

Wickhambrook Neighbourhood Plan
Working group meeting
7.00 to 9.00 pm Thursday 24 October 2022 at the MSC
NOTES

1: Attendance:

- Those present: Tracey (Chair), Ian Poole, Sandra, Jamie, Penny, Emily, Roger, Di, Sue and Richard
- Apologies: Tara, Maro

2: Minutes of previous meetings

- We agreed these as a fair record and there were no matters arising
- **Richard to send notes from 14 and 21 July to Hilary for website**

3: Preferred Options site 4.12a

Ian, Tracey, Hilary and Richard had attended a meeting with two West Suffolk planning officers (Anne-Marie Howell and Sam Robertson) on Friday 30 September. Tracey, Ian and Richard summarised the comments that West Suffolk had received at Preferred Options:

- We noted that West Suffolk had received only 38 comments on the Preferred Options consultation papers – and many of these were from the same person commenting in two sections. This was a far lower response rate than for Issues and Options.
- Key points from those 38 comments included: nine comments suggesting that 40 is too many houses; eight comments noting concerns about infrastructure; seven comments against site 4.12a; and nine comments in favour of that site

Tracey, Ian and Richard then summarised key points from the meeting:

- The target to build 40 houses in Wickhambrook in the coming 20 years is now set out in West Suffolk's Local Plan development as a minimum. Planners emphasised that this is a reasonable total given that some local service centres have been allocated more than 100 houses in the same period. We noted that 40 houses in 20 years represents about half the rate of new building that has occurred in Wickhambrook in the last ten years. We also noted that the total of 40 houses could increase if there are successful 'windfall' applications to build individual homes on small sites within the settlement boundary in the coming years, although the Neighbourhood Plan will help to manage and control this type of development.
- West Suffolk's planners will be proceeding with site 4.12a as their preferred option site in the further development of the Local Plan and will not be looking at any other sites. If Wickhambrook now initiates plans for building on a different site, there will be a danger of opening up two or more sites for development.
- We are invited to look again at the question of 'mixed use' development on site 4.12a. It is up to the village to make a case for housing only (and a smaller site?) or mixed use. If we wish to reject the mixed use proposal, we will need evidence to show lack of support and lack of need.

As a group, we discussed the mixed use proposal and noted that this does not have to mean industrial or large scale development. We noted that mixed use could include provision of, for example:

- allotments or community gardens
- nursery provision, child care facilities or a creche
- a play area
- a community café
- arts and crafts workshops and a small gallery or exhibition space
- a farmers market or produce and veg stall
- starter units, meeting rooms and/or small office spaces for the self employed and small businesses.

We noted that the development brief for the site would control the size, construction methods and design style of these elements. We also noted a need to present ideas like these to the village and to seek further suggestions and comments. We need research into the preferences of local people and likely demand for any new facilities.

We noted that up to 40% of the homes built on any site should be 'affordable' if the new West Suffolk Local Plan policy is successful. Currently the requirement is 30%. Our development brief can insist that affordable houses on site 4.12a include homes for rent, shared ownership and purchase if that is supported by up-to-date evidence at the time of construction. If these dwellings then meet the local need for ten affordable homes for local people demonstrated in the recent housing needs survey, there will be no need to open up a further site under the rural exception site scheme. **Ian will look into the possibility of using a Community Land Trust to manage part of site 4.12a and to ensure that these affordable homes are used for the benefit of local people on an ongoing basis.**

We noted that AECOM will be working on a site master plan or development brief for site 4.12a. We agreed that AECOM should visit the village again to look over the site with us and to hear our views about elements of the development (for example, the mix of housing types and styles, housing density, the inclusion of self-build plots and the crucial significance of landscaping). We suggested that AECOM could then prepare some early outline proposals and work with us to consult with the village over these ideas. AECOM will then prepare a draft that we can comment on (as with the design codes) before the plan is finalised. **Ian will now start the development brief/site master plan process with AECOM.**

We agreed that any consultation with the village from now on should be in face-to-face drop-in events (with back-up options online). We need to rationalise consultation opportunities and try to cover everything in as few meetings as possible. We noted that we will need to consult about a range of issues now to include:

- ideas for mixed use development in association with housing
- aspects of the site development master plan
- aspects of the Neighbourhood Plan in draft form
- community actions for inclusion in the Neighbourhood Plan.

We noted that we need to proceed quickly now to keep pace with development at West Suffolk and that the Parish Council is planning an extraordinary meeting on 3 November

2022 to review these matters. **Tracey will discuss future steps (including engagement with the community and the landowner) with the Parish Council chair.**

4: Summary of key issues from stakeholder interviews

The group agreed these as a fair summary of key issues arising from the interviews. **Richard to pass these materials on to Ian.**

5: Community actions

We discussed the summary of potential community actions for inclusion in the Neighbourhood Plan based on the outcomes of the village questionnaire. We agreed that we need to consult with the village again about priorities among these ideas but noted that the following potential themes seemed to have gathered robust support:

- speed watch, including traffic levels and parking issues etc
- landscape, conservation and wildlife – including potential for rewilding and/or creating community woodland
- maintenance and extension of footpaths and bridleways
- infrastructure improvement
- litter and dog fouling – a ‘tidy village’ initiative

6: Completing our Neighbourhood Plan

We noted the following specific actions and agreements:

- **Landscape survey under way soon – Ian to chase**
- **Site development master plan – Ian to initiate with AECOM and group to wait for contact**
- **Draft structure for Wickhambrook’s Neighbourhood Plan – Ian to draft and alert us to any gaps we need to fill**
- **Village consultations – group to discuss at next meeting**
- **Preparation of community actions for the Neighbourhood Plan – group to discuss at next meeting**

Ian also suggested that we could:

- Identify any interesting buildings or features in the village that are not formally listed but are considered of local importance (e.g. the school, barns, houses, cottages etc) – **Roger agreed to start an audit**
- Review ancillary buildings around the village (barns, sheds, garages, stables, workshops etc) to gather ideas for styles of building that might be appropriate for any mixed use features in the site development master plan – **Tracey agreed to begin to collect photographs**
- Conduct an audit of green spaces and important features of the landscape around the village – wait for the landscape survey to get this started
- Collect images of Wickhambrook for Ian to use as illustrations in the Neighbourhood Plan – **everyone to start taking photos please** (camera phone images are fine if stored in high res)

7: Date and time of next meeting:

7.00 to 9.00 pm Tuesday 29 November 2022 – Pavilion Room at the MSC