

SUMMARY OF DRAFT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Background

The Localism Act was introduced in November 2011 with the aim of devolving more decision- making powers from central government to local communities. Neighbourhood Plans allow communities, such as Downton, to get more involved in planning, specifically around creating plans and policies to guide new development. The Downton Neighbourhood Plan reflects the views and thoughts of the local community. Its particular concern is the requirement in the emerging Wiltshire Core Strategy for the development of 190 new homes in Downton by 2026. Downton is identified in the Core Strategy as a strategic location to support growth. This means that it is likely to come under increased development pressure with probable consequent adverse effects on infrastructure and facilities. The purpose of this Plan is therefore to ensure that development is guided by local preferences rather than just market forces and that it is coordinated and supported by infrastructure improvements for the long- term benefit of the Parish.

Active engagement with the local community (not just residents but also other stakeholders including local businesses, community and other groups) has influenced the creation of the Plan. Following a favourable local referendum, the Downton Neighbourhood Plan will form part of the development plan for South Wiltshire sitting alongside the Wiltshire Core Strategy, so becoming the starting point for deciding where development should take place and the type, quantity and quality of that development.

Consultation

An initial open meeting was held in November 2013 and, as a result of local interest, a steering group was set up which first met in January 2014. Community engagement focussed on explaining to as many residents and stakeholders as reasonably possible the purpose of a Neighbourhood Plan and obtaining views on how they would like to see Downton Parish develop up to 2026. Community engagement and consultation focussed on the following areas:

- Community surveys
- Producing a website
- Holding open meetings and events
- Consideration of the Housing Needs survey
- Consulting with young people and older people
- Consulting with local businesses
- Consulting with local organisations
- Consulting with some landowners.
- Commissioning a Sustainability Scoping document

The Neighbourhood Plan's Vision for Downton

We want Downton to evolve and thrive as a vibrant and attractive village, and for all the communities of the parish to retain their unique and distinctive characters. We aim to meet

the diverse and growing needs of existing and future residents and to provide a high quality infrastructure and environment in which to live and work.

We will do this by:

- Encouraging a thriving and prosperous community that delivers a high quality of life
- Supporting measured, proportionate and timely development to meet local and core strategy requirements
- Promoting a distinctive and flourishing local economy
- Endorsing policies that have a positive effect on the environment, including those that remove or minimise flood risk, mitigate climate change and reduce our carbon footprint
- Retaining the essentially rural identity of the community against uncontrolled growth
- Protecting the special historical, built and natural environment in which we live
- Involve local people in an ongoing basis in the process of plan-making, monitoring and delivery of development.

Our objectives are to:

- Deliver a housing growth strategy tailored to the needs and context of Downton
- Encourage sustainable, small scale developments over large scale mass housing
- Improve and sustain excellent local facilities for existing and new residents
- Strengthen and support local economic activity
- Seek ongoing improvements to transport, walking, cycling and digital connectivity
- Prioritise local distinctiveness in every aspect of change and growth
- Maintain historical sites and built environment
- Protect green spaces.

The Policies

The Policies are split into 6 themes with three of these being divided into two sections:

- Facilitating and Funding the Policies
- Landscape and Local Character,
- Housing Development and Homes for Local People,
- Local Economy (Local Businesses and the Rural Economies sections),
- Local Facilities (Community and Leisure sections),and
- Transport and Infrastructure (including a section on Drainage).

Each section includes a description of the local area and its facilities, and the justification and evidence for the inclusion of each policy in the Neighbourhood Plan. The evidence is based on the findings from local consultation taken within the context of legislation and the constraints of the local environment. Each section is coloured according to the colour scheme used in the Neighbourhood Plan Policy document.

Funding and Facilitating the Policies

Policy

Policy FF1. Subject to other policies in the neighbourhood plan development proposals will be supported which deliver appropriate community contributions to mitigate their impacts on the local environment and to provide proportionate and necessary improvements for the benefit of local residents.

Proposal

Proposal FFP1. To take advantage of the Community Right to Bid legislation and to protect the assets of the village to meet some of the aspirations of the Neighbourhood Plan, the Parish Council to set up a group to consider the value of registering some or all of the assets listed in Appendix 3 within six months of the making of the Plan

Landscape and Local Character

Policies

LC1. Development within the Plan area will be expected to respect designated heritage assets, respect local building styles and traditions in accordance with policy (LC2) and safeguard the character of the local environment in general, and the Cranbourne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the River Avon SAC in particular..

