

Wantage Neighbourhood Plan

Consultation and Engagement Strategy

Working Groups Briefing Note

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to inform Working Groups on the strategy for engaging with those living and working in Wantage and surrounds on the emerging draft neighbourhood plan for Wantage. This phase of engagement concerns telling people about the plan as well as gathering views on what should go into it. The outcome of this initial period of engagement will therefore provide information to work up the plan objectives and policies alongside the evidence base being collated.

The consultation requirements are set out in Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 (Part 5 s15) and a Consultation Statement will need to be submitted with the final neighbourhood plan. This statement will contain the following:

- (a) details of the persons and bodies who were consulted about the proposed neighbourhood development plan
- (b) explanation about how they were consulted
- (c) summary of the main issues and concerns raised by the persons consulted
- (d) description of how these issues and concerns have been considered and, where relevant, addressed in the proposed neighbourhood development plan

The town of Wantage has a population of approximately 11,327 and approximately 4717 households based on recent census data. The designated plan area is the whole of Wantage parish plus the Crab Hill and Stockham Farm developments.

The strategy helps to identify key stakeholders and interest groups in the parish with a view to engaging as widely as possible to demonstrate effective and meaningful engagement in the plan's development and to support a positive outcome at the referendum.

Key Issues and what will be addressed by the plan

The following topic areas have been set out by the steering group to be explored in more detail by the individual Topic Working Groups. The aim is to understand the key issues and views relating to each theme, and to explore options for inclusion in the neighbourhood plan.:

- Town centre businesses, economy and technology
- Heritage, environment, conservation and design
- Transport, infrastructure, education and health
- Youth, leisure, sport and art

At the first Theme Group meetings, a SWOT activity should be run to explore strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for Wantage in relation to that particular theme. The responses and feedback from the drop-in and other events, and media should be considered. Using this information, the groups should develop material for the drop in days, questions for the questionnaire and will help collate information coming back from the various engagement activities. **For more information on the role of working groups see Annex A.**

Using this information, the groups will then be tasked:

- To research their area of interest
- To scope out the evidence that is available
- To identify any “gaps” in the evidence base and consider whether any further research needs to be undertaken or commissioned
- To identify key players to engage in the plan making process
- To highlight any existing issues within this area of interest
- To understand the role of existing plans, strategies and programmes and their relationships to the neighbourhood planning process

Purpose of the consultation programme

For the final neighbourhood plan to reflect the views of those living, working and running a business in the parish of Wantage, it is important that opportunities to consult on key issues, options and proposals, and to feed into the process of developing the plan, are made available to all who wish to get involved. The plan should belong to those living and working in the parish and recognises that the views of the community and stakeholders are needed to shape the plan.

Engagement and consultation run throughout every stage of the plan process. There is a need to demonstrate how concerns raised through consultation have been addressed. This is particularly important at pre-submission stage of consultation which must accord with Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 and is essential for a robust Consultation Statement to accompany the final plan to the LPA (Regulation 15).

The Steering Group, informed by the Working Groups, will be responsible for ensuring that the consultation programme is kept under regular review. Working Groups will be responsible for recording the outputs of the different events along with feeding these outputs into the next stages of consultation.

Engagement Methods

The following activities are proposed in order to both raise awareness of the Neighbourhood Planning process and to gather views from the local populace to feed into the emerging draft document. All published information will be recorded for inclusion in the final documentation including any photographs taken at various events.

- Mailing / Email List and regular bulletins
- Website and Social Media
- Local press, media and displays
- Public Exhibition Weekend and Drop-in Days
- Questionnaire to be sent to all households and businesses
- Town Centre Survey
- One-to-One meetings
- Focus Group meetings

Administrative support will be provided through the Town Council offices.

Timings of specific activities

Activity	Suggested Timescale
1 st Theme Group meetings	July
Public Exhibition and drop-in days	Through July to September
Website/social media	Ongoing
Local press, media and displays	Ongoing
Town Centre meeting and Survey	September
One-to-one meetings	July/August/September
Questionnaire	Late August with responses by early September
Analysis of survey and questionnaire results	Mid September
Additional focus group meetings as required	September and October

People to Engage

The following table details the main categories of people with whom we wish to engage and by what means:

Stakeholder Group	Email bulletins	Social Media	Public Exhibition	One-to-one meetings	Online/paper Household Survey	Business survey	Focus Groups	Drop in Days		
Voluntary Sector										
Local Community Groups	X	X	X				X	X		
Residents Associations	X	X	X				X	X		
Disability Groups	X	X	X	X			X	X		
Church and Religious Groups	X	X	X				X	X		
Older residents group - Age UK etc	X	X	X	X			X	X		
Civic Society	X	X	X				X	X		
Sports and Leisure Clubs	X	X	X				X	X		
Youth groups (11-18)	X	X	X				X	X		
The National Trust	X	X	X				X	X		
Black and ethnic minority	X	X	X	X			X	X		
Women's Support Groups	X	X	X				X	X		
Farmers Groups	X	X	X				X	X		
Local Government										
Neighbouring town/parish councils			X	X				X		
Local planning Authority			X	X				X		
County Council			X	X				X		
Local MP			X	X				X		
Highways Agency			X	X				X		
Service Providers										
Landlords			x					X		
Major employers			X			X		X		
Market traders			X			X		X		
Retailers			X			X		X		
Local Media			X					X		
Arts/cultural organisations			X					X		

