

## Neighbourhood Plan item for March 2016 Deddington News

### Operation Watertight

In creating a neighbourhood plan for Deddington, we on the steering group have often looked to the example of Hook Norton who started early with their plan and seem to have made a thoroughly professional job of it. The Hooky plan was approved by a stunning 97% majority when put to a referendum last September and now that it has been ratified by Cherwell District Council forms an official part of the planning process.

Very encouraging - so who would have thought that just a few months later Hook Norton's pioneering effort would also serve as a horrible warning of what can happen when a plan falls into the hands of the government's inspectorate.

The story begins in May 2014 when Gladman Developments applied for permission to build 54 dwellings on a site on the east side of Sibford Road, Hook Norton. The site happens to be alongside a dairy farm, a stone's throw from the farm's fairly smelly slurry pit. In September 2014, Cherwell District Council refused the application.

Gladman appealed against the decision and a public enquiry was held in January and March 2015. The inspector allowed the appeal – which was “called in” by the Secretary of State at the Department for Communities and Local Government, who gave his decision in December 2015. He supported the inspector and so granted permission for the application to build the 54 dwellings.

The decision turned on the supposedly ambiguous wording of one of Hook Norton's housing policies which, by the way, resembles one of Deddington neighbourhood plan's draft housing policies. Namely the Hook Norton policy states that “proposals for up to 20 dwellings may be permitted where this does not result in more than 20 dwellings being built in any location at any time”.

Perversely, as many have argued, the inspector and the Secretary of State took this to mean that although only 20 dwellings might be built at any one time, more homes could be built incrementally on the same site at, say, five-year intervals. Hence they okayed the 54 dwellings.

This outraged the Hook Norton neighbourhood planners and caused the Deddington Neighbourhood Plan steering group some heart-searching over our plan if the intended meaning could be so easily overridden.

Then, in January, Cherwell District Council decided to mount a legal challenge to the Secretary of State's decision – and there the matter stands as we await the decision of the statutory review.

Encouraged by this clear evidence that CDC is prepared to defend neighbourhood plans – and put their money and their legal expertise where their mouth is – Deddington's neighbourhood plan is back under way. But the steering

group is taking another very careful look at our emerging policies to ensure that the wording is absolutely watertight.

We had already been considering how the policies need modifying in light of the comments made by parishioners at the third drop-in sessions at the Windmill Centre in November – and the views of stakeholders who have been in touch with us since then.

The emerging policies – clearly quite a way from being finalised – are on the neighbourhood plan website ([deddingtonneighbourhoodplan.org](http://deddingtonneighbourhoodplan.org)) and we would welcome comments on them or any other aspect of the plan process from anyone with an interest in the future of the parish. You will find the draft policies on the Home page if you follow the link “here” in Alan Collins’s message of thanks to people who attended the drop-in sessions.

We were very pleased with the turn-out at the November drop-in sessions, but that seems a long time ago now. A lot has happened since – not just the Hook Norton furore but, closer to home, the purchase of the School Field north of Gaveston Houses by David Wilson Homes and their planning application for 95 homes on the site (ten more than in the previous application).

In case you’re wondering at the numbers (way over the 20-home limit mentioned in our policies), the original application was granted on appeal before the cut-off date laid down in Cherwell District Council’s Local Plan, so our neighbourhood plan may not apply to the David Wilson application. We’ll see. And, setting aside the numbers for the moment, what about the name the developers have posted on their sign on the Banbury Road – “Deddington Grange”?

Helen Oldfield ([helenmoldfield@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:helenmoldfield@yahoo.co.uk))

## **Neighbourhood Plan Item for Deddington News, April 2016 edition**

Oxford has big plans to become a centre of the “knowledge industry” – and they don’t just mean the universities. They’re thinking of scientific, technical and technological centres, labs, workshops, what-have-you, that are expected to provide employment for thousands of people. The problem is that Oxford City doesn’t have the space to build housing for all these new workers.

It’s all a bit speculative at the moment, but the calculation is that 15,000 homes will be needed in the surrounding areas for Oxford City’s overspill and for Cherwell that would mean 3,500 new dwellings - over and above the nearly 23,000 already envisaged between now and 2031.

Cherwell District Council has expressed its willingness to fulfill its “Duty to Co-operate” with other Oxfordshire local authorities, including Oxford City, but hosted a couple of workshops for parish councils in the district to see how keen the villages were to “co-operate” - if that meant housing a new wave of Oxford workers within their parishes.

