

Shiplake Neighbourhood Plan Governance

This document summarises the benefits, issues and governance procedures for the Shiplake Neighbourhood Plan initiated in January 2017.

Current Planning Position in South Oxfordshire

Following the South Oxfordshire District Council's (SODC) declaration in 2016 that it did not have a five year land supply to meet its housing targets, Shiplake and its neighbouring parishes are facing a unprecedented high level of speculative planning applications from property developers; planning applications which under normal circumstances would be rejected. If successful these applications will have very detrimental impact on the 'street scene', the environment of the area, the provision of school places, an already inadequate road infrastructure and access to the villages from such new developments would pose safety issues for adults and particularly children.

Although the population density of Shiplake is already double that of other parts of South Oxfordshire, some additional development is to be encouraged. Speculative developments on the scale being proposed is considered unsustainable by Shiplake Parish Council. The government provides the opportunity - a Neighbourhood Plan - which enables parish and other councils to agree a plan for a proportionate increase in housing, taking account of the wishes of the residents of the parish in shaping the future of our two villages. The plan must be consistent with SODC's new Local Plan 2033 which, in turn, must meet the government's housing requirements. For Shiplake it has been confirmed that 33 new houses are required to be built between 2011 and 2033.

Benefits of developing the Shiplake Neighbourhood Plan

1. An agreed sustainable plan for development of additional housing in the parish taking account of the views of residents.
2. A plan that has significant weight in the planning process. SODC states: 'intended policy of their new Local Plan is to determine planning decisions by reference to Neighbourhood Plans...'. The Neighbourhood Plan would become part of the formal planning process.
3. SODC's intended policy and the weight of evidence embodied in the Shiplake Neighbourhood Plan should enable the parish council to have unsuitable speculative developments rejected at an early stage, thereby saving considerable time, effort and in some cases not insignificant council funds expended in objecting to such applications.
4. CIL funds will be generated for the parish council to support initiatives for the benefit of the community.
5. Possible initiatives benefiting the community are likely to arise as a result of the evidence gathering and 'brain storming' of the where, what and how of the development of the houses and the suggestions/ideas of residents as part of the questionnaire and subsequent community engagement activities.
6. Residents will have the opportunity to vote in a formal referendum to formally accept the plan or otherwise.

Issues Considered

1. **Timelines:** the Parish Council anticipates a draft Neighbourhood Plan will be produced by the end of 2017 for approval by SODC and subsequently by a government appointed inspector. The latter two approval stages followed by a referendum may take a further 6 months.
2. **Engagement:** the parish council has to be the designated authority sponsoring the plan, providing funds and applying for relevant SODC and government grants to facilitate the development of the plan, the process for which will be owned and driven by members of the Steering Group on behalf of the community.
3. **Role of the Parish Council:** sponsoring and supporting the development of the plan, encouraging as wide a representation and involvement of the community as possible. Given the council's role as the designated authority, the requirement for parish funds the parish applying for government grants and its necessary role in the planning process, a member of the council's PWG to be a member of the Steering Group established to deliver the plan.
4. **Governance:** a Steering Group was established in February 2017 to manage the process with monthly updates on progress provided to the parish council. The parish council to approve the selection of sites proposed for development prior to presentation to residents and to approve the draft neighbourhood plan prior to submission to SODC.
5. **Budget:** all requests for funds and grants to be facilitated via the parish councillor on the Steering Group, such requests to be approved by the parish council's finance committee. Appropriate due diligence to be exercised in pursuing sources of funding and grants and the selection of suppliers/contractors, whilst taking advantage of the council's understanding of local govt. and its procedures.

Recommendation to the Parish Council to approve governance structure for the Shiplake Neighbourhood Plan as outlined above.

Given the necessity to respond to the threats of speculative applications from developers, whilst seeking clarity from SODC on the commitments to be made by both parties in developing a neighbourhood plan, the parish council began engaging with residents at a meeting in December 2016 to seek their support for and involvement with the Shiplake Neighbourhood Plan. Based on a positive response, the parish council facilitated a meeting of volunteers in January 2017, which resulted in the formation of the Steering Group of 12 residents, inclusive of one councillor representing the parish council as referenced above. Peter Boros was proposed and accepted as the Chairman of the Steering Group. The appointment of a Deputy Chairman was considered desirable and Charlotte Colver was proposed and accepted. (Due to Charlotte's position as an SODC employee, advice subsequently received from SODC was that this represented a conflict of interest and she stood down from the Steering Group.)

Clarity on the requirements SODC wish of Shiplake in the development of a neighbourhood plan has been received and continues to be sought, along with its further commitment to the importance and role of neighbourhood plans in the new Local Plan 2033. As such the parish council is asked to approve this process for the '**Shiplake Neighbourhood Plan Governance**'

David Pheasant – 30/05/2017

