

# Woodstock Community and Infrastructure Delivery Plan

Appendix 10 – Sustainable Woodstock feedback (September 2019)

## Woodstock Community and Infrastructure Plan Feedback From Sustainable Woodstock Version 2 13<sup>th</sup> September 2019

Submitted by Sustainable Woodstock

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*We are a local voluntary community group and we aim is to raise awareness and champion environmental issues in our community and local businesses. Working together, we believe we can support projects and campaigns to tackle issues with a greater likelihood of success. We are interested in raising awareness on issues such as climate change, energy conservation, waste reduction, recycling, biodiversity, sustainable economics and respect for our planet and believe that local action is influencing change on national and international issues.*

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***NB:** The UK Government has put into law that the UK has a target of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 and so from the outset, all plans related to any development/change must consider the Climate Change Crisis in the materials they use, energy use, their tree-planting schemes, how residents/visitors travel, etc. I'm sure, as I write, the standards are being rewritten but those who are working in planning should be able to access the very best ideas and solutions for the health of a sustainable Woodstock. This would not only be for the sake of compliance with environmental standards but to make the housing and community attractive to buyers too.*

Sustainable Woodstock is happy to help by working with local councils, the Low Carbon Hub and like-minded groups to help make this happen.

### 1) **Woodstock Surgery and Community Hub**

Woodstock is already a thriving town helped by being alongside Blenheim Palace and Park and the wider countryside. From the feedback and all the evidence we've witnessed from residents, it's clear that their number 1 priority for Woodstock town is the surgery and we agree that a new surgery must be completed if the town is to remain a sustainable community. Fundamentally, the building should ensure that environmental credentials are sound, i.e. solar energy, air-source heat pumps, triple glazing, etc.

A new surgery should not only offer the services necessary for 21<sup>st</sup> century healthcare and additional patient numbers, but also be the kind of workplace that will attract doctors, that are in short supply, to Woodstock. The building should be a flexible space allowing for changes in the way local medicine might be managed, e.g.

a space for more local services such as phlebotomy, radiology, counselling, health visitors, physiotherapy, chiropody and visiting consultant rooms....to name but a few.

But for the community to grow in a place where residents can truly thrive, it's would be preferable to incorporate other community wellbeing elements such as a hub with a new library and community meeting rooms available to local groups such as volunteer groups, societies, community police rooms, a community café, etc.

A central site appears to be most appealing to residents and as there are no other obvious sites (to mostly untrained eyes) probably the site of the existing police buildings and library appears to be the most reasonable and might also ensure the town pharmacy would remain. Although, this site might not be big enough as there would probably be insufficient room for the legendary car-parking requirement for Woodstock.

## 2) Future Housing and Woodstock's Future

### a. Affordability

Woodstock can only be sustainable if all in the community are catered for. New homes should ensure that many are "truly" affordable (as specified by Blenheim in previous meetings) and we have the right mix of homes .... more of every type of housing. We're aware that affordable homes are difficult to define and the term affordability depends on many factors. Essentially people should be able to live close to where they work and this means that everyone should be able to find a home that is affordable to them. ....explained in the link to the Shelter blog below:

<https://blog.shelter.org.uk/2015/08/what-is-affordable-housing/>

### b. Energy.

- i New houses should be to the highest energy specifications with inclusion of "smart" regulated solar panels, air-source heat pumps for heating and batteries for storing excess generated energy.
- ii Create a "smart" local energy system (local "smart" grid). A larger project that links local renewables, electric cars and battery storage to optimise community energy use as well as cutting costs for residents. These projects can attract long-term support from various sources. This could make a big difference here in Woodstock and set up a "smart" grid?
- iii Nearby, a larger-scale renewable generation system, such as a solar park or wind turbine, should be explored to serve the town.
- iv Develop a scheme for helping residents and local businesses to upgrade the efficiency of their homes, offices and processes. This could include promotional material, funding to assist with implementation (e.g. consultants to identify possibilities and help to implement them, alongside potentially capital such as favourable loans that could be repaid from savings in energy bills.

### c. Cycling and walking - to be encouraged and facilitated.

**NB.** See Safer-Routes report for a more detailed report from Colin Carritt (sub-group of Sustainable Woodstock)

- i New routes for both cycling and walking required especially to help integrate the new housing developments.
- ii Footpaths need to improve greatly as they are dangerous when walking with children or those who need assistance. Banbury Road and along A44 good examples but a full survey needed.
- iii New housing - cycle tracks designed and established from the outset.
- iv More secure sites for bikes in the town, as they are frequently no sites available.

d. **Cars**

- i Reduce the need for residents to use their cars, e.g. shared ownership, local electric bus service, local delivery service. New houses should have a plug in charging points installed for future electric vehicles.
- ii New houses should have sufficient off-road parking
- iii Plug-In installations available in the town for electric vehicles to encourage use.
- iv Introduce an electric-car pool (already early plans by Blenheim).

e. **Travel**

- i Park & Ride for Blenheim/Oxford that could be electric and also have passengers dropped off at the town, surgery, school, new hub, community woodland, etc.
- ii Additional bus stops to present service for Woodstock East, Bladon Chains caravan site and Cow Yards, Blenheim. Buses should be electric.

f. **Road Crossings A44 from Hill Rise to Woodstock East & Banbury Road.**

- i Upgrade the zebra crossing at the Causeway (with very poor markings at the moment) to a pelican crossing.
- ii Create a new pelican crossing in Hill Rise to enable safer access to bus stops and green spaces including the community woodland and community orchard. There is an argument that increased numbers of crossing helps in traffic speed calming in built up areas.
- iii Create crossing points near Woodstock East.
- iv Investigate crossing options at the mini roundabout junction of Hensington/Shipton/Banbury Roads, a particularly dangerous crossing for children at school time.
- v Pedestrian crossing from new development north of Banbury Road, giving access to schools.

g. **Speed Limit Reduced on A44**

- i Advance warning-signs/signals of speed limits approaching, especially where a downhill stretch reduces the opportunity for natural speed decay.
- ii Increase 30 mph zone limit:
  - North of Woodstock to Stratford Lane
  - South of Woodstock to Bladon roundabout.
- iii Existing 30 mph reduced to 20 mph zone on A44 through the town, from bus stops on Manor Road to Hensington Gate and in reverse, as in areas of Oxford such as Summertown and Headington.
- iv 20 mph zone through Bladon.

h. **One Way option**

To help traffic flow consider making Hensington Road / A44 connection (narrow section) one way in favour of traffic from A44 to allow easier access to car park/possible new surgery and community hub. Improves safety for pedestrian and awkward right turn onto A44 near pelican crossing. Consequently, Union Street would then become one way.

i. **Weight Restricted on A44**

Consider restricting weight of lorries through the town.

3) **Trapping Carbon and supporting Biodiversity with more Trees, Wildlife, Wildlife Corridors, Verges & Urban Green Space**

- a. **Trees for Trapping Carbon.** Tree planting is necessary, not only in the new housing areas but throughout the area in order to trap carbon. Trees can make massive differences in fighting back climate change. We are being urged to plant a mix of native species that will help preserve the birds, insects and other local creatures.

<https://www.sciencenews.org/article/planting-trees-could-buy-more-time-fight-climate-change-thought>

- b. **Woodstock is a known site for** the return and nesting of swifts, swallows and house martins and has a good bat population. Research has shown that homes that welcome the natural world are good not just for wildlife, but also for human health and wellbeing. New housing developments should include places for birds to nest and other wildlife. "There is an urgent need to ensure developments do not become sterile places with little wildlife".

Swift, swallow, bat boxes & hedgehog highways should be installed into houses. For hedgehogs, if fences/walls are to be installed, holes included to allow hedgehogs to travel from garden to garden.

RSPB engages with developers to increase the likelihood that wildlife is considered at the start of the design process." Read more:

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/conservation/projects/kingsbrook-housing/#xtR7vA2xCTri632o.99>

<https://www.warwickshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/saving-wildlife-and-wild-places/hedgehogs>

- c. **Wildlife Corridors**

Wildlife will be lost if we do not provide corridors to link wildlife habitats. Generally they consist of native vegetation that join two or more larger areas of similar wildlife habitat. Much of England's wildlife is now restricted to wildlife sites, which consist largely of semi-natural habitats. However, surviving in small, isolated sites is difficult for many species, especially in the longer term and climate change. Wildlife corridors should be part of the new housing developments and they should NOT be simple set aside strips of land. They should be properly planned with input from institutions such as Wildlife Trust's (BBOWT), RSPB etc.

