



Listening Learning Leading

**AN APPLICATION TO BECOME A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING
FRONT RUNNER**

From

**SOUTH OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
IN PARTNERSHIP WITH
WOODCOTE PARISH COUNCIL**

Toby Warren
Community Partnerships Manager
Corporate Strategy
South Oxfordshire and Vale of
White Horse District Councils
Benson Lane
Crowmarsh Gifford
Wallingford
OX10 8AX

8 July 2011

Preface

“South Oxfordshire District Council welcomes the opportunity for local residents to come together to decide what their area should look like. Woodcote’s experience of community led planning means it is ideally placed to produce a successful Neighbourhood Plan. The Neighbourhood Planning Front Runner Scheme will allow the parish council to produce a plan that can act as a model for villages across South East England.”

Angie Paterson

South Oxfordshire District Council's Cabinet member for planning

“Woodcote has a long record of proactive community engagement. Our Parish Plan is recognised nationally as an example of outstanding good practice. Its key recommendation - that the village develop a ‘Woodcote Housing Development Report’ - anticipated Neighbourhood Plans by several years and the 25 years of data therein provides an excellent platform for the development of a model plan.”

Mr Robin Pierce

Chair Woodcote Parish Council

“I believe that Woodcote will, given its record, develop a Neighbourhood Plan which would become a template for others, but more importantly provide a way in which the strongly held views of the residents of the Parish can be successfully reconciled with the need for development, in its widest sense, and so lead the way for Woodcote to contribute to the achievement of the SODC Core Strategy objectives.”

Mr Jerry Green

Chair Woodcote Parish Plan Steering Group

“Very happy to support”

John Howell, Member of Parliament for Henley



Section 1 Introduction

1. South Oxfordshire District Council, in partnership with Woodcote Parish Council, and with the support of the Chilterns Conservation Board, wishes to become a Neighbourhood Planning Front Runner. This will be for the production of a Neighbourhood Development Plan, rather than a Neighbourhood Development Order.
2. Woodcote Parish is an attractive partner located, as it is, entirely within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and having a long record of successful community engagement and planning supported by village polls and surveys that attract very high (over 85%) participation rates.
3. The proposed Neighbourhood Plan will not only address the particularly serious planning challenge faced by rural villages in South East England but will, we believe, be an excellent exemplar for the many parishes like Woodcote that accept the need for sustainable development, that see a strong community input to decisions on when, where and how this development should happen as essential, and yet face the considerable challenge of being located within, or alongside, an AONB.
4. As such this proposal will not only contribute to easing the development pressure in South Oxfordshire it will also:
 - (a) show villages with less experience than Woodcote of producing parish plans how, using local volunteers, such plans can be produced;
 - (b) show parishes unused to polling their residents how to obtain very high levels (above 80%) of community engagement in the development of neighbourhood plans;
 - (c) demonstrate, and thus help to establish, a high standard for such neighbourhood plans; and
 - (d) create confidence in what can be achieved and so encourage other parishes and communities to produce their own plans.
5. To ensure that these wider benefits are obtained South Oxfordshire District Council will work in partnership with Woodcote Parish Council and groups, such as the Chilterns AONB Conservation Board and the Oxfordshire Rural Communities Council, to disseminate learning and promote neighbourhood planning across the county.

Contact Details

Should any part of this application require clarification then please contact Mr Toby Warren at the address given in Section 7 of this application.

Letter of Support

Letters of support for this application are appended to this submission.

Section 2 Variety in Respect of the Following Key Characteristics

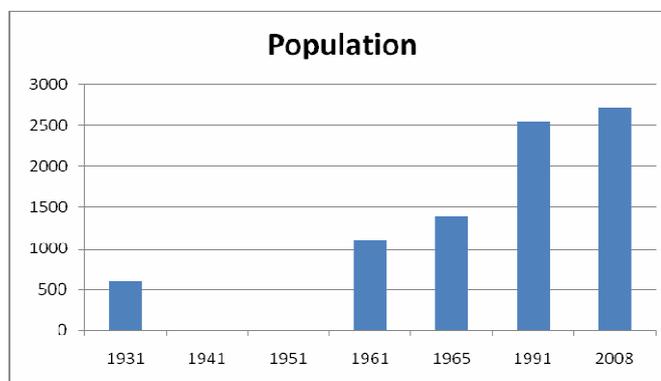
I. Urban/Rural/Suburban Character

6. South Oxfordshire is a rural district in South East England covering an area of 253 square miles. The 2001 Census recorded a population in the district of just over 128,000. This was an increase of 7% over that recorded in 1991. Most of the district is rural in nature, with the land in agricultural use. Around 70% of the district has a green belt or AONB designation. The northeast of the district forms part of the Oxford Green Belt, and some 30% of the Chilterns AONB is located within the district. Some 50% of the population lives outside the district's four main, but small, towns of Didcot, Henley, Thame and Wallingford.

