *'took further interpretation of the regulations'* and decided that its agreement of 2 April 2020 that the WNP had been correctly examined at the time in the context of the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy 2012 *'cannot be revisited'*. The *'deviation'* proposal was withdrawn. The WNP in its Examined form will go to Referendum with no reinstatement of those Enhancement proposals which the Examiner had deleted. After a positive Referendum vote, this will be reviewed in the normal Neighbourhood Plan Review procedure [Para. 2b), below].

## 2. The next 12 months.

a) A positive Referendum result on 06 May will give the WNP its statutory planning role. Our Consultation Statement and Website show all our community consultations since 2016 and the Statement has been Examined. We have reported routinely and regularly to both Wheatley and Holton Parish Councils. Post-Referendum, WNP Committee's major responsibility will be the WNP Review

b) With LP 2035 adopted by SODC (December 2020) and a WNP hopefully approved at Referendum, the key Review of the neighbourhood Plan as advised by the Examiner can commence. In keeping with normal procedure for an NP Review, we will consult the community, including on the reinstatement of all the key Enhancement proposals. (LP2035 already sets out provisions for the WNP to make detailed amendments to the Green Belt.)

The Green Belt proposed to be released in the Enhancement proposals is at Ms Tombs' Field and the land around the Bungalows Community by ASDA.

### **3. Traffic / Roads**

a) The WNP Committee reminded SODC in January, that the latest village developments (OBU 500 homes and the Care Home on Park Hill), will increase traffic pressure on a village which WNP already calls 'a two mile unofficial slip road to the M40 complex'. The Committee of 19 residents know their village and live here, one of the arguments for Neighbourhood Planning. Our two architects describe Committee work on the proposed Enhancements, as 'the luxury of 2-3 years of *positive* planning.' The whole Committee has learned from nearly six years of advanced listening. The WNP text highlights community concern over traffic, roads, noise and air quality, and gives space to OCC Highways' own comments on the nearby motorway complex. The A40 dual carriageway forms a village boundary. Our website Evidence Bases also record in much detail community concerns about roads, traffic and air quality.

[[www.wheatleyneighbourhoodplan.co.uk](http://www.wheatleyneighbourhoodplan.co.uk)]

b) In 2018, we spent two hours with OCC Highways – a meeting chaired by a WNP Committee member with an agenda of village concerns. That was over three years ago. At the end of the meeting, OCC said 'Come back when your Plan has been through Referendum.' If the WNP is approved by the Referendum, it will give the community the statutory voice with which to share its knowledge and ideas about local roads and traffic with OCC Highways in a sustained dialogue.

### **Conclusion**

The WNP Committee has been proud to try to serve its community. In turn we all owe thanks to the 130+ Volunteers who so often delivered /collected leaflets / questionnaires, helped lay out displays, ran refreshments and encouraged us as a team by phone, email, irreverent humour and especially by turning out during those four hectic years before we submitted the WNP to the Examiner.

We look forward to a positive Referendum and to Reviewing the WNP afterwards.

**Please Vote !**

John Fox / Roy Gordon  
Chair / vice Chair  
& The Members of WNP Committee

*April 2021*