Stakeholder Group	Email bulletins	Social Media	Public Exhibition	One-to-one meetings	Online/paper Household Survey	Business survey	Focus Groups	Drop in Days		
Schools and Colleges										
Primary and secondary schools			X	X			X	X		
Colleges			X	X			X	X		
Nurseries/pre-schools			X	X			X	X		
Children's Centres			X	X			X	X		
			X							
Statutory Consultees										
Tbc			X					X		
Tbc			X					X		
Tbc			X					X		
Tbc			X					X		
Other										
Business Groups			X			x	x	X		
Chamber of Commerce			X	X		x		X		
Developers			X	X			x	X		
Landowners			X	X			x	X		
Private individuals	x	x	x		x			X		

Introduction to Neighbourhood Planning

Neighbourhood planning provides a powerful opportunity for local communities to take more control over planning for their local areas. Once adopted by the district council, they are used by the council to help to determine planning decisions in the local areas, in conjunction with the local plan as a formal part of the 'development plan'.

The Neighbourhood Plan will be a document that tells the story of Wantage in land-use and development terms and sets out, through individual policies, how development should take place over the next 15-20 years. The Plan can be as broad or narrow as the community wishes. It could set out sites for new housing and design of that housing; it could safeguard local green spaces that are valued by the community; or it could direct the development of new or improved community facilities. The opportunities are extensive but the key is to focus on what is of primary importance to the residents and businesses of Wantage.

The Neighbourhood Planning process is a formal one and, once drafted and formally consulted on, the plan will be tested by an independent examiner. This examiner, selected jointly by the district and town council, will decide whether or not the Neighbourhood Plan meets a series of 'basic conditions' including: does it adhere to EU regulations (eg. Human Rights, environmental laws); has the whole community had adequate chance to feed into the plan; do the policies in the plan generally conform with national and regional policies; and is the plan promoting sustainability?

If the plan passes the examination, it will proceed to a local referendum where all those on the electoral role will be invited to vote on whether or not they wish for the Neighbourhood Plan to be used to determine planning decisions. A simple majority vote means that the plan is successful and the District is then obliged to take it formally into the Local Plan suite of documents.

The Role of the Working Groups

Encouraging the wider community to get involved in the development of the plan is very important because the plan needs to reflect their views and aspirations. It will also be the community whose vote counts at the referendum and the level of engagement will be tested by the Examiner.

To manage the engagement programme, four Working Groups have been set up:

- Town centre businesses, economy and technology
- Heritage, environment, conservation and design
- Transport, infrastructure, education and health
- Youth, leisure, sport and art

The aim of each Working Group is to provide the Steering Group with a summary of views and opinions gathered from the wider community about what the key issues are regarding the theme and what can be done to address them. The Chair of each Working Group will sit on the Steering Group to help facilitate this.

Each group will need to get to grips with their theme by considering what the current situation is relating to the topic area including any policies at the national, regional and local level that influence it and any changes that might happen over the next 20 years relating to Wantage (eg changes in

demographics, technological and economic drivers) and how those changes might impact upon the theme.

Once the Group understands the topic, they need to think about how best to engage with the wider community to get their input. The engagement strategy sets out some ideas on this, including meeting with specific stakeholder groups, one-to-one meetings with special interest groups, snapshot surveys eg of the town centre and surveys or questionnaires.

The intention is for all WGs to contribute to one overarching questionnaire that will be delivered to every household in the parish, so constructing questions for this will be a key task.

The aim is to uncover issues that can be addressed through planning policies as this is the focus of the Neighbourhood Plan. Inevitably, wider issues will emerge and these can be recorded too, as with development may come funding for the town (via Community Infrastructure Levy or Section 106 contributions) and these wider issues can form the basis of ideas that might benefit from such funding.

Getting Started

A good starting place for getting to grips with the theme is looking at what current policies exist at both the national level and the local strategic level. Key documents to have a look at include:

- [The National Planning Policy Framework \(NPPF\)](#)
- The Vale of White Horse Local Plan – the existing 2011 one and the latest updates that will form the new updated plan including:
 - [Local Plan Housing Delivery update 2014](#)
 - [Saved policies from the former Local Plan](#)
 - [The new Local Plan site](#)
 - [List of supporting evidence for the new Local Plan](#)
 - [Landscapes and Habitats Assessments](#)
 - [The Strategic Housing Market Assessment \(SHMA\) update 2014](#)
 - [Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment \(SHLAA\) 2014](#)
- [The 2011 Census data for Wantage](#)

There are many national, regional and local special interest groups who will hold further information and data relevant to the themes and it is worth exploring these too.

Below are some pointers specific to each theme, with a starter list of useful documents to have a look at:

Town centre businesses, economy and technology

Useful documents:

- [Chapter 1 of the NPPF](#) is about Building a strong, competitive economy.
- [Chapter 2 of the NPPF](#) is about ensuring the vitality of town centres. There are also chapters on promoting good design and conserving heritage assets.
- [Chapter 5 of the NPPF](#) is about supporting high quality communications infrastructure.
- [Chapter 12 of the VOWH 2011 Local Plan](#) covers shopping and town centres.
- [Oxfordshire County Council operates a broadband campaign](#)
- [Vale of White Horse Retail Study, 2008](#)
- [Retail and Town Centre Study, Vale of White Horse District Council, 14 March 2013](#)

- Economic Forecasting to Inform the Oxfordshire Strategic Economic Plan and Strategic Housing Market Assessment – a draft final report for the Vale of White Horse District Council and partners.

Heritage, environment, conservation and design

Useful documents:

- [Chapters 6 and 7 of the NPPF](#) look at delivering a wide choice of high quality homes and requiring good design.
- [Chapter 12 of the NPPF](#) looks at conserving and enhancing the historic environment.
- [The NPPF](#) also has chapters covering: protecting Green Belt land, meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change, and conserving and enhancing the natural environment.
- [Chapter 7 of the VOWH 2011 Local Plan](#) covers the Natural Environment with an appendix on nature conservation designated sites.
- [Chapter 7 of the NPPF](#) covers design policy at the national level.
- [The VOWH Local Housing Delivery update 2014](#) includes detail on design stating:
 - Design – the high quality and rich heritage of the Vale’s villages and towns contributes significantly to its attractiveness. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and it is important we create new places where people want to live. We have therefore updated our design policies:
 - o Design and Local Distinctiveness (Core Policy 37)
 - o Design Briefs for Strategic and Major Sites (Core Policy 37a)
 - To further enhance our ability to secure the highest quality development supported by necessary facilities and services we are also preparing:
 - o An Infrastructure and Community Benefits Strategy, incorporating a Community Infrastructure Levy
 - o A Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for Section 106 developer contributions,
 - o An Urban Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)
- [Vale of White Horse District Council: Preferred Approach Local Plan 2029 Part 1: Habitats Regulations Assessment, March 2013](#)
- [Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011, Chapter 6](#) – Historic Environment and there are also appendices covering conservation areas, historic parks and gardens and scheduled ancient monuments.

Transport, infrastructure, education and health

Useful documents:

- [Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan 2011-2030](#)
- [Local Plan 2029 Part 1: Strategic Sites and Policies: Infrastructure Delivery Plan – p.19](#)
- [Oxfordshire education pages](#)
- [Oxfordshire health pages](#)
- [VOWH Health Profile](#)
- [Chapter 5 of the NPPF](#) looks at promoting sustainable transport.
- [The VOWH Local Plan 2011 covers transport](#) in chapter 5.
- [Pupil Place Plan](#) - This shows local communities, and those interested in their development, how we expect school provision to change over the next few years. It brings together information from a range of sources and sets out the issues the county council will face in meeting its statutory duties for providing school places up to 2018 and beyond.

The plan includes present and predicted future pupil numbers on roll, together with information about birth rates, school capacity, and new housing. The plan analyses changes in the number of school places available over the last year and it suggests where other changes may be necessary in the future. The plan also sets out our policies on school organisation and the statutory framework for making changes such as opening, closing or enlarging schools

- [Education Strategy](#) – the vision is for Oxfordshire to be a dynamic and forward looking place for education and learning, providing the best quality experiences for children and young people to grow up, learn, develop and achieve
- [Proposals for new schools](#) in Oxfordshire
- [Chapter 8 of the NPPF](#) covers promoting healthy communities
- [Public Health England](#) produces annual health profiles of every district
- [AgeUK page for Wantage](#)

Youth, leisure, sport and art

Useful documents:

- [VOWH Leisure and Sports Facilities Strategy](#)
- [Sport England](#)
- [Arts Council](#)
- [VOWH Sports and Arts](#) participation strategy
- [Vale of White Horse Youth pages](#)
- [VOWH Local Plan 2011 covers Leisure in chapter 10.](#)
- [VOWH Local Plan 2011 covers Community Services and Facilities in chapter 9](#)
- [Chapter 5 of the Retail and Town Centre Study](#), Vale of White Horse District Council, 14 March 2013 is about commercial leisure opportunities in the town centre