Well, they were not keen, not at all. Councillors expressed concerns that by deliberately encouraging commuting across the county, traffic congestions and pollution would worsen – in conflict with various other CDC policies – and villages might lose their identity. The general – though not unanimous – feeling was that Oxford City should house its own workers, as closely as possible to the city and if necessary by striking into Green Belt land. Deddington Neighbourhood Plan’s steering group expressed a similar view in response to CDC’s consultation document.

As a Deddington parish councillor, I attended one of the CDC workshops, mostly alongside councillors from the south of the district, and was struck by both the similarities and differences between our outlooks.

Nearly all the parishes were concerned about traffic congestions and rat runs, and there was widespread irritation that CDC was promoting the use of public transport at a time when the bus services were being axed. In Deddington, I would say the emphasis seems to be more on road safety and parking problems.

Other issues concerning new developments were identical – the need for starter homes for young people and homes suitable for downsizers, worries that “affordable” housing wasn’t actually affordable and the discount purchase scheme would make matters worse, the need for high quality design in keeping with the village aesthetic, gloom about poor infrastructure, in particular water pressure and sewage capacity.

Most of the parishes – unlike Deddington - seemed fairly content with the sport and recreation space they had. Some were anxious about finding the money to maintain the playgrounds and sports fields properly. Some were running out of cemetery space, and simply couldn’t afford to buy new land at housing development prices.

Many councillors thought home working should be encouraged, in fact was crucial since there is so little other employment in the villages. For this high-speed broadband was essential – and should be included in the Local Plan as a requirement for developers. Another proposal was that planners should be encouraged to allow residents to convert their garages into offices. This is at odds with Deddington neighbourhood plan where the current impetus is to discourage garage conversions in the interests of preserving parking places.

Perhaps our home workers make do with the garden shed or the kitchen table.

Helen Oldfield

[helenmoldfield@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:helenmoldfield@yahoo.co.uk)

[www.deddingtonneighbourhoodplan.org](http://www.deddingtonneighbourhoodplan.org)

Neighbourhood Plan item, May 2016 issue of Deddington News

## **Anyone for a mancave?**

The Neighbourhood Plan steering group has reached the point of fine-tuning policies and even drawing up a tentative draft plan. There'll be another chance for you to give us your feedback and new ideas at the Annual Parish Meeting on Wednesday May 4 at the Windmill Centre when the neighbourhood plan will be the main item on the agenda.

It's always good to have fresh perspectives. Besides the big issues – how many houses? where? when? – it's strange how matters that appear to be no more than details turn out to be controversial, or at least food for debate.

Take garages. I've never been much attached to them, however I recognise this is very much a minority view: garage owners value them highly and it's now unthinkable to build a house of any size without a garage.

Yet amazingly few people actually park their cars in their garages. Cherwell District Council put the figure at about 50%, and a Deddington man who lives in one of the turnings off Hempton Road reckons the percentage in his street is way smaller than that, maybe 2%.

If garages have not been formally converted into an office or workshop, they've become de facto storerooms or mancaves. Once we had cupboards-under-the-stairs, lofts or box rooms. (Remember them? Probably not, but I recall going to my mother's friend's house as a child and finding upstairs a small room with a tiny window completely filled with suitcases, trunks and boxes.) Now we have garages (or some of us do) to stash our stuff that probably should have been thrown away years ago.

And the steering group is keen that new residents in new estates in Deddington should be adequately provided with garages and parking spaces - what's more, garages that you can actually drive into and comfortably open the door to alight unlike the rather skimpy ones currently pencilled in for the School Field estate.

One reason this is given such priority is no doubt because of the perceived parking problems elsewhere in Deddington parish, particularly in the old parts of the villages where houses were built shoulder to shoulder before the coming of the motor car and there are few drives and even fewer garages. The exceptions are the several one-time coaching inns along High Street and New Street that have gated archways presumably leading to a yard and perhaps even stabling beyond.

Sadly it's unlikely any new estates will be so handsomely equipped, but it won't be for want of the steering group trying.

Hope to see you on May 4<sup>th</sup> to talk garages and other broader issues.

Helen Oldfield [helenmoldfield@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:helenmoldfield@yahoo.co.uk)  
[www.deddingtonneighbourhoodplan.org](http://www.deddingtonneighbourhoodplan.org)

Item for June 2016 edition of Deddington News

## Neighbourhood Plan

The shifting plans for School Field provide an object lesson in how important it is to have a neighbourhood plan in place – always supposing, when push comes to shove, that the plan actually holds sway in the teeth of quixotic planning inspectors and ever-changing planning and building regulations.

