

Stow Matters



This edition of Stow Matters focuses on the Stow on the Wold and the Swells Neighbourhood Plan. Here you can read about the results of the March 2020 community household questionnaire and the site preference drop in days and learn how the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group is using these results to develop planning policies that protect and enhance the town's natural, social and historic environment, while also providing the development necessary to keep Stow and the Swells as successful places to live into the future. Although the Neighbourhood Plan will cover both Stow and the Swells this newsletter focuses on Stow on the Wold.

Above all the Neighbourhood Plan must be a **Plan by the Community for the Community**.

So if you have any questions or comments or would like to get more involved in preparing the Neighbourhood Plan, please contact the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group through Stow on the Wold Town Council by emailing info@stowonthewold-tc.gov.uk or telephone **01451 832 585**.

Why do we need a Neighbourhood Plan?

A Neighbourhood Plan puts in place planning policies for a neighbourhood area to guide future building and infrastructure development. In other words, it is an important part of the process through which Cotswold District Council (CDC), as the Planning Authority, decides

which planning applications will be approved and on which sites. It gives the local community a strong say in these decisions.

There is a complex process to be followed to complete a Neighbourhood Plan, with different stages of consultation, review and approval. Final approval of a Neighbourhood Plan is by a referendum of the community. If a majority of those voting approves a Neighbourhood Plan it becomes part of the statutory development plan for the area and therefore has considerable weight when planning applications are being considered.

How Does The Cotswold District Council's Local Plan Affect Stow?

There is no requirement for Stow to contribute to the Government's housing target for the Cotswold District Council area. However, the Stow and Swells Neighbourhood Plan can provide evidence of the need for development of genuinely affordable housing.

For example, at present, about 40 homes for social rent are needed by younger people and families with a local connection and local key workers. In addition, for those who aspire to and can afford home ownership, we need some homes for shared ownership and some for sale as starter and next step homes. One, two and three bedroom homes are all needed in Stow.

Once built, new genuinely affordable homes for social rent and shared ownership must be available forever as a permanent community asset.

STOW ON THE WOLD & THE SWELLS Neighbourhood *Plan*

The alternative is that the homes would be sold on the open market and the community would be back facing the same challenges of lack of genuinely affordable housing and encroachment into an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The March 2020 community consultation showed considerable support (73%) for genuinely affordable housing to be developed.

There are important protections for the AONB in the CDC Local Plan. These policies were not in place when approval was given for the development of the dementia home and two care/residential developments for the elderly on what were previously sites outside the development boundary.

To reinforce the protection of the AONB the draft Neighbourhood Plan will include the following overall development aim:—

The Stow on the Wold and the Swells Neighbourhood Plan will only support development outside the current development boundary that complies with our social, environmental and economic sustainability objectives, recognises the connections between them and provides satisfactorily for the development needs included in the Neighbourhood Plan.

[More on the next page](#)



Stow on the Wold Town Council

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Who Is Preparing The Neighbourhood Plan?

The Neighbourhood Plan is being drafted by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group consisting of six community representatives, three Stow Town councillors and one councillor from the Swells Parish Council

Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group :-

Cllr Maggie Deacon (Chair), Cllr Alun White, Cllr Mike Curtis, Cllr Tom Blythe (Swells), Nicholas Carr, Ashleigh Cox, David Cox, Peter Dixon, Stephen Gurmin & Bridget Ritacca.

Several other community members have volunteered to help the Steering Group with specific tasks. We have called them the Community Plan Champions. We are very grateful for their help and advice.

Current Community Plan Champions :-

Susan Arthurs, Mary Beston, Alexander Clayton, Phillipa Davy, Ella Forster, David Germaney, Arun Hamilton, Colin Piper, Jan Piper, Millie Robinson, Paul Walker, David Wiblin, Sophie Winter & Stow Civic Society.

The Steering Group is now working on a draft Neighbourhood Plan that reflects the community's wishes.

Community Consultation

Details of the results of the March 2020 community consultations can be found by clicking on the **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN** link on the **HOME PAGE** of council website www.stowonthewold-tc.gov.uk.

March 2020 Community Household Questionnaire Results

A good response rate was achieved which the Steering Group can treat as strong guidance.

The community supported the following statements :-

- Protect and enhance the unique nature of the historic, social, and environmental heritage of Stow and the Swells parishes for future generations.
- Achieve a balance between social, environmental and economic sustainability.
- Support the development needed to address current threats to sustainability.
- Achieve a sustainable social and economic future for Stow and the Swells.

Between 2011 and 2019 the working age population of Stow is estimated to have fallen by over 6% and the number of children has fallen by over 30%. Once the new care and residential home/village for the elderly are populated the number of people over the age of 65 will increase to 42%.

The community clearly recognises the potential impact of these changes on the long term sustainability of Stow and supported development that will attract more local younger people and families to live in Stow. At the same time the community does not want unbridled development.

The community supported :-

- Growth phased so that it can be integrated into the local infrastructure of roads, schools and services (257 household votes (79%).
- Second homes/holiday lets are having a significant impact on the availability and price of housing in Stow. Therefore, restrictions must be applied to new housing developments (228 household votes (70%).
- Little support (16 household votes (5%) was given to open market led housing development. Residents voted for mixed schemes (156 household votes (48%) and social housing led schemes (130 household votes (40%).
- A strong majority of Stow residents support specific requirements on the design, materials, sustainability, size, height, mass, surface water runoff and the provision of off street parking, safe walking and cycling routes, green spaces and wildlife corridors.
- The protection of St Edward's Hall, Stow Primary School, Stow Community & Family Hub, Fire Station, Police Station & Law Courts and Stow Social Club (the latter already protected as a community asset) for continued community use if they are no longer required for their current use.

Site Preference Results

Eleven possible development sites were included in the consultation. Only one larger site and/or a few smaller sites will be selected for allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan. The selection will be based on availability at a price that enables the identified development needs to be achieved, while minimising the

impact on the AONB. There will be an independent Strategic Environmental Assessment of the sites.

The March 2020 community consultation included three drop in days where people were able to complete a form to indicate which sites might be considered for development.

Unfortunately, only 125 site preference forms (8% of the Stow adult population) were completed. Although this information will be used by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, in view of the low response rate, we cannot regard the result as strong guidance. Details of the ranking of sites can be found on the Stow Town Council website found by clicking on the **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN** link on the **HOME PAGE** of council website www.stowonthewold-tc.gov.uk.

How Will the Views of the Community be Reflected in the Neighbourhood Plan?

The Neighbourhood Plan must provide evidence to support planning policies that reflect the views of the community. In addition to the population changes, the following evidence shows why development of genuinely affordable housing is needed to attract more younger people and families to live in Stow :-

- The 2015 housing needs survey indicated that 27 one, two and three bedroom homes are needed in Stow. However this is only based on returns from people living in Stow. Many younger people with local connections might have already been forced to live elsewhere.
- Since then, the Cotswold District Council housing waiting list, which fluctuates daily, has around 40 applications for social rent, from people with Stow local connections who wish to live in Stow.



Residents viewing information at one of the community consultation drop in days held in March 2020

- The number of residential properties in Stow that are used as second homes and holiday cottages is over 160 or 16% of total residential properties. Most of these properties are one, two and three bedroom cottages that would once have been ideal starter homes so new affordable homes should be protected from being sold for these purposes.
- No new housing estates for social rent have been built in Stow since 1951 when the Park Estate was completed
- 133 former council houses have been sold in Stow leaving 138 former council houses available for social rent.
- The reduction in the number of properties available for general sale has led to house prices in Stow that are now allegedly the highest in Gloucestershire.
- The average house price in Stow is at least fifteen times the average income, leaving a mortgage gap of about £300,000. The cheapest property in Stow is still eleven times average incomes and nineteen times the lowest incomes.
- Younger people who have grown up in Stow have no chance of buying or renting an affordable home in Stow. This has in turn impacted on the age range of the current population of Stow.

The consequence of these is a reduction in the working age and child age population of Stow since 2011. If nothing changes there will be threats to the long term sustainability of Stow.

