

A Profile of Shiplake Parish

Shiplake Parish comprises two smaller villages - Shiplake Cross and Lower Shiplake - as designated within the emerging SODC Local Plan and is located in South Oxfordshire, two miles south of Henley on Thames. The Parish extends from the banks of the river Thames across the A4155 up to its boundaries with Binfield Heath Parish and Harpsden Parish, the former being part of Shiplake until changes c. 2000.

The parish is one of six (Harpsden, Shiplake, Binfield Heath, Eye & Dunsden, Sonning Common and Kidmore End), embracing several smaller villages, between Henley on Thames and the major conurbation of Reading in Berkshire; both of the latter having acknowledged issues of an unsustainable highways infrastructure and severe concerns over environmental factors. As such, the greenfield rural area has significant amenity value as an environmental buffer. The AONB to the north and the Thames flood plain to the south is a limiting factor for housing development opportunities.

Shiplake itself has approximately 630 dwellings with a population of approximately 2000, based on 2011 Census (1954 people) and ORCC's community profile project 2013 (1955 people). According to the electoral role about 80% of electors live in Lower Shiplake and 20% in Shiplake Cross.

Social housing in Lower Shiplake is provided within a small estate (estimated 9 of 21 units) of smaller affordable houses at Westfield Crescent and the SOHA accommodation of 12 units, a project strongly supported by the parish council, due for development in 2017 to the latest EU standards. Both have easy pedestrian access to the post office and shop, the pub, local butcher and train services. The housing in Shiplake Cross is largely clustered close to the primary school, church and Plowden Arms and generally comprises smaller houses, including a post war development of council houses, many of which have been bought by residents over the years but still retains an element of affordable rental accommodation.

Because of its rural environment, proximity to the river with the Thames Path as it winds through Lower Shiplake, rail transport links and local school, it is considered a desirable place to live. It is also an attraction for visits by ramblers, joggers, cyclists, rowers and tourists from nearby communities (and further afield). The density of housing reflects this desirability with significant developments between 1960 and 2003, adding more than 170 houses in Lower Shiplake – an increase of 56% in the number of dwellings since 1970 - and resulting in a **population density of 4.4 persons per hectare, one of the most densely populated smaller villages in South Oxfordshire with its average population density of 2 persons per hectare**. These factors, alongside national trends and policy, particularly with regard to 'back land' development, have led to expensive housing stock and the gradual conversion of smaller more affordable 2/3 bedroom homes into larger 4/5 bedroom homes, a trend across the district referred to in SODC's proposed Local Plan.

In recent years, the Parish Council sponsored the production of The Shiplake Villages Plan (SVP) Report 2014, which reflected the views of residents in terms of what they valued about Shiplake, how they would want to see the villages develop and provided a more up to date insight into local demographics. This was done with the guidance of and was subsequently highly commended by SODC. Extracts have been included within this designation application, including the '**Additional notes on historical perspective of Shiplake and its villages**' provided below. For more details, a copy of the report can be viewed on the parish's website via: www.shiplakevillages.com or click here: http://www.shiplakevillages.com/page-content/documents/1394213420-SVPREPORT_Final.pdf The report included reference to projects such as: provision of high speed broadband; road maintenance; paths & cycleways; local rail and bus services; housing and development; traffic calming; community facilities and activities. The outcome has been very positive for those projects largely under the parish's influence and control. The impact on others has been more limited because of national and local authority budgetary limitations.

A key aspect in the conclusions and recommendations of the Shiplake Villages Plan (SVP) was the views on housing development, strongly supporting the value of the rural location and its local services alongside strong negative feelings regarding the effects of creeping urbanisation. Whilst a very large proportion of residents (89%) felt the issue is important, with 74% not wanting greenfield sites developed, they also recognised the issues of affordability for young and old families; over 70% preferred any new developments to be small to medium houses.

Additional strong feelings were expressed regarding the continued separation of the two villages, provided by the existing green space around the busy A4155 tertiary link between Henley and Reading. The associated high volumes of traffic, particularly in commuter and 'school run' periods, are a major concern.

Should housing requirements become a larger issue, it was appreciated that the Parish Council may have to investigate addressing such concerns, whilst ensuring that the characteristics of the villages most valued by residents are retained.

Subsequent changes in the government's guidance on housing requirements, reflected in the emerging SODC Local Plan 2032/3 and an apparent current shortfall in SODC's '5 Year Land Supply' have resulted in ad hoc potentially overwhelming and unsustainable speculative housing applications. The parish council wishes, therefore, to develop a neighbourhood plan to meet housing requirements, consistent with the emerging Local Plan and based on an approach/vision to **Preserve, Protect and Grow**, thereby enhancing the existing character and setting of the parish with its special landscape to the benefit of the local and extended communities in the area.

The Parish Council is a properly constituted elected body, representing the local community within the defined parish boundary.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group is comprised of a parish councillor and eleven residents, representing a cross section of the local community within Shiplake.

The area defined in this application and supported by the attached map is appropriate to be designated as a Neighbourhood Plan Area.

Shiplake Parish Council
March 2017