



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Consultation 3 generated over 1100 individual comments and questions and we have picked out the ones which came up most often. They are presented in the form of FAQs together with answers. They have been put together by the Forum Coordination Group and the NP Steering Committee. For any further information please contact Rachel at the Parish office or by email: wmdp@watlingtonnp.org.uk

TRAFFIC

Q: How will the re-aligned B4009 be paid for?

A: The developers will be expected to pay a portion of the cost.

The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) will contribute if the proposed development at Chalgrove Airfield is approved.

The District Council is likely to contribute as the new section of road is part of their plans for strategic infrastructure

The County Council can apply for new funding announced by the Government

Oxfordshire County Council, as the Highways Authority, will need to approve a specification for the new section of road before the full costs are calculated.

Q: How can we ensure that the realigned road is constructed before the new housing is built?

A: The Neighbourhood Plan makes sure that land is provided for the road through the sites which have been allocated for development. The most important issue is for the new section of road to be approved by Oxfordshire County Council as the Highway Authority before construction of new houses starts. Watlington Parish Council will do everything in its power to ensure that this occurs as the developers submit their applications for site developments.

Q: How can we make sure that the new section of the B4009 works for Watlington?

A: Watlington will benefit from a significant portion of through traffic being diverted around the town. The County Council has jurisdiction on all technical details of any new section of road that is constructed. The aim of the Neighbourhood Plan is to ensure that any new section of road matches the B4009 on the Shirburn and Britwell sides. The road should be a similar width of about 6.5 metres with trees and hedges along the edge. Because it will be part of the town it will have a good footpath alongside it, safe crossing points and the new houses should be well set back from the road. The Neighbourhood Plan team has sought advice on the requirements required to support any new road infrastructure and will provide feedback later in the year.

Q: If the new road is built won't it just transfer the problem of congestion and air pollution to the new housing developments?

A: This will not be allowed to happen. The intention of any new Watlington traffic management system is to ensure that the traffic pinch points that currently exist are not replicated in any new approach. Any new buildings would need to be set back from the new road to ensure that both noise and air pollution are minimised.

Q: What will happen to HGVs:

A: Restrictions on HGVs coming through Watlington will be the same for the new section of road as it is for the B4009 now. There is a limit of 7.5 tonnes for all through traffic. Vehicles over 7.5 tonnes are allowed to have access if they are delivering or collecting within the weight restriction zone but if they are just passing through they should not be in Watlington. The key issue is enforcement of the weight restriction which will continue to be a key priority going forward. HGVs having legitimate access to the Industrial Estate and farms within the zone are expected to use the new road instead of driving through the town centre.

Q: If all the through traffic uses the new road won't the town centre die?

A:

- Not all through traffic is likely to use the new section of road. Traffic from Henley and the Reading direction using the B480 will continue to come through the town. At the moment this is about one third of the traffic which passes through every day.
- The overall aim is to improve the centre of the town to make it much more attractive for people to visit. The reduction in through traffic will therefore help a lot.
- Watlington's shops and facilities already attract most people into the town. Passing traffic only generates a small amount of additional business.

Q: What is happening about traffic management proposals for the town centre?

A: It was a struggle to secure funding to pay a traffic consultant to work with us to see what could be done to improve town centre traffic. Mode Transport Planning was appointed and their report is expected in September. We will hold a 'drop-in' at the Watlington Club after the summer holidays to let people know what the outcomes are and how we may be able to get something done.

Q Will new housing increase demand for town centre parking?

A There is a shortage of off-street parking for residents, visitors and people who work in Watlington. A survey of the Hill Road car park was done in 2016. The Parish Council will develop an off-street parking strategy to optimise the use of Hill Road and the Sports Pavilion car parks. This is not dependent on the Neighbourhood Plan, but cash from developers may be available to improve car park layout, security and lighting.

HOUSING

Q: Do we have to have 238 new houses?

A: In a bid to tackle the current housing shortages the Government has published targets for building new homes in the period 2017-2033. Each District Council has been allocated a share of this overall target. In turn, the District Council (in our case SODC) has provided housing supply targets to all of the towns and larger villages in the area. The target for Watlington is for a minimum of 238 new dwellings to be built over the next 16 years. This should ensure the continuing vitality of the town, and meet both local and District housing needs. To be approved, the WNDP has to reflect the District's housing plans, while Government planning policies do not allow us to place a cap on numbers.

Q: What happened to the idea of spreading development sites around the town?

A: This approach has been looked at very carefully. The Consultation held in January 2015 outlined this option but it was not supported by the majority of people who responded. Two factors have influenced the current proposals: the number of new homes which Watlington is expected to provide has increased from 79 to a minimum of 238; and a large majority of people stated they want to see a new road which takes traffic away from the centre of the town. The WNDP allocates development sites to the north and west of the town, including safeguarding land for a new road. This plan was supported by 86% of the people who responded to the recent consultation.

