

STATEMENT FROM LONG WITTENHAM PARISH COUNCIL

REVISIONS TO THE 'MADE' NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN APRIL 2019

The Long Wittenham Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) was made in October 2017. Subsequently three events made the Long Wittenham Parish Council decide to revise the NDP. Firstly a local landowner had offered land at a reduced price to enable the community hub to proceed and negotiations to purchase the land had reached an advanced stage. A planning application for 36 houses in the village (on land off Fieldside) went to a Planning Inquiry at the end of 2017 and one of the applicant's arguments supporting his application was that the NDP did not allocate sites for development. Lastly, the planning consultant that the Parish Council had engaged to help with the Public Inquiry advised the Council that it should now be possible to write a NDP with site allocations.

The main changes in the revised NDP are site allocations/safeguarding to allocate a site for the community hub with houses, to allocate the site that was passed at the Public Inquiry for up to 36 houses and to safeguard the existing school and village hall sites once these premises move to the new community hub. In the original NDP the development of a community hub was not able to be supported by a specific site and so at that stage there was no certainty that the community hub would ever proceed. Subsequently a suitable site came forward which proved to be satisfactory following site assessments by external consultants. The viability of this overall scheme was also dependent on safeguarding the existing school and hall site for some additional housing development. The village residents accepted additional housing above that which was required by the SODC Local Plan but only if the village got these much needed community facilities in return. The development on the land off Fieldside (adjacent to the Community Hub site) was included as it already had been granted outline planning permission and its inclusion would enable the two sites to be developed together for the benefit of the village. Therefore the revision of the NDP with site allocations will give more certainty that the community hub will proceed along with the provision of additional houses. It will address the foreseeable housing needs of the village for the duration of the plan. It will also ensure that both this development as well as the development on the land off Fieldside will be built in a way that is in keeping with the village's desire to maintain the heritage and environment of the village.

Long Wittenham is a historic village and residents are always concerned to maintain the village as a separate settlement as housing developments in neighbouring settlements creep closer. A large development in North East Didcot will result in the outskirts of Didcot being only 1Km from the edge of Long Wittenham. We have therefore included a new policy to maintain a gap between Long Wittenham and Didcot (following the lead of the Didcot Garden Town proposals) which will ensure that only in exceptional circumstances will the gap between the two settlements be built on.

We have also included a policy on foot and cycle paths; in the original NDP a move to more sustainable transport was an aspiration rather than a policy. Traffic flow through the village is an increasing problem and the cessation of the bus service in 2016 made residents even more reliant on car transport. In addition there are proposed employment opportunities in the vicinity with the Science Vale project. Having a policy on foot and cycle paths will ensure that Long Wittenham residents can access other sustainable transport initiatives in the area to reduce reliance on the car for work journeys and encourage the use of foot and cycle for recreation.

Overall, we feel that these changes are significant because they will add certainty to the aspirations of the made NDP and they will also strengthen the desire to protect the heritage and environment of the village.

The revised plan has maintained policies on housing mix and design (to ensure that we maintain the unique and historic character and setting of the village), parking, infrastructure and the ecologically sensitive area.