Things slip. A few years back, the School Field (behind Gaveston Gardens, fronting on to the Banbury Road) was deemed by the planning authority to be suitable for 50 houses. In December 2013, planning permission was granted on appeal for 85 houses. This year the new owners, David Wilson Homes, put in a new application, this time for 95 homes. Now that's been topped by their latest application - for 99 dwellings.

The justification for this is that they need to redesign the estate – with more houses - to meet the objections to their previous plan made by Cherwell's planning chief. In the new layout it's all beginning to look a bit poky, with mostly pocket-handkerchief gardens, but it's still within government recommended density levels.

Another piece of fancy footwork concerns the roads on the proposed new estate. The planning officer thought the planned roads were not of such a standard that the highway authority could adopt them: the carriageway has varying widths, the parking spaces are too small, footpaths from some of the house lead straight on to the carriageway.

The developers' answer was simple. They won't be adopted - a residents' management company will maintain the roads. You can imagine the neighbourly disputes this will provoke when the time comes for repairs. What about the people who can't pay, won't pay?

Another twist concerns my favourite – the garages. The planning officer suggested these should be 3 meters by 6 meters. The developers' bland response is that "the garages have been excluded from the parking provision". So what on earth is the point of them? Or is this some kind of post-modern recognition that it's a quaint old custom to put your car in your garage?

To be fair to David Wilson Homes, one area where they are not welshing on their commitments is in providing the required 35% of affordable homes. That at least is welcome, though they are dickering about whether any of these should be built to Lifetime Standards (suitable for people to continue living in as they get old and frail and less mobile).

The question is – will this kind of slippage be repeated on future developments in Deddington? The steering group will have to look at its policies yet again to

make sure they are as watertight as we can make them. But the truth is there are no guarantees.

Helen Oldfield [helenmoldfield@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:helenmoldfield@yahoo.co.uk)  
[www.deddingtonneighbourhoodplan.org](http://www.deddingtonneighbourhoodplan.org)

## Neighbourhood Plan item for July 2016 Deddington News

### Playing around

The question of playgrounds are a hot topic for both the Neighbourhood Plan steering group and the parish council: who should be responsible for any new play areas built on new housing developments in Deddington parish? Are the ones we already have up to snuff?

It seems a good moment to take another closer look at the responses to the Youth Questionnaire which was circulated at the same time as the adult survey in autumn 2014. Just under half the estimated number of 11- to-17-year-olds in the parish replied – 72 in all. Of these 33 attended the Warriner School, 19 went to a variety of independent preparatory or secondary schools, and the rest to colleges and secondary schools around the district, plus a precocious duo from Deddington primary.

I've commented before on the amazing willingness of Deddington's parents to chauffeur their children around – 78% of those responding to the Youth Questionnaire said they had no problems getting transport/lifts to go places. And, pleasingly, 62.5% - or 45 individuals - thought there was enough for young people to do in the parish.

However, when it came to pinpointing what new things and what improvements we need in the parish, they had plenty of suggestions. Some ranging from the outlandish to the just about feasible – ice rink, swimming pool, roller disco, skate park, climbing wall – others all too familiar. Modernise the Windmill Centre and make it more inviting, they chorused; and the most common suggestion of all – improve the playgrounds. "I would like to see a bigger senior playground in Deddington," said one. "Clifton park is boring with no up-to-date equipment," said another. "More fun stuff." "More variety" "Better teenage park equipment." "An obstacle/fitness course." And so it goes.

A couple called for a netball court, "somewhere for team games for girls". That struck a chord, so far as I know female members of the football and cricket teams are very few indeed. But - stop press - I've just heard there is weekly netball on the Windmill all weather court.

Another question asked whether there were any areas of the parish where the youthful respondents felt unsafe. "None" was the most frequent answer. But there were a few alerts: The Daedings and Gaveston Gardens were too dark; Daeda's Wood was remote with strange people; cars hung around the Windmill car park; the graveyard at night was scary, and even by day the cycle path to Clifton was uneven and overgrown.

In response to all that there is some good news. Refurbishment at the Windmill is well under way, and the parish council is currently exploring grants, ways and means of setting up a fitness trail at the Windmill sports field.

