**WATLINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN FORUM**

**Notes of the Workshop held on Monday 30th January 2017 at 8.00p.m.**

Present: David Cotterell, Jim Simmie, Vivien Martin, Tony Williamson, Norman Perry, Gill Bindoff, Tony Powell, Terry Jackson, Tom Bindoff, Peter Richardson, Keith Jackson, Richard Sibly, Sally Stewart, Elisabeth Grocutt

Apologies for absence: Pepita Bianchi, Rebecca Broadbent, Pauline Harvey.

The workshop was arranged by the Forum Coordination Group to update members of the Traffic and Development Sites Groups on the progress of the WNDP and to report on the possible implications for Watlington of the SODC emerging Local Plan and the work on the infrastructure requirements linked to development of Chalgrove airfield by the Homes and Communities Agency. In addition to bringing everyone up to speed on the current situation the aim was to reach agreement on the best way forward for the WNDP and to identify any further information needed before the draft can be finalised.

1. **Traffic:**
   1. WNDP Forum Traffic Group: DC reported on the current action to engage a consultant to carry out a traffic impact analysis relating to three scenarios comprising different groups of possible development sites. The Traffic Group will meet on 31.01.17 to look at the responses in detail and to make a recommendation to the WPC NP Steering Committee at its meeting on 6th February. There is a grant from Locality to cover this work (expiry date 31.03.17) and the consultants have confirmed that the work can be completed by the end of March.
   2. SODC is carrying out an analysis of traffic movements along the B4009 corridor in order to assess how the increase in traffic generated from known and likely development up to 2033 will be affected by the bottle neck by Watlington Town Hall. Traffic modelling is being done using the Oxfordshire County Council software package and is expected to be completed in March. If traffic volume and flow is found to be in excess of the capacity of the town centre roads it is likely that an alternative route for traffic to the north and west of the town will be included in the Local Plan 2033 as essential new infrastructure. In this event, it is expected that SODC and OCC would contribute to the cost.
   3. There is an indication that SODC will fund high level evaluations of traffic management strategies in the town centre - the Traffic Group has identified strategies to be tested. It is hoped that confirmation of this expenditure will be available shortly.
   4. Data included by the HCA in the Chalgrove Airfield Briefing Pack was tabled. The pack had already been circulated electronically. Figures for current and forecast traffic movements during morning and evening peak hours were discussed. The increase in traffic generated by the possible development at Chalgrove was not discussed because of the uncertainty of the development going ahead. The figures for development at Chinnor and Benson are much more reliable and provide clearer evidence. Comments were made that traffic increase forecasts are often underestimates of actual increases. In view of the projected figures it was agreed that the existing problems of traffic congestion and air pollution in the town centre are very likely to increase.
   5. It was noted that HCA will hold a follow up meeting to the Watlington and Surrounds Workshop held in December. This is likely to be in March when HCA will feed back the outcomes of their traffic analysis and infrastructure proposals to the communities affected by the proposed development at Chalgrove. Assuming that the re-alignment of the B4009 to the north and west of the town is included – in line with the discussions the WNDP Forum and WPC have had with the HCA team - the new route would also have some HCA funding if the development at Chalgrove goes ahead.
   6. The planning application for the development of 100 homes on a site in Pyrton Parish near the Pyrton crossroads is expected to be determined by SODC in early March. A planning application is also expected to be made in February for 200 homes on the site between Britwell and Cuxham roads. Both these applications require an analysis of traffic impact and have implications for a secondary route around the town.
2. **Development Sites:**
   1. TP gave an update on the selection of preferred sites for development.
   2. The SODC consultation on its Local Plan Preferred Options had indicated that 200 new homes would be expected to be provided in Watlington. The WNDP has been looking at the provision for a minimum of 200 but this figure could rise considerably if a high proportion of the costs of an alternative route to the north west of the town have to be met by developers. At this stage the WNDP is looking at a maximum of 400 new homes allocated to the settlement of Watlington.
