

SOMERFORD KEYNES NDP NEWS

Issue 3

WHOSE PLAN IS IT, ANYWAY?

It's a little while since we started creating a Neighbourhood Development Plan, so it may be time for a reminder of what it is. In the first issue of "NDP News", we explained that the NDP would state what the community would like, or not want, to happen in their area. In other words, this is *YOUR* Plan and not something to be imposed by the Parish Council, CDC, Gloucestershire or Whitehall. That is why there are consultation events, newsletters and, finally, a referendum in which every elector is entitled to vote. Only if the NDP wins majority support will it become the legal document that must be taken into account in any future planning decisions.

In brief, if the community wants it, this is our opportunity to say loud and clear what we do and do not want to happen in our Parish.

The next important event will be a presentation and consultation on the emerging Plan on **Monday 19th January 2015 in the Village Hall at 7.30p.m.**

In addition, we have to talk to CDC, so that we link to the emerging Local Plan. To ensure that we are meeting all of the necessary external controls, we are using specialist advice from GRCC and a specialist external consultant, whose job it is to ensure that the policies we are promoting meet all of the necessary planning criteria. (All funded from a grant from the Community Development Fund and not your Parish precept, you will be pleased to know!)

So, we'll keep talking and - even more important - listening!

HOUSING NEEDS SURVEY

We commissioned the Gloucestershire Rural Communities Council (GRCC) to undertake a survey of the Parish in order to secure an up-to-date picture of housing needs currently and in the future. In addition, as part of a national investigation, GRCC sought to identify local demand for affordable housing. It is important that we have this information to help us formulate the approach to housing in the NDP.

The survey was completed in September, with questionnaires distributed and collected by volunteers from the Parish. Thanks to the community's willingness to co-operate, the response rate was, by some distance, one of the highest in the county for this survey at around 60%. The Report has still to be finally

approved by the Parish Council, but the unapproved version is now available on the Village website.

As part of the Housing Needs Survey, you were invited to suggest areas where development could take place. That produced some quite interesting suggestions (Swindon!). The most mentioned were the Oak & Furrow site, Church Lane and that vicinity, and Water Lane, opposite the Village Hall and Arlington House.

However, it is essential to note that these are just suggestions from individual respondents in answer to a specific question, which is a standard one in housing needs surveys. Whilst the NDP may include policies on a small amount of development, it will NOT make recommendations on locations. Instead, the proposed policy criteria for future development are intended to protect the community from unwanted building in unwelcome locations.

HOW FAR WOULD YOU GO?

One of the matters under consideration is just where to set the boundaries of Somerford Keynes and the other settlements in the Parish. We are suggesting that as the nature of the village is such that there should be no encroachment on the predominantly "ribbon" development along existing roads. But how far out from the "heart" of the village should those ribbons extend? No further than the last property currently on each road? As far as any developer wants to go? Somewhere in between and, if so, how would you set the boundary?

PROTECTING OUR SURROUNDINGS

Understanding our environment is an important element in rural NDPs. Therefore, we commissioned Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust to undertake a biodiversity, open space and rare species count based on available public sources. This will show the extent of woodland, parks, and orchards within the parish. Early reports have revealed that we have around 200 rare, protected, and priority species. The final report will be completed later this month. What is becoming clear is that we live in a very busy ecological area, an aspect that must be considered within the NDP.

We are also looking at the vistas and views both from and towards the main settlements to define their location and setting in the landscape.

If you have any views, comments or concerns on the content of this newsletter then please contact the NDP team on ndp@somerfordkeynes.org.uk

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