

Westwood Parish Council has commissioned this Special Edition which is focussed solely on the very important topic of **Neighbourhood Planning**, the term used by central and local government to address the nation's need for new housing and supporting services. In simple terms, there are central government targets for the provision of new housing, including the associated infrastructure and services, to meet the needs of a growing population, and each Local Authority must make their contribution to meeting those targets. Similarly, each Town and Parish Council will be expected to make a contribution to support their Local Authority. As there is a presumption that all Councils and Local Authorities will be positively supporting the needs of the nation, Westwood Parish will be expected to determine what types, how many and the locations of new housing in our area. More on this later.

This will be a cause for considerable concern throughout our community, and we are already having to deal with planning applications for the building of new properties. However, Neighbourhood Planning is the formal process which has been defined to allow us, under the leadership of the Westwood Parish Council, with support from Wiltshire Council, to take ownership and control this key issue. It will enable us to determine the scope, scale and impacts of new housing developments within the parish boundaries.

This special edition is to bring this most important and pressing subject to your attention and to seek your active and positive engagement in the process. Except for major emergencies, **rarely has there been a need for every one of you to get involved in a critical local issue such as this.**

The following is a précis or paraphrase of the opening section, as it applies to us, from the publication entitled "A Planning Guide for Wiltshire's Parish and Town Councils, 2013". A full online copy can be found at www.wiltshire.gov.uk/neighbourhood-planning-a-guide-nov-13.pdf.

The government has brought about significant changes to the planning system through the Localism Act 2011. These reforms seek to achieve a reduction in the volume and complexity of the planning system, with less "top-down" prescription and more "bottom up" involvement by both planning authorities themselves, and by local people and businesses. The National Planning Policy Framework [NPPF] sets out the government's priorities for planning in England in a single comprehensive planning document that includes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Neighbourhood Planning is a tier of the planning system which seeks to give communities more control over the future of their area. The Wiltshire Core Strategy is our Local Authority's framework for community-led planning policy documents. Wiltshire Council will support communities to plan successfully and cost effectively for their areas by helping to identify the approach that best suits the needs of each community. The Wiltshire Core Strategy seeks to help communities in this decision making process and provide a guide on developing a "neighbourhood plan".

Jargon buster : SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT means ensuring that better lives for ourselves does not mean worse lives for future generations. It is about positive growth which makes economic, environmental and social progress, and the planning system is about helping to make this happen.

To give you an indication of the scope and scale of the issue, and how **it will impact YOU**, consider this. Although not finalised and still in consultation, the current Wiltshire Core Strategy for the Bradford-on-Avon area is to provide at least 670 new homes. 510 dwellings are planned to be in Bradford on Avon itself, including land identified to the east of Bradford-on-Avon at Kingston Farm. The remaining **160 new homes are to be provided by Holt, Westwood and Winsley.**

What does this mean for Westwood Parish itself ? From the census in 2011, the populations of these villages were 1,580, 1,100 and 1,920 respectively, totalling 4,600. Westwood was therefore 23.9% of the size of the total population of these 3 large villages. Other things being equal, **this equates to Westwood contributing 38 new homes on a pro rata basis.** Whether this turns out to be the contribution we are committed to deliver is not known and agreed at this stage. However, whether it is 38, 28, 18, or even 8, where should they be built, what should be their design, and what additional infrastructure and facilities should be provided to support this growth and development ? How does this impact or complement our existing services and businesses ? There are many other questions to be answered and issues to be resolved, but **this is an illustration of the problem to be addressed.**

To do this, Westwood Parish Council have assumed overall responsibility for the executive decisions for our community, and a Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group [NPSG] has been established. The NPSG has the brief to define, document and recommend for agreement our Neighbourhood Planning Strategy, the

options available, and the most appropriate and recommended approach to deliver it. To achieve this, **it will require significant time and effort within our community, with extensive cooperation and collaboration with YOU.**

If you want to get involved in the definition and delivery of our Neighbourhood Planning Strategy, please become an active and committed member of the Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group. If this is not possible, but you still want your voice to be heard, then at least attend our Annual Parish Meeting on Wednesday, 7th May, and our Parish Council meetings [see our website : www.westwoodparish.co.uk/].

The full NPSG will constitute no more than 13 members made up as follows :

- 3 members from the Westwood Parish Council. These have already been appointed, and are Cllrs. Ian Richardson [Chair], Allan Parker and John Bishop.
- 6 representatives from the non-business community, with a balanced representation across all ages, gender, sexual orientation, marital status and any disability.
- 3 representatives from the business community within Westwood Parish.
- An appointed Link Officer from the Spatial Planning team in Wiltshire Council, who will provide subject matter expert advice and guidance.

If you are interested in becoming a member :

- Please let your interest be known directly to Cllr. Ian Richardson, preferably by eMail to ian.richardson7@dsl.pipex.com, or by post to 10 The Laurels, Westwood. BA15 2AX.
- The closing date for applications is Friday, 9th May.
- All applications will be discussed at the NPSG on Monday, 12th May.
- Successful candidates will be advised by 14th May, and invited to attend their first NPSG on Thursday, 22nd May.

The criteria for selection are :

- **Residency** : other than the Link Officer, all candidates must live or work in Westwood Parish.
- **Commitment and availability** : as the Neighbourhood Planning process and activities for the remainder of 2014 are both critically important and urgent, candidates must confirm that they will be able and willing to be an active and committed member of the NPSG.
- **Balanced representation** : the NPSG will need to be as inclusive and representative as possible, covering all ages, gender, sexual orientation, marital status and any disability.
- Estimated commitments and activities are :
 - To attend NPSG meetings are to be held from 18:30 to 20:00 in the Parish Rooms. Over the next 4 months, the proposed are [to be confirmed] :
 - Monday, 14th April.
 - Monday, 28th April.
 - Monday, 12th May.
 - Thursday, 22nd May.
 - Monday, 9th June. **Note** : this NPSG meeting will be from 17:30 to 19:00, followed by the Westwood Parish Council meeting at 19:30.
 - Monday, 23rd June.
 - Monday, 14th July.
 - To participate in various community activities, such as consultations and workshops.
 - To attend the Annual Parish Meeting. The next APM will be held in the Parish Rooms from 19:30 on Wednesday, 7th May.
 - To actively seek out comments and feedback from your friends and neighbours who live or work in Westwood Parish.

PLEASE GET INVOLVED IF YOU WANT TO HELP SHAPE THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THIS PARISH