   3. Uncertainty about the number of new homes to include in the WNDP has been a problem from the start. National pressure for house building together with the weakness of the existing SODC Local Plan regarding the lack of a five year housing land supply is leading to very high numbers of new homes being given planning permission in the Distrct.
   4. Anna Badcock, the local member of SODC, has indicated that Watlington could end up with 1000 new homes if planning permission is given on all the larger sites around the town.
   5. The Government’s Housing White Paper will be published shortly. It could increase the number of new homes for Oxfordshire beyond the 100,000 included in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment.
3. **Discussions/conclusions:** 
   1. There was an in depth discussion about the best way to take the WNDP forward in the current circumstances. Everyone contributed their views and the following actions were agreed:
   2. The WNDP will be progressed as quickly as possible with a view to holding the pre-submission consultation in March. A draft is being worked on and is at a well developed stage. It was agreed that, although every piece of evidence/information (traffic data and housing numbers) would not be available in the next few weeks, opportunities to influence decisions about development in Watlington via the WNDP will be lost if the draft is not finalised soon and made available for public consultation.
   3. The planned Traffic Management Strategy paper is an essential document to go alongside the set of WNDP documents (although it is not part of the formal WNDP). Watlington residents need to see that the NDP process can deliver improvements in the town centre at the same time as the size of the town grows. The Coordination Group was asked to find out as quickly as possible if SODC funding for assessing the traffic management options will come forward.
   4. In view of the traffic impact analysis required to be provided by developers for planning applications, together with the data from the SODC B4009 corridor analysis it was agreed that the use of the Locality grant of £4500 for the same work could be an unnecessary duplication. Locality will be asked again if it is possible to use this grant to fund the feasibility of identified traffic management strategies. Note: the Traffic Group agreed at its meeting on 31.01.17 to recommend to the WPC NP Steering Committee that this site specific traffic impact analysis work is not required.
   5. Improvements to traffic management in the town centre are needed immediately. A request for a meeting with SODC and OCC to discuss all traffic issues will be repeated.
   6. There was a majority view that an alternative route for through traffic is needed in order to improve the current impact of traffic on the town centre and to avoid the situation getting much worse.
   7. Every effort would need to be made to ensure that the new route fits the rural character of the remaining B4009 corridor – that weight restrictions are retained and enforced and that the ‘B’ classification of the road is maintained.
   8. While it is known that increasing highway capacity leads to increased traffic volumes, it was agreed that the new section of road should not be used as a ‘rat run’ but should be well designed so that through traffic can bypass the town centre but not create a problem for new residents living alongside the road.
   9. The worst scenario for Watlington would be that there is no integrated plan for development and that sites and sections of a new, alternative, route are proposed in a piecemeal way.
   10. Preferred sites will be identified which will contribute to the provision of the alternative route. Meetings have been held with developers interested in all these sites.
   11. The number of new homes provided for in the WNDP on allocated sites linked to the settlement should not exceed 400.
4. **Recommendations to the WPC NP Steering Committee: the following were agreed:**
   1. The draft WNDP will be finalised as soon as possible even though some information on traffic, highways infrastructure and housing numbers are not available. This is to try to enhance the influence of local interest on decisions being made about development in Watlington and to avoid being overtaken by events.
   2. The WNDP will include provision for an alternative route round the north and west of the town in the form of a re-aligned B4009. The route, width and design of the new road (i) is in keeping with the character of the road at both ends where it joins the existing B4009 at Britwell Road and Shirburn Road and (ii) avoids an adverse impact on new residents living alongside the route.
   3. The WNDP will provide for a maximum of 400 new homes on allocated sites which relate to the settlement of Watlington within the Plan period to 2033.
   4. The WNDP will provide an integrated plan for development to ensure that the growth of Watlington does not have an adverse impact on the rural, historic, character of the town and the beauty of the surrounding landscape.

Notes taken by Gill Bindoff

01.02.17.