LC2. New development proposals within the Downton Conservation area (as shown on Figure 8) will be required to preserve or enhance its character or appearance. New development proposals will also be expected to conform to the principles included both in the Downton Village Design Statement and in the Downton Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan.

LC3. All new development and any alterations to existing buildings must achieve the highest possible level of energy efficiency and sustainability, taking account of the visual impact and its position in the landscapes.

LC4. Development which adversely affects European protected sites or impacts on County Wildlife Sites or other features protected through Wiltshire Council's Core Policy 50 Biodiversity and Geodiversity will not be supported.

LC5. Housing development on the Parish's public Green Infrastructure will not be supported. This includes: The Millennium Green, Moot Lane Playing Fields, The Downton Moot, The Borough Greens and the Memorial Gardens.

LC6. The scale and mass of new development will be expected to be informed by, and to be sensitive to the local topography and landscape character of the Plan area. New development will be expected to reflect the character and appearance of the rural landscape. Proposals that fail to do so will be resisted.

Proposal

LCP1 Opportunities to maximise the activities of the Downton Green Group, in conjunction with the Salisbury Transition group, to encourage recycling, re-use and repair of household goods will be supported.

Justification and Evidence

The following supports these policies:

- The Parish of Downton and the landscape in which it sits has a character developed over many centuries of human activity.
- The Parish contains a significant green infrastructure of open spaces.
- The Parish has over 85 listed buildings and is also an area of some archaeological significance.

Consultations with the local community showed strong support for policies which supported development on the basis that:

88% strongly agreed that new development must not dominate in scale, block distinctive views or significantly change the balance and character of the Parish.

82% strongly agreed that all new buildings should adopt an approach to design and use of materials which is compatible with the local environment as laid out in the Village Design Statement.

85% strongly agreed that development must not harm or adversely impact on protected habitat areas or designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest such as the River Avon.

92% strongly agreed that green public spaces and water meadows throughout the parish, including the Borough Greens, Memorial Gardens, Millennium Green, Moot recreation area and the Moot, must always be protected from development and adverse impacts.

Housing and Homes for Local People

Policies

LH1 The Neighbourhood Plan will facilitate the delivery of no more than 190 homes within the Plan period without further public consultation. Should there be a higher allocation for Downton. Subject to other policies in this Plan new residential development proposals will be supported to achieve the strategic housing requirement where they deliver infill development or small scale development of no more than 25 dwellings within and immediately adjacent to the settlement boundary of Downton as established in the Core Strategy. Residential development elsewhere in the Plan area will be resisted.

LH2 The delivery of new homes within the Plan period will be monitored. In the event that the development of new homes through existing commitments will not achieve the strategic figure of 190 dwellings consideration will then be given for the development of the SHLAA sites shown in figure 10 and in the order identified in table (provided number to the table) of the Plan. Planning applications for SHLAA sites identified in table (insert number) that come forward out of identified sequence order will be considered on their individual merits and given the position of housing land supply at that time

LH 3 Subject to the provisions of policy (LH1) planning applications for new residential development will be required to include a mix of dwelling types to meet the identified needs of the local community as set out in the Housing Needs Survey 2014. Planning applications will also be required to demonstrate how they would deliver starter and smaller homes and affordable homes for rent or shared ownership.

Proposals

LHP1. Wiltshire Council and Housing Associations must give priority to the needs of people in the Downton Plan area when allocating affordable housing.

LHP2. Access arrangements for new development of land north of the junction of the A338 and B3080 must minimise the creation of new junctions on the A338 by utilising the existing roundabout at Batten Road.

Justification and Evidence

The following plans, documents and strategies support these policies:

- National Planning Policy Framework
- Wiltshire Core Strategy
- Wiltshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment
- Housing Needs Survey
- Wiltshire SHLAA
- Downton Village Design Statement
- Downton Neighbourhood Plan Sustainability Assessment Scoping Report

Results of Consultations with Local Residents showed that:

75% strongly agreed that housing development up to 2026 should not exceed the 190 homes allocated for Downton by Wiltshire Council.

69% strongly agreed that new, or additional, housing, wherever located in the parish should be developed in small clusters rather than large scale developments.

