

WANTAGE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN WORKSHOP
HELD ON 21 JANUARY, 2015

Notes of Discussion on Table A

Conserving our Heritage : Facilitator Caroline Finney

Design Guidance. It was noted that there were guidelines produced by the District Council that covered principal matters. It was suggested that there was a need for more specific policies to cover the Market Place and town centre, concerned with shop fronts, their signage and lighting. There had been policies in the Local Plan in the past concerning this. Policies needed to be applied to the Market Place and other places and roads leading to it. This mainly related to the two existing Conservation Areas. There was also a need to protect the character of roads of a particular age such as Charlton Road, Ormond Road and Newbury Street. Developments should adhere to the local vernacular. There may be a need for a policy for extensions that are not covered by permitted development. There was a need for more parking spaces within residential developments than had been provided within more recent developments within the town, e.g. St. Mary's, The Wharf, etc. There was discussion concerning the protection of local green spaces. There may be a need to specify some of these as community assets. A number of these were identified. There was a need to develop and protect green corridors so that wildlife was able to migrate from area to area and into the open countryside. This should be accompanied by, but protected from, pedestrian and cycling access. Some of the areas mentioned were Manor Road Memorial Park, Wilts and Berks Canal route, open areas in St. Mary's Convent, Wantage Cricket Club field and allotments sites.

Shopping in Wantage : Facilitator Neil Homer

An addendum to the District Council's Local Plan indicated that there was a requirement for around 4,200 square metres of additional convenience and comparison goods floor space in the Plan period. Consideration needed to be given to where this should go. Should development be focused on Limborough Road or elsewhere? Certain areas around the town centre were currently not retail, but there may be a need to protect them to encourage use of the town centre. It was felt there was a need to create a feeling that Limborough Road was part of the town centre, rather than separate from it. It was suggested that possibly buildings on the north side of Mill Street could be knocked down to open up the access between Limborough Road and the town centre. There was discussion about retail development to the south of the market place. The Post Office sorting office could be a development site for either shops or car parking leading to shopping development between Church Street and Portway. Neil expressed the view that policies should be concerned with developing retail to either the north or the south of the Market Place, but not to both. There was a need to resolve the issues of public car parking. The discussion moved to the St Katharine's/Broadway Motors sites, and what was their potential use? If Aldi or Lidl were to seek a site in Wantage where would they go? These stores work to a design formula which was unlikely to be suitable for certain parts of the town. These style of stores were viewed as being complementary to local independent stores rather than in competition focusing on a limited range of products. Neil raised the question of pedestrianisation in the Market Place. He felt there would be a need to commit for

or against this in the Neighbourhood Plan. It was noted that additional pedestrian space could be created in the Market Place, without full pedestrianisation, by closing or narrowing various parts of the roadway and extending/widening the pavement area, e.g. area adjacent to Barclays Bank, and narrow the roadway from the north side of the Market Place extending the pavement southwards.

Housing and Employment : Facilitator Alison Eardley

Given that all the Local Plan strategic housing sites were outside the Wantage Neighbourhood Plan area, there was a need to consider where housing development proposals not in the Local Plan might occur. It was felt that conversion of retail space to residential should be resisted at a ground floor level, but supported on upper floors. The SHLAA was considered. It was felt that no housing development should be permitted on farmland to the south of the Chain Hill cemetery or south of Larkdown. These were on the fringe of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and might be at risk. There was discussion about prospective development at The Convent. It was felt that in any development, there was a need to protect the green corridor. It was suggested that the aim should be to create a garden-style town and encourage activity through green corridors. There was discussion about the King Alfred's Academy East Site – what should it be used for in the future? The Academy needs to sell the land at housing development prices in order to fund the cost of development at the other Academy sites. There was an issue concerning the replacement of playing field land that would need to be resolved before this could proceed. There would be a need to find another location for the Youth Centre ideally to stand-alone from the Academy. It was suggested that this might be accommodated within the Crab Hill development or alternatively within the existing leisure centre at Portway, if a new leisure centre is provided.

There was discussion about employment and employment sites. Local employment had decreased over the years through businesses operating with lower staffing levels. Any major new employment developments were likely to be outside the Neighbourhood Plan area on the Grove Technology site or south of Williams or through work at home activities. There was discussion about Autotype. This is a site sufficiently close to Wantage town centre that could provide long-term parking for those working within the town centre.

The discussion moved to housing itself. It was felt that new developments should have ecologically viable sound housing. The Neighbourhood Plan survey of recently new housing developments had identified that there was inadequate storage facilities provided in these new homes. Inadequate sound proofing was also a problem. It was felt that there may be a need to specify minimum floor spaces for dwellings to ensure that there was space for storage and also a need to specify an amount of usable garden space. There was discussion concerning the adequacy of parking provision. The District Council was currently working to one space for a one-bedroom property and two spaces for a two-bedroom property (applies to outside town centre). There would be a need to provide evidence that this was insufficient, e.g. access for emergency vehicles was needed. Alison raised the question about the integration of Crab Hill to Wantage. It was felt that on the plans published so far, integration seemed reasonably good, with pathways and cycleways connecting into the existing.

Getting Around Wantage : Facilitator Geoff Rice

It was felt that there may be a need to redesign how traffic moves around the town centre. Whilst it might not be possible to remove buses from the Market Place, priority should be given to stopping it being used as a bus stand. There was a need to find car parking solutions for those working and living in the town centre. There was a need to consider whether there was anywhere where a two-floor car park could be accommodated. Whilst there was the possibility of an arrangement for a park-and-walk facility at the Autotype property, there was a need for a strong policy to encourage the use of cycles. Almost all properties within the Neighbourhood Plan area are within ten minutes cycling time of the town centre. There was a need for cycle parking to be in keeping with the historical town centre. Roads were generally not safe for cycling, and priority needed to be given to defining safe routes.

There were problems being experienced with unadopted roads (PO Lane) and with roads in new developments. It was District Council policy that for developments with more than five dwellings, the roadways should be adopted by the County Council. There was an obligation on developers to meet standards set by the County Council. Problems were being experienced at The Wharf development. A member of the group advised that it had taken over ten years for a road in a development in Wallingford to be adopted. It was suggested that some form of bond should be sought from developers to enable the councils to step in.

Shared highways, which were currently favoured on new developments, were proving unsatisfactory for cyclists and pedestrians. There was a need for safe cycleways. New roads should provide a cycle lane with some form of physical distinction, e.g. metal studs or rumble strips. It was noted that on-street parking was a problem for cyclists. Vehicles were legally parked, but restricted the highway to an extent that it was dangerous for cyclists using the road, e.g. Ormond Road, Newbury Street and Priory Road.
