****

**Notes of the meeting with members of the Pyrton NDP Team held on Tuesday 21st March at the Community Office at 4.30p.m.**

Present:

Ian Hill ) Watlington

Gill Bindoff )

Peter Richardson )

Wayne Burt ) Pyrton

Michael Crawford)

Genevieve young )

The meeting was held to share information about the progress of the Watlington and Pyrton Neighbourhood Development Plans and to establish whether the NDPs are in conformity regarding sites PYR 1 and PYR 2 (formerly identified as WAT 7 and WAT 8)

1. The Watlington NDP is nearing the stage when it can be published for the pre- submission consultation. The Parish Council will meet on 30th March to make a decision about launching the consultation after Easter.
2. The Watlington NDP has policies allocating three sites to the north and west of the town. Provision will be made for a minimum of 200 new homes. This number is likely to rise during the period of the NDP. Site 3 (formerly identified as WAT 9) adjoins the parish boundary between Pyrton and Watlington.
3. These sites have the capacity to meet the housing need identified by SODC and the WNDP and can provide land for a safeguarded route for a re-aligned B4009.
4. This new route would take most of the through traffic away from the town centre and would improve air quality in the Air Quality Management Area. A map showing an indicative route for the new section of road is included in the WNDP document. This was tabled.
5. The route is shown in a line across PYR 1 and PYR 2. from the Pyrton crossroads. It is then shown as a route through the WNDP development sites to join the B4009 at Britwell Road. The WNDP cannot make any proposals for the two sites in Pyrton but recognises that the sites provide an opportunity to safeguard land for the re-aligned B4009.
6. The Pyrton NDP is at a similar stage regarding the pre-submission consultation. It is possible that the six week consultation periods for both NDPs may overlap.
7. The Pyrton NDP proposes that PYR 2 should be designated as a Local Green Space because of its environmental importance. There should be no development of any kind on the site.
8. PYR 1, as a brownfield site, is allocated for some development for approximately 15 new homes.

There was a general discussion on the implications for the NDPs given that they are not in conformity. The Pyrton team have been advised that this should not be a problem in progressing their NDP. However, SODC has indicated that it would be regarded as a difficulty. This view will be tested when the Pyrton NDP is put forward for consultation.

Alternative routes for a re-aligned B4009 were discussed. In theory, there is a possible route within the Watlington NDP area but it would be through the site of Icknield College, the allotments and the playing field. These sites have high amenity and environmental importance and make a significant contribution to the social and environmental sustainability of the WNDP. For this reason, a route through these areas is not proposed.

It was agreed that PYR 2 is a very sensitive site because of its location at the centre of two Conservation Areas and close proximity to Shirburn listed park and garden and the AONB. It is also very prominent in views from the AONB at the top of Watlington Hill, which is a very popular viewpoint.

There was also agreement that the integrity of the settlements of both Pyrton and Watlington is very important to both communities. Separation of the settlements is essential to their individual character and setting.

Watlington Parish Council and the Watlington NDP Forum had sent strong objections to the outline planning application for development of 100 new homes on the site of PYR 2 on the basis of environmental harm and the inadequacy of the highway proposals.

The decision date for the planning application is 31st March 2017. The Watlington NDP team had a meeting with Jonathan Harbottle and Jeremy Emmerson of Providence Land on 16th March. The company has not decided whether to wait for the SODC decision or to propose an altered application which may receive approval in principle but use ‘Grampian’ conditions to deal with all outstanding matters.

It was understood that both NDPs respond to issues identified by local residents. It is not the intention of either NDP to disadvantage the residents of the neighbouring community. However, there is disagreement on the level of harm which would result in the use of PYR 2 as part of a re-aligned B4009. Pyrton’s priority is to avoid permanent damage to the environment and to retain the existing green space between the village and Watlington. Watlington’s priority is to provide sites for housing development which are sufficient to meet the predicted need of at least 200 homes, do the least damage to the landscape, the AONB and historic environment and provide an opportunity to re-align the B4009. The re-alignment would reduce traffic flow in the town centre and improve air quality. The proposals in the Watlington NDP are likely to result in strong objections from Pyrton.

The possibility of creating new areas of air pollution along a re-aligned B4009 was discussed. It was agreed that provision of increased road capacity is likely to generate an increased flow of traffic. However, it is the view of the Watlington NDP team that the canyon effect of buildings in Shirburn Street and Couching Street which exacerbates the problem of traffic congestion is very unlikely to be replicated in new areas of development. Dr Burt referred to the recent publication of research commissioned by CPRE about the long term impacts of expansion of the major highway network – ‘The end of the road’. It was noted that the road schemes included in the research relate to trunk roads, motorways etc and not to ‘B’ classified roads in a rural context. It was also noted at the meeting that, although traffic volumes are not expected to reduce in the short term, emissions will improve as alternative fuels for vehicles become more widely used. It was also noted that, in addition to improvements to air quality, the reduction in traffic through the town centre would make a significant improvement in the public perception of safety in the area around the Town Hall.

Questions were raised by the Pyrton team about the design of the new section of road and the likelihood of congestion caused by increases in traffic. This increase would be far greater if the proposed development of Chalgrove Airfield goes ahead. It was claimed that by attempting to solve the problem of traffic congestion and air pollution in the town centre, the problem would simply be moved to the newly developed part of Watlington. As the owner of Pyrton Manor, which has a boundary with Pyrton Lane and one of the WNDP development sites, Dr Burt expressed personal, as well as parish objections to proposals in the WNDP.

These conflicting views are unlikely to be easily resolved. More information about predicted traffic flows will become available and the Highways Authority, Oxfordshire County Council, will make a decision about a re-aligned route for the B4009 when enough evidence is available. In the meantime, the next consultation on the SODC Local Plan 2033 is due to begin on 29th March. This Plan may include a proposal to re-align the B4009 around Watlington in order to reduce air pollution in the town centre and to make provision for traffic increases resulting from high development levels along the B4009 corridor.

It was agreed that the two NDP teams will remain in contact and will keep each other informed about progress.