70% strongly agreed that there should be phased construction for larger scale developments.

68% strongly agreed that new housing should provide opportunities for young and single people to live in the parish by including a good proportion of one or two bedroom homes.

75% strongly agreed that, in general, development on brownfield sites is preferred to building on open countryside.

The Housing Needs survey of 2013 showed that 46% of respondents expressed a need for two bedroomed accommodation.

The Local Economy

Policies

LE1 Insofar as planning permission is required proposals for new commercial units and for the refurbishment of existing units on the Downton Business Park will be supported provided that they are in scale and in character with the immediate locality and would have no unacceptable impacts on the free and safe flow of traffic on the highway network in general and on the A338 and the B3078 and the HGV weight limit in particular.

LE2. Planning applications for the development of new or extended retail facilities to serve local needs within the Plan area will be supported where they have no unacceptable negative impacts on the residential amenity of the locality concerned or the safe and free flow of traffic on the highway network.

LE3. Planning applications that propose the development of new tourism and leisure facilities of a scale appropriate within the Plan area will be supported where they have no unacceptable negative impacts on the residential amenity of the locality concerned including the protected area of the New Forest Park or the safe and free flow of traffic on the highway network.

Proposals

LEP1. Optimal use of the existing Business Park to maximise employment will be encouraged.

LEP2. Communication between businesses and the Parish by means of a regular meeting which facilitates research on constraints on development, reviews demand, hosts links with local schools, encourages employment for local people and apprenticeships and supports job advertisements, to be enabled by the Parish Council within 1 year of the date of the Neighbourhood Plan .

Justification and Evidence

The following supports these policies:

- The Parish has a diverse local economy.
- The principal employment area in the Parish today is the business park located off the A338 Salisbury Road. However, only 11% of the employees are local people.
- Within the village there are 17 businesses, 15 of which are retail businesses or pubs and cafes. This is the sector with the highest proportion, at 51%, of local employees.
- The number of local retail outlets and facilities has reduced over the past few years .
- Approximately 21% of people employed in Parish based companies, live within the Parish.

Results of Consultations with Local Residents showed that:

77% want to exploit our proximity to the New Forest by supporting applications to offer tourism or leisure facilities, including in rural areas.

82% would like to encourage a thriving economy by supporting business and commercial expansion in the Parish.

75% supported the expansion of the Business Park. As the initial business survey indicated, many of the businesses in the Parish are keen to expand.

72% supported the development of new retail units in Downton.

The Rural Economy

Policies

RE1. Planning applications that preserve the rural nature of the Neighbourhood Plan area while also ensuring the continued economic well-being of the agricultural and non-agricultural business activities will be supported.

Proposals

REP1. The Parish Council to work with statutory bodies and others as appropriate to help achieve the needs of the rural community and a viable rural economy without compromising the special qualities of the area.

REP2. Residents and the Parish Council to continue to lobby for the provision of superfast broadband throughout the rural parts of the parish within the next three years.

REP3. The Parish Council to continue to work with the appropriate authorities to highlight the maintenance requirements of the rural roads throughout the life of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Justification and Evidence

The following supports these policies:

- A significant majority of the Neighbourhood Plan area is rural.
- The rural area provides employment for about 250 people (although not all are local residents).
- Parts of the Neighbourhood Plan area are at the limits of the coverage of the communications network and an increasing number of people now work from home.
- The rural parts of the Parish are covered by minor roads which are subject to lower levels of maintenance than A classified roads.

Results of Consultations with Local Residents showed that:

Just over 70% of respondents strongly agree that 'Future expansion of local industry should be on the Downton Business Centre rather than rural areas of the Parish'.

88% strongly agree with the statement that 'New development must not dominate in scale, block distinctive views or significantly change the balance and character of the Parish'.

85% strongly agree with the statement 'Development must not harm or adversely impact on protected habitat areas or designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest such as the River Avon'.

84% strongly agree with the statement 'Wildlife sites and woodland must be protected and, where necessary, restored and managed'.

Transport and Infrastructure

Policies

T1. Development proposals will be required to demonstrate that they can be incorporated in a satisfactory way into the capacity of the local highway network. Planning applications will be expected to identify and assess the impact of the proposed development on pedestrians, cyclists, road safety and the free and safe flow of traffic in the plan area. Where appropriate measures should be included in proposals to mitigate the impacts arising from the development proposed.