Q: Why are we not seeing alternative options?

A: The WNDP has investigated and consulted on different options for development over the last few years. The Consultation undertaken in April/May this year focused on recommendations on which housing sites should be included in the WNDP. Previous Consultations and Roadshows asked people to say what options they preferred and the current Plan is the outcome of this process. The results of the last Consultation showed that over 80% of the people who responded support the sites allocated in the Plan. Neighbourhood Plans are required to submit firm recommendations on proposed housing sites and do not have the option of proposing alternatives.

Q: What is the definition of 'affordable'?

A: The term 'affordable housing' means homes which are provided by housing associations, similar organizations or local authorities to offer homes for rent, sale or part ownership to people who are on the District Council's housing register. 'Affordable housing' covers social rented housing (where target rents are determined nationally), affordable rented housing (where rents are controlled to no more than 80% of the local market rent) and intermediate housing (where homes for sale or rent are provided at a cost above social rent but below market levels). In line with the District Council's policy, we are specifying that 40% of new homes on the development sites in Watlington should be for affordable housing. This will represent 90 units of affordable housing if 238 new homes are built in Watlington, of which 40 could be offered to local people on the SODC register.

Q: Is there more that can be done to provide less expensive homes to rent or buy?

A: The Housing Survey which was carried out in 2016 demonstrated the need for a wide range of different kinds of housing in Watlington. The WNDP makes it clear that a good mix of housing types is expected to be provided on the proposed housing sites. This should include new homes at the less

expensive end of the market. In addition, there is support for a small number of park homes and self-build plots.

Q: How can it be ensured that new housing is well designed and fits in with Watlington?

A: The policies in the WNDP require that new housing should conform to the guidelines set out in the Watlington Design Guide regarding layout, scale and building materials so that the character of Watlington is maintained. The WNDP also includes guidance on the provision of green spaces for recreation and for the encouragement of wildlife in the sites allocated for development.

Q: Why not concentrate on Housing and Traffic and ignore the Environment?

A: All our consultations have shown that local people consider the environment in and around Watlington to be very important. It is clear that this underpins the concerns that people have about the traffic and impact of new housing. These aspects cannot be separated. In addition Neighbourhood Plans are required to produce a report which identifies all aspects of the environment in their area which would be affected by new development and to endeavour to keep the impact to a minimum. This is particularly significant for Watlington because it is situated in a very sensitive area which includes the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, protected wildlife sites, and natural chalk streams.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Q Can the schools cope with many more pupils?

A Both Watlington Primary School and Icknield Community College have confirmed that they have capacity for more pupils at present. New homes planned for Watlington will not all come at once. They will be built over a number of years - WNDP runs to 2033. Factors relevant in predicting demand for school places include : the housing mix in Watlington; the quantity and type of new housing in other parts of the schools' catchment area; and trends in birth rates over the next 16 years. If the potential development of Chalgrove Airfield goes ahead, it will have an impact on the provision of secondary education over a wide area of southern Oxfordshire.

Q Can the Chiltern Surgery cope with an increased population in Watlington?

A The Surgery says it is able to accept an increase in patient numbers at present. More detailed plans will be made as the mix of new residents becomes clearer, for example, demand for maternity and child health services. The surgery also needs to plan for the needs of a growing number of elderly people in Watlington. NHS plans for re-configuring primary care are not within local control.

Q: What will be done about sewerage/drainage as the existing systems can't cope?

A: Thames Water has produced a drainage strategy for Watlington. There is capacity for some more housing, however, developers are required to show that their proposals will not overload the existing water and sewerage infrastructure. If there would be an overload, Thames Water and the developers have to agree what improvements are needed and how they will be funded. This has to be done before any new houses are occupied.

Q: What is happening about the development at Chalgrove Airfield?

A: Nothing has been finally decided as yet but the site is still included in the District Council's emerging Local Plan for development in the area. The Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) have told us that a planning application for the site is expected to be made later this year. It is fair to

say that the impact on Watlington and the surrounding area will be significant, which is why the parish council objected so strongly to it when SODC consulted on the plan which included it. However, we think it is highly likely to go ahead and the Government agency (HCA) which is promoting it is very determined to make it happen. For this reason, our discussions with the HCA have focused on the importance of dealing with the impact of all the extra traffic coming in the direction of Watlington towards the M40 and of the effect on our schools, shops and sports facilities. Having said that, we must also consider the potential benefit through the availability of new facilities, much needed public transport links and funding towards our proposed alternative route.