



Wellow Neighbourhood Plan



Community Consultation October/November 2021

Statement from the Wellow Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Introduction

The community consultation for the Wellow Neighbourhood Plan closed on 19th November. We would like to thank all those Wellow residents that participated in the consultation by completing the questionnaire and attending the drop-in event on 13th November. Many expressed support for our work on the Neighbourhood Plan which was both gratifying and reassuring. Obviously, not everyone agreed with all that we proposed in the consultation. We will endeavour to reflect the diversity of opinion as we process the results.

A total of 505 completed the questionnaire either on-line or on paper. Over a 100 people came to the event on 13th November. The feedback from the latter will be included in the results from the consultation.

In the remainder of this statement we address (i) some concerns about the consultative process raised by some residents either verbally or in writing, (ii) how we intend to feedback the results of consultation to the community and (iii) what will follow from this, including further community consultations.

Consultation process

Concerns raised about the consultation process were:

1. The nature of the questionnaire - characterised by some as a tick-box exercise.
2. Why people were not consulted before candidate sites or local green spaces were included in the consultation document?
3. Why certain sites for housing put forward rather than some others?
4. Where was the evidence relating to the evaluation of the sites?

The first point to make is that this was a consultation, primarily on the key policies to be included in the Neighbourhood Plan. To be able to consult and elicit meaningful responses reflecting the wishes of the community, draft policies had to be proposed to see (i) whether the community approved them, (ii) what changes they would like to see and (ii) if they did not like the policies, what would they like to see instead?

We took all reasonable steps to promote the consultation including a leaflet which we employed Royal Mail to deliver to every address in the Parish. The evidence from the response to the questionnaire and the attendance at the drop-in event was that there was widespread awareness of the consultation.

The policies proposed built on previous community consultations, the residents' survey of late 2018, the Housing Needs Survey in late 2019 and the business survey in late 2020.

Questionnaire

For the consultation to be as easy as possible to complete, to obtain as many responses as possible and to process the responses where these would number some hundreds, we used an on-line survey. Also to gather the views of those who could not or did not wish to complete an on-line survey we produced a paper version which exactly mirrored the on-line version such that we could combine the results from both sources. There had to be a tick-box element but we ensured that for each policy there was scope to add comments and included a comment box at the end for any other comments. We provided an illustrated brochure to explain the policies, much of this detail was also included in the questionnaire.

Consultation with landowners

Before any sites were included in the consultation for housing or for Local Green Spaces and as part of the neighbourhood planning process, we were obliged to contact landowners to inform them that we were going to consult with the community on their sites for either housing or Local Green Spaces. We wrote to all that we could trace to inform them that we were proposing to include their land in the community consultation. We were able to trace all the owners of the potential sites for housing and all agreed to their inclusion. For the green spaces we were eventually able to trace all but one landowner but this took more time since much land in the Parish is not registered. Some landowners did object to their land being designated as Local Green Spaces. Whilst noting these objections, we decided to proceed with the consultation. The original residents' survey indicated that these spaces were valued and we needed to gauge the degree of support there was for their designation. All this took some time and was not completed until the start of the consultation.

Selection of sites for housing development

We will be publishing a separate set of documents on the website relating to the process by which the proposed sites for housing were included in the consultation. Suffice to say here that it was the outcome of a long process of:

1. Using the Test Valley Borough Council's SHELAA (Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment) reports to indicate what land was being promoted by landowners and developers for housing and economic development in the Parish.
2. Doing an initial team appraisal of the sites which was useful but not to the standard methodology promoted by government and Test Valley Borough Council.
3. The commissioning of a consultancy company, AECOM for the site assessment using the standard methodology. See: <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/assess-allocate-sites-development/>. AECOM's services were made available to the Parish through the technical support offered by central government.
4. Working with AECOM to select the sites to be evaluated and commenting on draft reports.
5. Taking full cognizance of the residents' survey since it was clear that the majority of those responding (81%), strongly favoured smaller developments of less than 10

houses. Because of this and the different characteristics across the large Pottery Farm site (SHELAA 16), it was decided to split the site into the areas to the east and west of School Road and request AECOM to evaluate these separately.

6. Reviewing the results of the AECOM assessment. All the sites evaluated had some constraints. Five sites were assessed as potentially suitable for some housing if issues could be resolved. Two were assessed as potentially suitable for the redevelopment of existing businesses only. The remainder were assessed as not currently suitable for any form of development.
7. Selecting sites that could be put forward for consultation with the community given the need for these to be sustainable and of a size suitable for small developments. We also had to consider the housing needs assessment (see the summary report at <https://www.wellownhp.org.uk/evidence-base-2/#housing-needs-assessment>) and the requirement for the volume and type of housing.
8. Adding a site for affordable housing since the housing needs assessment had indicated the need for such housing. It was decided that to facilitate the building of such housing, a rural exception site¹ should be selected.

At the drop-in event, at one point, it was noted that a letter had been circulated within School Road regarding a site which has been included in the consultation. Unfortunately the sender of said letter, for whatever reason, did not feel inclined to attend the drop-in session and did not see fit to forward it to the Steering Group. If, however, the author of this letter would care to submit it, it could help the Steering Group with understanding comments we have received regarding this site.

Processing and feedback of results

We are processing the questionnaires plus other comments resulting from the drop-in event. With all the comments received, this is taking some time and is being done thoroughly to ensure we reflect all views.

Not being a survey of all residents in the Parish nor a random sample, the results must be reported with certain caveats.

We will present a summary of the results which will be available on the website, as was done with the residents' survey.

Given the current situation with COVID and to make access to most of the community as easy and as safe as possible, we plan to present the results in a Zoom meeting open to all in the Parish who are on-line. We will make provision by way of a report for those unable to attend. We will also report on how we intend to use the results to produce a final draft of the policies. The date of this meeting will be announced in the New Year.

Further consultations

There will be two further consultations:

¹ Small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing.

1. A pre-submission consultation – this is when the Neighbourhood Plan has been drafted. The consultation is arranged by the Steering Group and is open to the community, other stakeholders (which can include developers) and statutory consultees such as English Nature, Environment Agency, National Highways and Hampshire Highways.
2. Consultation on the Submission Draft – this draft is derived from the pre-submission draft but incorporates accepted comments from the consultation at 1. The second consultation is conducted under Test Valley Borough Council before examination of the draft by an independent examiner.

Because the gathering of feedback from the consultation has come to an end it does not mean that residents cannot send in further comments on the Plan at any time by email to admin@wellownhp.org.uk or in writing to the Parish Office. All relevant and constructive suggestions will be welcome.

14th December 2021