T2. Insofar as planning permission is required proposals to improve pedestrian, cycle and vehicular access to the Downton Primary School and to Trafalgar Secondary School will be supported

Proposals

TP1. The Parish Council to reinforce the need for solutions to the congestion and the free flow of traffic using the A338 and the B3080 by working with Wiltshire Highways Authority and carrying out periodic reviews.

TP2. Downton Parish Council to support local people to establish a new footbridge across the River Avon together with associated cycle paths, including liaison with landowners and developers.

TP3. Proposals to improve parking facilities in the Borough area including the area at the Co-operative store and the White Horse Inn to be actively investigated by the Parish Council.

TP4. The Downton Society and the Parish Council will continue to work with the Wiltshire and Hampshire Councils, the New Forest National Park Authority, Highways England and the Police to discuss issues, proposals and monitoring of the area wide weight limit in general, and on the B3078 through Downton in particular.

TP5. The Parish Council to work with local bus companies and Wiltshire Council to lobby for an increase in availability of public transport.

TP6. Proposals which support a sustainable transport strategy for rural areas including Wiltshire Council's objectives to reduce impacts on the built and natural environment (SO3), encourage the efficient movement of freight (SO10) and improve safety for all road users (SO8) will be supported.

TP7. Practical solutions to parking constraints in the High Street and Lode Hill will be supported in liaison with the Highways Department.

TP8. Work to improve footpaths and cycle routes through Downton and its Neighbourhood Plan area will be supported by cooperation with Wiltshire Council, the New Forest National Park Authority, Sustrans and landowners.

TP9. There should be effective road signage in all necessary locations to alert traffic to the limitations on commercial traffic in Downton village.

Justification and Evidence

The following supports these policies:

- The western aspects of Downton Village are adversely affected by the traffic on the A338, along with the effects of through-traffic connecting to the B3080 to the New Forest. Wiltshire Core Strategy Traffic modelling identifies that 'Rush hour traffic in Salisbury is forecast to rise by 33%.
- The B3080 has a weight limit to inhibit HGV traffic but the weight limit is not strictly observed.
- Car usage in the Wiltshire area is forecast to rise over the next 10 years.
- Residents use on street parking and this has particular difficulties for pedestrians as well as vehicles as two lanes are reduced to one at the eastern end of the Borough, along the High Street and up Lode Hill.
- There are no National Cycle Network routes through the Downton Neighbourhood Plan area.
- Salisbury train station is 7.3 miles away and there is no direct bus route from the Plan area.

Results of Consultations with Local Residents showed that:

94% strongly agreed that developers must assess traffic impact on the wider community e.g. congestion and parking, and help mitigate the impact.

Infrastructure and Drainage

Policies

TD1. All applications for development (other than for minor extensions and changes of use of existing buildings) will be required to take account of the groundwater levels and surface water flows in the Plan area. Where appropriate flood risk assessments will be required to be submitted with planning applications.

Planning applications that demonstrably add to existing foul and surface water conditions within the plan area or which do not provide acceptable mitigation will be resisted.

Proposals

TDP1 In assessing applications for housing development and providing comments to Wiltshire Council the Parish Council will expect to see detailed proposals indicating that all drainage systems associated with the said development need to be sealed to prevent groundwater ingress, particularly at connections from premises to sewer systems and need to have assurances that testing and certification will be in place to ensure efficacy when connected.

TDP2 Wiltshire Council to complete and implement a ground water management strategy for Downton

TDP3 Wessex Water to complete and implement an Infiltration Reduction Plan

Justification and Evidence

The following supports these policies:

There are significant impacts to the community from high levels of groundwater on a regular basis. In extreme cases, these can lead to property flooding and there are regular overflows from the sewers and surface water drainage system in many locations onto roads and pavements as a result of groundwater infiltration.

Results of Consultations with Local Residents showed that:

92% of residents strongly agreed that any new development must have a solution to negative impacts on existing foul and surface water systems before planning permission is granted.

86% of residents strongly agreed that flood defences should continue to be strengthened in vulnerable areas.

Community Facilities

Policies

CF1. Proposals for the expansion or modification of schools, pre-school facilities and day nurseries will be supported in circumstances where they are appropriate in scale, design and massing and where they would have no unacceptable negative impacts on the residential amenity and conservation area of the locality concerned or the safe and free flow of traffic on the highway network. Any expansion of premises will be expected to provide appropriate play areas, adequate car parking facilities and, where necessary, safe drop off zones.

Proposals

CFP 1 - The Parish Council to support plans for the medical and dental practices to expand as needed by residents of new housing where these conform to the Neighbourhood Plan Development Policies.

CFP 2 - Local schools to apply their admissions policy to ensure their practice prioritise children within the Neighbourhood Plan area over those from outside of the area so that every child in the Parish under year 11 can attend a school in Downton.

CFP 3 - The Parish Council to support any application for a Post Office in the High Street area and to investigate the potential for a post box in that area.

CFP 4 - Adequate premises and consequent admission policies must be provided to facilitate children of the Parish of Year 11 or under who wish to attend the Downton Schools.

CFP 5 - Adequate medical services to serve the residents of the plan area and those outside the plan area for whom Downton is a service provider must be provided.

Justification and Evidence

The following supports these policies:

- As a designated 'service centre' Downton's community facilities and services will need to be considered in the context of the wider area.
- With increasing mobility the viability of many rural services has declined significantly over the past fifty years.
- The surgery feels it is well able to meet the needs of the proposed new houses and would be willing to expand the number of surgery staff should the need arise.
- Most of the children at the primary school come from the villages of Downton, Standlynch, and Charlton-all-Saints but a significant proportion come from outside of the Parish.
- There are difficulties for the current pre-school site - all equipment has to be put away at the end of each day; there is no dedicated office space and no grass area on site. There is currently no parking or drop off points outside the preschool.
- The primary school is planning expansion to meet the level anticipated from the Wiltshire core strategy.
- The library is well able to accommodate a significant increase in users.

Results of Consultations with Local Residents showed that:

73% strongly agreed that Primary School capacity must be increased to cater for all children of the parish who wish to attend the school.

96% of the respondents expressed a strong opinion that future plans by the GP surgery to expand their services or premises should be actively supported.

63% strongly agreed with the proposal that the Post office in the high street should be reopened.

69% strongly agreed that Community buildings such as the library and memorial hall should be supported and improved to meet the needs of a growing community.

52% strongly agreed that Pre-school provision in the village should be expanded to meet the needs arising from any increase in development.

Leisure Facilities

Policy

LF1. Proposals that would result in the creation of new leisure facilities and/or the redesign or extension of existing leisure facilities will be supported provided that they comply with other policies in the neighbourhood plan and the wider development plan.

Proposals

LFP1. The Parish council to look favourably on proposals that encourage outdoor activities.

LFP2. The Parish Council to seek to improve the quality and availability of premises in the community for societies, meetings and activities by actions, including engagement with local schools to share facilities, and improving facilities in the Moot Lane recreational area within the restrictions of any covenant on the land ownership during the lifetime of the Neighbourhood Plan.

LFP3. The Parish Council to pursue the improvement of the Memorial Hall as an integrated solution to the provision of better facilities for the Community.

Justification and Evidence

The following supports these policies:

- With an average monthly footfall of 2,480 people, the Leisure Centre is clearly important to local residents.
- The management team at the Leisure Centre are clear that there is the capacity to welcome more people and maximise availability to the whole community.
- Downton has a relatively high proportion of its population being over 60 (40%). It is well known that 'Social isolation and loneliness impact upon individuals' quality of life and wellbeing, adversely affecting health and increasing their use of health and social care services' and that this is particularly the case in older people.
- The Moot Lane ground is poorly provided with facilities.

Results of Consultations with Local Residents showed that:

50% strongly agreed that there should be a lobby for public funding and provide support for retention and improvement of the leisure centre.

33% strongly agreed with an approach of identifying a suitable area of open space to reintroduce a village cricket ground.

24% strongly agreed with an approach to create a village trim trail to encourage healthy living in a safe environment.

31% strongly agreed with the need to improve the quality and availability of premises in the community for societies, meetings and activities.

44% strongly agreed with an approach to engage with local schools to encourage sharing of their facilities with the community.

27% strongly agreed with an approach to improve facilities in the Moot Lane recreation area.

It is recognised that the demand in this Leisure Facilities area is lower than for other sections.