But will the youngsters be there to see it. Only 24% (17 respondents) said they plan to carry on living in Deddington when they grow up. Many more - 42% - said they didn't know. Sensible really. Who knows where jobs, love affairs, curiosity may take them.

Helen Oldfield [helenmoldfield@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:helenmoldfield@yahoo.co.uk)  
[www.neighbourhoodplan.org](http://www.neighbourhoodplan.org)

## Neighbourhood Plan item for September 2016 Deddington News

### Some like it small

One indisputable finding of the Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire is the need for smaller homes suitable for older parishioners looking to downsize and for young people looking for somewhere they can afford to buy. In this respect Deddington reflects the situation pretty much across the country.

Notoriously, big construction companies do not favour these more modest homes – there's less profit in them. The various plans put forward for the School Field west of the Banbury Road, for example, have included very few two- and three-bedroom houses for sale on the open market.

This is where smaller companies see their opportunity – suggesting schemes more tailored to the housing needs that were revealed in the questionnaire. In the past few weeks members of parish council and of the Neighbourhood Plan steering group have met representatives of two such companies: Blue Cedar Homes and Village Foundations.

Simon Tofts of Blue Cedar at the first such meeting made clear that his company had no particular sites in Deddington parish in mind, they were simply testing the water. His company has several developments across the south west and specialises in fairly luxurious houses, occasionally bungalows, for the over-55s. Mostly they build 10 to 12 houses on a plot of about an acre – somewhat scaled up if they are required to provide affordable housing (which they would be in Deddington).

Often the houses are grouped round a central communal lawn with a summerhouse. They're built to Lifetime Standards, which means they can accommodate people if they become less mobile as the years go by – wheelchair-friendly doorways, downstairs dining room and shower which can be converted to an en-suite bedroom, that kind of thing.

The fittings are pretty upscale and with a visiting site manager taking out the bins, and possibly gates at the entrance, you could expect a purchase price to match and a fairly steep annual charge. On the other hand – if you're trading in a four- or five-bedroom family home, cost may not be an issue.

Village Foundations is a smaller outfit which designs developments and negotiates with landowners rather than actually build houses themselves. They concentrate on developments in rural areas, catering for the older generation downsizing and younger people starting out.

Their man Jonathan Harbottle kicked off by showing us a sketch of part of his company's scheme for Marsh Gibbon, a smallish village in Aylesbury Vale. This consisted of nine dwellings on one site – four maisonettes in a large country house style building and a terrace, which he likened to almshouses, in what looked like a built-from-scratch elongated barn conversion, with most of the

accommodation in each unit downstairs but with an extra bedroom upstairs. All very pretty, but what they had in mind for Deddington was on a larger scale.

Unlike Blue Cedar, Village Foundations had had tentative discussions with a local landowner – focusing on a couple of relatively small sites which Harbottle thought might together accommodate up to 80 dwellings. That looked like a stretch.

What distinguishes local landowners from a large conglomerate such as David Wilson Homes (part of Barratt Developments and the new owners of the School Field site) is that, knowing the need for more sports fields in the parish, they sometimes offer an extra piece of land for recreation as a gift.

So far the Neighbourhood Plan steering group has resolved to lay down criteria to guide future planning decisions rather than state preferences for individual sites. It will be interesting to see if the locally attuned elements offered by small companies and local landowners will make the difference when – and if – planning applications are finally submitted.

That becomes more problematic when you consider the shenanigans on the School field site, where Cherwell District Council has rejected David Wilson's most recent application for 99 houses. Whether David Wilson Homes will appeal against that decision or settle for the earlier approved plan for 85 houses – or go back to the drawing board – is unknown at the time of going to press.

Still, if you were one of the 55 who stated in the questionnaire that you were looking to downsize (not to mention the 183 who thought they might in the future) or the 53 who said they were hoping for a starter home, maybe, just maybe, some of you, at least, will find something to suit you before too long.

Helen Oldfield ([helenmoldfield@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:helenmoldfield@yahoo.co.uk))  
[www.deddingtonneighbourhoodplan.org](http://www.deddingtonneighbourhoodplan.org)

## Neighbourhood Plan item for October issue of Deddington News

### The waiting game

It's been a long time coming but the Neighbourhood Plan steering group is almost at the point of producing a plan, complete with parish profile, policies and all the rest of the paperwork bureaucracy requires. But for the moment our hands are tied - we're waiting for Cherwell District Council to publish two key documents.

