

West Wickham Neighbourhood Plan Newsletter

October 2016

As has been outlined in previous issues of Village Voice, the survey conducted in July 2015 demonstrated support for developing a neighbourhood plan for West Wickham including Streetly End. South Cambridgeshire District Council Planning Committee approved the application for a plan for West Wickham in December 2016.

A voluntary working group has therefore been established, and the group met for the first time on 13th September. The next working group meeting will be on 18th October.

While the working group will lead and coordinate development of the plan, to develop a successful plan that really

represents the wishes of the village we need as many people to share their views and participate in its development as possible. We will be asking for input in several different ways (e.g. surveys and meetings) in due course, and very much hope everyone will contribute their thoughts. We will be holding a number of open meetings in the Village Hall, the dates and times will be advertised in the Village Voice.

We will be trying to keep the community up-to-date with the progress of the plan through regular information in the Village Voice and on the village website.

<http://westwickham.org/category/neighbourhood-plan>

Working Group Members

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Frequently Asked Questions

As a first step, we thought it would be useful to answer some likely questions on key aspects of the neighbourhood plan development process. If you have any other questions or would like further information at this stage, do please contact a member of the group.

What is a neighbourhood plan?

A neighbourhood plan is a community-led framework for guiding the future development, regeneration and conservation of an area. The working party will create a document containing policies that will be independently examined, and depending on acceptance at a village referendum, adopted in the planning rules for the parish.

How long will it take to develop our village plan?

It varies, but the working group are aiming for about two years.

Does a neighbourhood plan have any real effect on what gets built in West Wickham?

Yes, a neighbourhood plan will be part of the statutory development plan for the area. This statutory status gives neighbourhood plans far more weight than some other local documents, such as parish plans, community plans and village design statements.

How do I find out about progress on our neighbourhood plan?

The working group will give regular updates via the Village Voice and village website. There will also be open meetings to present and discuss the plan.

Can I have a say on our neighbourhood plan and influence the content?

Yes, you can:

- Answer the various surveys that will be delivered as the working group develops the plan.
- Talk to a member of the working group. Trevor Hall can guide you to an appropriate member of the working group responsible for the area you would like to discuss.
- Come to the open meetings that will happen over the coming months.
- Finally, you can vote for or against the adoption of the plan in a referendum. Only if over half of votes cast are for adoption of the plan will it come into effect.

Will the plan allow West Wickham or Streetly End to get much bigger?

No. South Cambridgeshire Draft Local Plan classifies West Wickham, including Streetly End, as an 'infill' village. They consider that, because of the lack of services and facilities in the village, we have to travel outside the village for most of our daily needs. Thus development on any scale would be deemed unsustainable in West Wickham. Unsustainable development is not allowed, with or without a neighbourhood plan. To make more substantial development sustainable in West Wickham would require a large investment in facilities and services in the village. The working group consider this is highly unlikely.

What development is allowed in West Wickham if we don't have a neighbourhood plan?

Only applications to build up to two houses in gaps on existing roads, or exceptionally up to eight dwellings on a brown field site, would be allowed. Because plots of land that meet these criteria are very expensive it is unlikely these houses would be "affordable housing".

What is an affordable house?

A house made available on a subsidised basis. This can include both rented and shared ownership properties.

Can a neighbourhood plan deliver affordable housing in the parish?

Yes, a neighbourhood plan can facilitate development to provide affordable housing. In particular, the plan can enable a 'rural exception site' to be made available, to make it economically viable for a developer to build affordable housing.

What is a 'rural exception site'?

An area of land designated for affordable housing where planning permission would normally not be granted - for example a green field site on the edge of the village. Developers are forced to build at least some affordable housing on these sites (but such developments may include non-affordable houses too). Because the land price would be lower than the price of an infill plot, the development is still viable.

Can a neighbourhood plan stop all new development in the village?

No. A neighbourhood plan can not promote less development than the existing planning rules allow. For West Wickham this means that the local plan cannot limit the development to less than the 'infill' development described above. If we attempted to limit development below this level our plan can be challenged in court and could lose its statutory status, becoming worthless.

Information Needed

At the first meeting of the Working Group a major topic discussed was the potential for a Housing Needs Survey, which has to be carried out by an independent organisation (Cambridgeshire ACRE). This survey would be particularly important in generating information on the need for affordable housing. (See the FAQs for the definition of affordable housing).

The initial survey of residents of West Wickham showed that there were seven people living in the village who were living with others but wished to have a house of their own within the village, seven people who wished to have a smaller house in the village, and four people on the housing waiting list. Anecdotal information suggests that there may be up to 30 people currently not living here who would like to live in or return to West Wickham.

To find those people who responded to the initial survey with a possible housing need, the Working Group would be grateful if the following form could be completed and posted in the Neighbourhood Plan Post Box in the old telephone box near 24 High Street.



I would like to receive a Housing Needs Survey Form for the following reason:

- I live in the village but wish to have my own house here.
- I wish to live in a smaller house within the village.
- I am on the housing waiting list.
- I have connections with West Wickham but presently live outside the village. (Residents who know someone in this situation are asked to ensure their contact details are provided).

Name:

Address:

Telephone or email address: