

WATLINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

DISCUSSION PAPER FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE STRATEGY COMMITTEE ON 29TH JANUARY 2019

LAND ISSUES ARISING FROM THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

1. Watlington Playing Field:

- This land is held on a lease from Beechwood Estates. The current lease runs for 50 years from 1997 to 2047. The lease is reviewed every 10 years and a review was scheduled for 2017. This review has not been held although WPC has raised the issue with the land agent. Currently, under the previous rent review, WPC is making an annual payment of £5,000.
- The lease contains a provision for Beechwood to end the lease and provide a similar area of land elsewhere in Watlington. This could be on land adjacent to Hill Road.
- The playing field has been designated as a Local Green Space in the WNDP. This designation is expected to be able to continue beyond the period of the Plan – i.e. beyond 2033.
- The NPPF has policies for open spaces and recreation – paragraph 97: this states that playing fields should not be built on unless:
 - a) An assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shownthe land to be surplus to requirements; or
 - b) The loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
 - c) The development is for alternative sports and recreation provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.
- The current location of the playing field is very suitable because it is adjacent to the recreation ground and the sports pavilion which belong to WPC. The Pavilion provides toilets/changing rooms/social space.
- The Neighbourhood Plan has identified the need for additional sports facilities. Current provision is below the assessment required for the existing population and the population will rise significantly over the next few years.
- Informal discussions have been held with Providence Land about the possibility of including additional space for the playing field on their site PYR 2. The amended development proposals for the site include an area adjacent to the existing boundary which could enable an additional full size football pitch to be provided. This may not be acceptable to the landowner of the playing field as it would involve the removal of part of the existing boundary.
- The concentration of outdoor sports facilities in the current location is logical because it is close to Icknield Community College where playing fields could come into community use in the future.
- **PROPOSAL:** that WPC approaches the Beechwood Land Agent to discuss the possible purchase of the playing field by WPC. The contact is Richard Drew, Carter Jonas, Summertown, Oxford.

2. Land for affordable housing:

- Over the period of the WNDP, the allocated development sites could provide a total of 120 new affordable (housing association) homes.
- The new homes will be allocated by SODC to people who have registered with them and are on the housing list.
- 10% of the new affordable (12) homes are likely to be allocated to people in Watlington who are in need of housing and are on the register.
- A further 10% could also be available for local people (also on the housing register) who have worked continuously in Watlington for 5 years.
- These numbers are not set in stone but are below the number of people who responded to the Watlington Housing Survey indicating a need for a housing association home.
- There are 4 groups of people on the SODC housing register. Those who have the least points – category 4 – are unlikely to be offered a house because there will be more people on the register who are in greater need. The category 4 people are often held to be adequately housed because they are often young people who still live with their parents. It is this group within Watlington who find it the most difficult to live independently and move away from home if they do not have a high enough income to rent or buy locally.
- The provision of a Rural Exception Site could be an answer to this problem and increase the number of affordable homes locally. The benefit of a rural exception site is that the housing remains affordable in perpetuity.
- The site could be developed by a housing association or in partnership with the Oxford Housing Land Trust. These are options which would give WPC a say in who occupies the homes.
- Watlington Parish Council has a suitable site on the parish boundary with Cuxham. This is currently let to a neighbour on a three year lease.
- **PROPOSAL:** that WPC initiates a discussion with SODC about the possible use of the land for a rural exception site. The contact officer at SODC is Pat Connell.