As we progress, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group will continue to report to the community through the council's newsletter "Stow Matters". Once all the draft Neighbourhood Plan policies have been approved by Stow Town Council and the Swells Parish Council and commented on by CDC, the draft Neighbourhood Plan will be shared with the community for confirmation and comment, before the very final draft Plan is ready to begin the formal process of independent scrutiny leading to the community referendum



This montage indicates the need to ensure any development respects the historic built environment of Stow. Photographs kindly supplied by Stow & District Civic Society

How Can Genuinely Affordable Housing Be Provided In Stow and later in the Swells if necessary?

There are three ways of providing the genuinely affordable housing that we need to attract younger people and families to become residents in Stow. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages. There is no single approach that is all advantages and no disadvantages.

Market Led Housing

5% of those who returned their questionnaires voted for this.

Cotswold District Council's Local Plan requires that open market led housing must include up to 40% affordable housing and therefore 60%+ of housing for sale at market prices.

Main Advantages

- Developers will pay Section 106 and New Homes Bonus payments to Cotswold District Council.
- A Community Infrastructure Levy is paid for each dwelling built. If Stow has an approved Neighbourhood Plan 25% (rather than 15% if no Plan in place)

of these payments would automatically be paid to the Town Council to pay for infrastructure to support the new residents.

- Landowners are more likely to sell a site for this sort of housing as it achieves a high price per hectare.

Main Disadvantages

- There is no evidence of need or requirement in CDC's Local Plan for more unrestricted market housing in Stow on the Wold or the Swells.
- There is no guarantee that any of this money paid by developers to CDC will come to Stow. None of the money paid by the developers for the new care/retirement home/village will be paid to Stow.
- At least six market homes would need to be built to achieve up to four affordable homes, so more countryside would need to be built on.
- Although it is possible that homes for social rent would be provided, the definition of affordable housing includes properties sold at 80% of market price. In Stow, this is not affordable for most younger people and families.
- A developer may resist a restriction being placed on these homes, which would prevent them being used as second homes and holiday lets.

Mixed Housing Schemes

48% of those who returned their questionnaires voted for this.

These schemes would include housing for social rent, shared ownership and sale. In this case the Neighbourhood Plan will seek to ensure that as many as possible of the dwellings do remain genuinely affordable as a community asset in the long term.



Wraggs Row – an example of what new housing might look like. Photograph kindly supplied by Cotswold Tourism



Demonstration of how Stow sits within trees — key point to copy in any future development. Photograph kindly supplied by Stow & District Civic Society.

Stow on the Wold Town Council
BONFIRE & FIREWORKS



SADLY DUE TO COVID-19
PANDEMIC THIS YEAR'S EVENT IS
CANCELLED BUT STOW TOWN
COUNCIL HOPE TO BE BACK WITH
AN EXTRA SPECIAL Bonfire &
Fireworks event in 2021

Main Advantages

- Landowners may be prepared to sell a site at a price that would enable a mixed scheme to be financially viable, as the price per hectare would be higher than agricultural land prices.
- Some Section 106 and New Homes Bonus and Community Infrastructure payments would be paid to Cotswold District Council and Stow on the Wold Town Council.
- Affordable homes would be provided for those on the lowest incomes and for those who aspire to home ownership.
- Those homes that are for social rent and shared ownership can be provided so that they remain genuinely affordable forever for new permanent residents.
- Less homes in total should need to be built to provide for the genuinely affordable housing we need.

Main Disadvantages

- Some homes are likely to need to be provided for open market sale to achieve a financially viable scheme, so there would be more homes than if only social housing were to be developed.
- The financial contribution to local infrastructure paid by a developer would be significantly less than for market led housing.

Social Housing For Rent

40% of those who returned their questionnaires voted for this.

This is what used to be called council housing. The Cotswold District Council housing waiting list varies every day but generally includes around 40 households with a Stow local connection who wish to live in Stow.

Main Advantages

- This is housing for those on the lowest incomes. Home ownership, even shared ownership, may not be an option for many younger people and families with local connections who seek the security of a permanent home.
- Homes for social rent and shared ownership can be provided so that they remain genuinely affordable forever and would provide for permanent residents

Main Disadvantages

- Landowners may not be prepared to sell a site at the prices necessary to enable social housing to be built.
- No provision would be made for younger people and families who aspire to own their own homes.

STOW ON THE WOLD & THE SWELLS
**Neighbourhood
Plan**



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Part of Places for People

STOW MATTERS PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY BRIO RETIREMENT