- d. **Verges and Urban Green Space**

Change of management to verges and urban green space to promote flowering plants and insects (in other words, a more relaxed green space as an integral part of bringing wildlife and development closer together at the planning stage. Advice should be sought on what an urban space maximised for wildlife could look like.

More reading

- i defra publication : *Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services*

<https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/gb/gb-nbsap-v3-p1-en.pdf>

- ii *Making space for nature': a review of England's wildlife sites*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/making-space-for-nature-a-review-of-englands-wildlife-sites-published-today>

#### 4) **Accessibility for Disabled & Able-bodied**

- a. Ensure all community buildings are accessible but noting the particular difficulties at the pharmacy and Town Hall.
- b. Community Woodland & Community Orchard. This is an area that was created by volunteers after Blenheim donated the land for this purpose. It is a community green space that is maintained by Sustainable Woodstock volunteers. Residents can come together to socialise, walk dogs, learn skills, etc.

Maximise the community green space by creating pathways to improve accessibility to all in the community. If we're unable to find funding for this, help support the existing pathways and glades by helping with funding of regular grass cutting and invasive weed control (minimal).

## 5) **Facilities for Children**

Woodstock has play areas for young children and these should be well maintained and expanded to suit different ages.

## 6) **Everyday Shopping in Woodstock**

- a) There are many lifestyle shops in Woodstock but we should be encouraging the establishment of stores that support local producers of meat, vegetables, fruit and other foodstuffs.
- b) Shops should offer refill stations and deposit-return stations/machines.
- c) Farmers Markets – more of them for fresh produce. I think we should be calling for an expansion of the Framers Market. Why not have monthly suspension of Saturday parking outside the Bear Hotel and the Post Office to allow market stalls to be set up on both sides of the wide section of Park Street. To have a Farmers Market the size of, say, Deddington's would be fantastic and draw more people to the town (by bike or by bus of course!)

## 7) **Waste and Recycling**

- a. Quality of waste and recycling bins throughout the town should be improved and maintained.
- b. Most street waste bins are filled with cans, bottles, etc. as well as other debris and do not allow segregation for recycling. Waste bins should be replaced with segregated recycling bins.

## 8) **Allotments**

Enormous pressure on the land for building means that most new houses or flats offer virtually no land for growing their own. People are losing skills and allotments are a way of learning from the experienced as well as a social experience.

- a. Given the positive reasons for having an allotment, rather than generally having a waiting list the town should consider providing what's needed.
- b. Given the exceptionally poor quality of soil in our area, take up and maintenance should be encouraged by preparing new and existing allotments with decent top soil and water.

Benefits of allotment gardening - see National Allotment Society for more detail.

<https://www.nsalg.org.uk/allotment-info/benefits-of-allotment-gardening/>

## 9) **A Place to have Fun in Leisure and Sport, Young and Old – apart from visiting Blenheim**

Sport and other leisure activities bring benefits to people and to our society. Activities improve physical and mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development, and economic development.

Woodstock should consider a super-hub that incorporates flexible spaces for sport and leisure-type activities giving benefits to all ages, such as rooms available for crafts, meeting rooms, a gym, a studio space suitable for all manner of activities from the very young to the much older, small cinema/presentation room, a music room where young bands and other musicians can work and practice, badminton, netball, squash, basketball, ping pong, swimming (with a cover and open all year) and even a climbing wall ...and a café. So while these ideas are big and exciting for the community as a whole and would be ideally suited on the same campus ....we offer no solutions for siting. We understand there is likely insufficient funding but future plans may incorporate such ideas or some of the ideas. The police station site is certainly insufficient to incorporate these ideas in the future and it would be a shame to move people away from the town centre for these activities....or would it? Again all building quality must be to the highest environmental standards and include places for bikes, plug-in cars.

By the way, there are nice examples of hubs and super-hubs in nearby Charlbury and Corsham, Wilts respectively. See links below:

<https://www.charlburycommunitycentre.org.uk>

<https://www.corsham.gov.uk/amenities/springfieldleisurecentre.php>

- 10) **Art Work** Given the very real climate crisis, can we consider spending the contribution per household for art work on environmental projects instead?