

Wickhambrook Neighbourhood Plan working group
Full meeting – 7.00 to 9.00 pm Thursday 21 April 2022
NOTES

1: Attendance:

- Those present: Tracey (Chair), Jamie, Di, Tara, Sandra, Sue, Penny, Richard and Roger (online) and Ian Poole (Consultant)
- Apologies: Sandy, Margaret, Emily, Maro and Sam
- We welcomed Ian Poole, our Consultant, to the meeting

2: Minutes of last meeting and matters arising:

- We agreed the minutes of the previous meeting.
- There were no matters arising.

3: Report from the Parish Council:

- Unused grant from last year was returned and new grant applications have been made.
- **Note: date of engagement day offering the village info and updates on the Neighbourhood Plan will be the afternoon of 9 July 2022.**
- The next PC meeting is on 28 April.

4: Report from West Suffolk Preferred Options consultation papers:

- Ian Poole updated us on progress with West Suffolk's Local Plan.
- The Preferred Options papers have been published and the consultation is scheduled to run from 26 May to 26 July 2022.
- We have three months in which to consult with the village and prepare a response.
- Preferred Options is not a firm plan – it is indicative. Housing numbers are included – but they can change and West Suffolk will need to find locations for more houses.
- The projected rate of growth is about what West Suffolk has achieved over the past 20 years.
- Most housing will be allocated to towns – Bury, Newmarket, Mildenhall etc.
- Allocation to Wickhambrook is 40 houses over 20 years – this is roughly half the rate of growth over previous ten years. This allocation could change but is unlikely to be reduced.
- West Suffolk is starting a new baseline for these numbers from 2021 – any houses currently being built will not count against our Preferred Options allocation.
- The proposed site is WS195a (in the north-eastern corner of previous site WS195) – but this is open for discussion. West Suffolk does not regard Wickhambrook as providing a strategic site (i.e. crucial to the delivery of large numbers of houses).
- Any individual person (and neighbouring parish councils) will be able to comment on the Preferred Options proposals via the consultation process.
- Ian now recommends consultation between the Neighbourhood Plan group and the community to discuss preferred site(s) and to develop a response to West Suffolk.
- Ian, Tracey, Richard, Roger and Hilary will be meeting with West Suffolk at 3.00 pm on Tuesday 26 April. We can expect this proposal to be confirmed and we can update West Suffolk on our progress with the Neighbourhood Plan.

5: Key messages from the Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire results:

- Richard and Sue reported on Section 1 on Housing.
- Di and Penny reported on Section 2 on Infrastructure
- Tara and Sandra reported on Section 3 on Local Economy

- Richard and Sue reported on Section 4 on Environment
- Tracey and Roger reported on Section 5 on Shared Vision

6: Discussion:

- We noted that accepting the Preferred Options allocation of 40 houses over 20 years would not prevent planning applications for further new building – for example, as infill or on smaller sites around the village. The Neighbourhood Plan and Local Plan would be crucial in managing these demands.
- We noted that we could argue for development on more than one site – but that this might open multiple sites up to proposals for further development in future. We will need a landscape appraisal to support the identification and assessment of any potential sites.
- The Neighbourhood Plan could help to manage the timing of any development.
- We noted that WS195a is a big site (2.85 hectares) for 40 houses so there would be opportunities to explore provision of green spaces, woodland buffer zones, hedgerows and other aspects of development.
- We noted that we could also use the Neighbourhood Plan and the Design Code to provide a development brief. This could help the community to manage any development in terms of: housing mix provided (including affordable homes), density of housing, availability of self-build plots, creation of green spaces, landscaping and screening, provision of community or workshop facilities etc.
- We noted two distinct meanings for ‘affordable homes’:
 - homes in a commercial development that are built to be ‘affordable’ but are then available to any buyer on the open market
 - homes that are built by a housing association on a Rural Exceptions Site which must meet the housing needs of local people as a priority
- We noted that a Rural Exceptions Site would, by definition, make use of agricultural land outside the current settlement boundary.
- We also noted the potential value of setting up a Community Land Trust.

7: Next steps:

- **Ian, Tracey, Richard, Roger and Hilary to meet with West Suffolk at 3.00 pm on Tuesday 26 April. Richard to provide notes for the full group.**
- **Ian to explore options for commissioning a landscape appraisal.**
- **Working group to continue work on Neighbourhood Plan – initially completing work on questionnaire and interviews to provide consistent summaries of outcomes.**
- **Working group to prepare to feed back key questionnaire and interview outcomes to village with summary of West Suffolk’s Preferred Options proposal for Wickhambrook – together with any recommendations or responses from the working group.**
- Possibly carry out an audit of footpaths and byways and their condition to assess need for further links and permissive paths?
- Collect good quality photographs from around the village for Ian to use in the Neighbourhood Plan (Sam is a keen photographer with a drone – **Jamie to ask Sam if he would take photos**).

8: Dissemination:

- **Plan a drop in sharing and consultation event for the village – e.g. with refreshments and display boards – on 9 July or earlier?**
- Wait to see what kind of consultation events West Suffolk will provide and plan further events or activities in light of their programme.

9: Any other business:

- There was no further business

10: Dates and times of next meetings:

- **7.00 to 9.00 pm Thursday 12 May 2022**
- **7.00 to 9.00 pm Monday 6 June 2022**
- **7.00 to 9.00 pm Thursday 23 June 2022**
- **All meetings for full working group**
- **All meetings confirmed in the Pavilion Room at MSC**