

Copy of email sent to planningpolicy@winchester.gov.uk on 11 April

Winchester – Your Place Your Plan consultation

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the Winchester District Plan consultation – Your Place Your Plan. This is the response from Wickham Society, a civic society within the community.

We have reviewed the consultation documents and questionnaire and do not feel it is appropriate for the Society as an organisation to respond directly to most questions as many of them are relatively subjective. We have therefore forwarded the details and web links to our members and have encouraged them to respond individually with their views.

However, Wickham Society believes that the following points should be included as part of the next stage of discussion on the future of the district:

- We agree with the overarching vision and aspirations of this revised local plan. The impact of climate change, long forewarned, is now with us and the Society believes that we all have a responsibility to learn from past mistakes and so should include the climate change implications in every strategic decision to achieve the aim of carbon neutrality by 2030.
- The pandemic has confirmed that access to outside space is a vital part of supporting people's well-being. Every opportunity to protect existing countryside and green spaces and to retain existing settlement boundaries must be a priority.
- Communities such as Wickham value their distinct identities. With a huge (6000 homes) development immediately adjacent to the southern boundary of Wickham, it is crucial that the small separation provided by the existing farmland is maintained – thus creating a vital green belt between Wickham and Welborne. Housing development in this settlement gap should be expressly forbidden as it is in the 2014 Winchester District Plan.
- Any additional housing should be developed first on brownfield sites or within existing buildings, be respectful of the local character and ideally be where there are established public transport hubs and employment. We believe the opportunities for the development of such locations for homes has increased with the rapid decline of high streets and should be taken to retain life in the centres of Winchester and surrounding market towns.
- Wickham is located on the southern boundary of the district. It suffers the environmental impact of its position at the crossroads of two A roads and a number of B roads. Levels of traffic and congestion have increased substantially due to housing developments to the east in Denmead, Havant and Waterlooville, to the south from Whitely, Fareham and Gosport and to the west from Waltham Chase, Bishops Waltham and Hedge End and beyond. This will be greatly exacerbated by the creation of 6000 homes in Welborne, less than a mile south of Wickham, which is due to start in the next two years.

Wickham urgently needs a review of traffic bottlenecks and pedestrian danger spots with action to mitigate these problems before any kind of further development is even considered to take place in this locality.

- Following the pandemic, there also needs to be further review of the minimum size and facilities within an individual dwelling, for example, sufficient living rooms for families to work from home or support home schooling. Assuming a continued reluctance to use public transport, adequate parking with secure access to a recharging electricity supply will need to be reconsidered in new developments in areas outside the city as bus routes in rural areas become increasingly unviable. An example of how existing parking allowances are inadequate is well known in this parish in Knowle Village – designed and built as a purpose-built community in the early 2000's. Residents have to rely on cars to access every service and employment; the streets are clogged overnight and at weekends, compromising the ability of emergency services to access some parts of the village.
- The Society believes that the planning system must work for people and the environment and that developers' needs are secondary. The countryside is part of the solution to carbon neutrality and for any new development there must be clear evidence of housing need in that location, with the necessary infrastructure to support it. The apportionment of a specified number of houses as a fraction of a government-dictated requirement for the district is not an appropriate way of determining the housing needs for a village like Wickham.
- There must be an audit trail to show the way in which each new development is going to offset its carbon footprint – both for embedded carbon incurred during build and the ongoing usage.

The countryside is part of the solution to the climate emergency and every effort must be made to protect it.

You have asked for ideas of indicators to help monitor the district plan objectives. We put forward the following suggestions:

- Snapshots of the number of children who walk to school.
- Pollution levels
- Levels of fly tipping and recycling

Best wishes

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