The first is basically a list of sites throughout the district that are available for housing development. In local government speak it's the Updated Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment - or SHLAA. The public, landowners, house builders and other interested parties were invited to suggest possible sites for new housing by a deadline of June this year. These proposals are vetted then assembled and should be published soon.

The last SHLAA produced in October 2013 identified only one site in Deddington. There may be a few more on the updated version.

The second document is Cherwell's Local Plan part 2 which may give a clear idea of how many new homes Deddington will be expected to accommodate over the next 15 years - and may even suggest where they could be built.

Either document could mean we'll have to make changes to our neighbourhood plan. For, of course, figures are juggled all the time - most recently the number of homes Cherwell will be required to build to accommodate the overspill from Oxford.

On the one hand, Oxford has ambitious plans for expansion in the "knowledge industry", on the other hand the City is deemed to have no space to house all the anticipated new employees. The number of new homes needed for the overflow of workers and their families in the rest of the county is estimated at 15,000 - and in January the share for Cherwell district was mooted as 3,500. Now that's gone up to 4,400.

In March, the Neighbourhood Plan steering group pointed out that scattering commuters all over the county would mean more traffic congestion and pollution and suggested it might be better to build homes nearer the workplaces, even if it meant encroaching on the Oxford Green Belt. Well, the Oxfordshire Growth Board, the inelegantly named coalition of the various local authorities and others concerned, ignored all that - and indeed upped Cherwell's quota.

One day we'll see whether this predicted employment boom for boffins materializes in Oxford. But even if it's a fantasy, there's no denying the need for homes.

Helen Oldfield [helenmoldfield@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:helenmoldfield@yahoo.co.uk)  
[www.deddingtonneighbourhoodplan.org](http://www.deddingtonneighbourhoodplan.org)

## Deddington Neighbourhood Plan

### **The play's the thing**

We thought we were pretty much finished with drawing up policies on the neighbourhood plan group, but no - fresh issues keep arising. News reaches us from two different Cherwell villages that playgrounds on new developments have been provoking bad feeling - to the point in one instance where the police were called.

The trouble stems from a recent money-saving wheeze by developers. Where the number of houses on a new estate reaches a certain level (50 dwellings in Cherwell), developers are expected to build a play area. Traditionally, these playgrounds were handed over to the local district council together with a lump sum to cover the maintenance for a period of, say, 15 years ahead.

That was then. Nowadays some developers are providing the play area as required - but then handing it over to a management company instead of the local authority. The upshot is that the new residents are in effect responsible for the play areas themselves. And this leads to friction when children from outside the estate come to the playground - and use and perhaps cause wear and tear to the equipment the parents from within the estate will pay for.

The Community sub-group of the neighbourhood plan is now considering drawing up a new policy intended to forestall these kind of ructions - perhaps insisting that play areas on new estates should be adopted by the local authority. In practice this means the parish council would become responsible for them, and therein lies a potential problem.

Deddington Parish Council currently has the parish's four existing play areas in its care. Some councillors have been reluctant to take on responsibility for new playgrounds on new estates because, when the commuted sum for maintenance runs out, the council would have to cover the ongoing costs. On the other hand, it's true to say that new residents will pay their council tax, including their share of Deddington's precept, like everybody else.

This question is not simply theoretical. David Wilson Homes, who are currently applying for permission to build 99 homes on the School Field site north of Gaveston Gardens, intend that the play area should be run by a management company - along with the roads, which under current plans will not to be built to a standard where they could be adopted by the highways authority.

Cherwell District Council foresaw the problem two years ago: in November 2014 the council's Executive passed a resolution that "the Council's strong preference is that public open space, outdoor sports pitches and play areas on new developments continue to be adopted by the Council in conjunction with the relevant town or parish council with a commuted sum...". The resolution was prompted by Bicester Town Council which objected to a management company taking over the play area on one of their new estates, on the grounds that it would mean "double taxation" for the incoming residents and that the equipment in the play area might be inferior to that on playgrounds run by the town council.

Oddly, this "strong preference" has not so far found its way into the planning obligations required of David Wilson Homes, should they get planning permission for their latest application.

Who should be responsible for play areas? This is a dilemma both the neighbourhood plan steering group and the parish council will have to ponder. What's your view? The steering group - and very likely the parish council too ([deddingtonparishcouncil@googlemail.com](mailto:deddingtonparishcouncil@googlemail.com)) - would like to hear from you.

Helen Oldfield ([helenmoldfield@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:helenmoldfield@yahoo.co.uk))