7. The proposed Neighbourhood Plan will be prepared for the Parish of Woodcote. The Plan will be for the whole parish which is a substantially rural area, centred on the village of Woodcote, with a population of 2,715.

8. Population

The Woodcote Parish Plan 2008¹ reports that over the past forty years the population of Woodcote has grown substantially but unevenly.



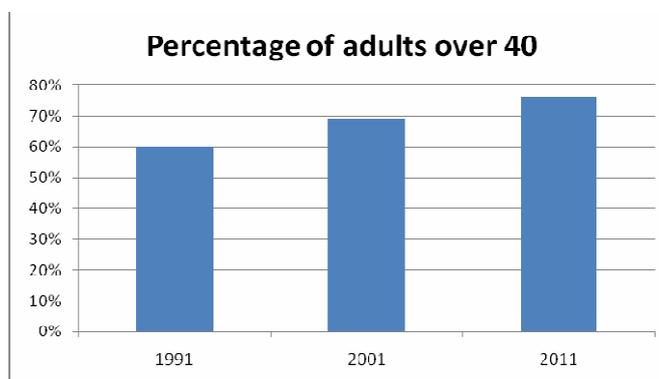
9. Housing

In the same period the balance of housing has changed such that 40% of houses in Woodcote now have four or more bedrooms and only 21% have one or two bedrooms. Thus not only are average house prices high there is a limited stock of entry or low-cost housing.

The South Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (published in December 2010) identifies sixteen potential housing sites in Woodcote.

10. An Aging Population

76% of adults living in Woodcote are now over 40, compared with 69% in 2001 and 60% in 1991.



¹ A pdf file containing the Parish Plan is attached.

11. Employment

Employment rates within Woodcote continue to be high at 62%: This is a reduction from the 70% recorded in 2000, and may be a consequence of the ageing population.

Of those in employment, 22% are self-employed with approximately two-thirds of these working full-time, and one-third part-time.

12. The Oratory School is the major employer in the parish with additional employment provided by a number of independent businesses. Although there has been little change since the Village Appraisal in 2000 in the number of businesses located in Woodcote (thirty-six in business premises) the closure of the Chiltern Queens Bus Depot in Long Toll shortly after that Appraisal led to the loss of fifty jobs. The site of the Bus Depot remains unoccupied with no immediate prospect of development.

13. Only 19% of Woodcote residents in employment work in the village and the high rate of employment is sustained by 'out commuting' which, with poor transport links, is a major cause of the high car ownership in Woodcote (an average of more than 2.5 cars per family) and the consequent congestion.

14. The statistics for the local businesses which took part in the consultation show that 46% of employees are from Woodcote, down from 56% in 2000.

15. The village surveys show that local shops are highly valued for day-to-day purchases and this has helped Woodcote retain its Post Office, a small local Co-Op and a small general store. These are, however, under increasing pressure from large supermarkets and the advent of internet shopping services.

II. Geographical Location

Woodcote is about 5 miles (8 km) south east of Wallingford and about 7 miles (11 km) north west of Reading, Berkshire. It is in the Chiltern Hills, with the highest part of the village some 600 feet (180 m) above sea level.

III. Types of Local Planning Authority

The parish of Woodcote is within South Oxfordshire District Council, which is part of the county of Oxfordshire. The parish is within the designated Chilterns AONB.

IV. The Strength and Experience of the Parish Council

Woodcote Parish Council has a strong track record of undertaking and successfully completing village projects, many of which are planning related. Woodcote has carried out Village Appraisals in 1984, 1991 and 2000 and in 2008 produced a Parish Plan following another village survey. Of particular note is the very high level of local participation with 85% of households contributing their views.

This topic is expanded in Section 6.

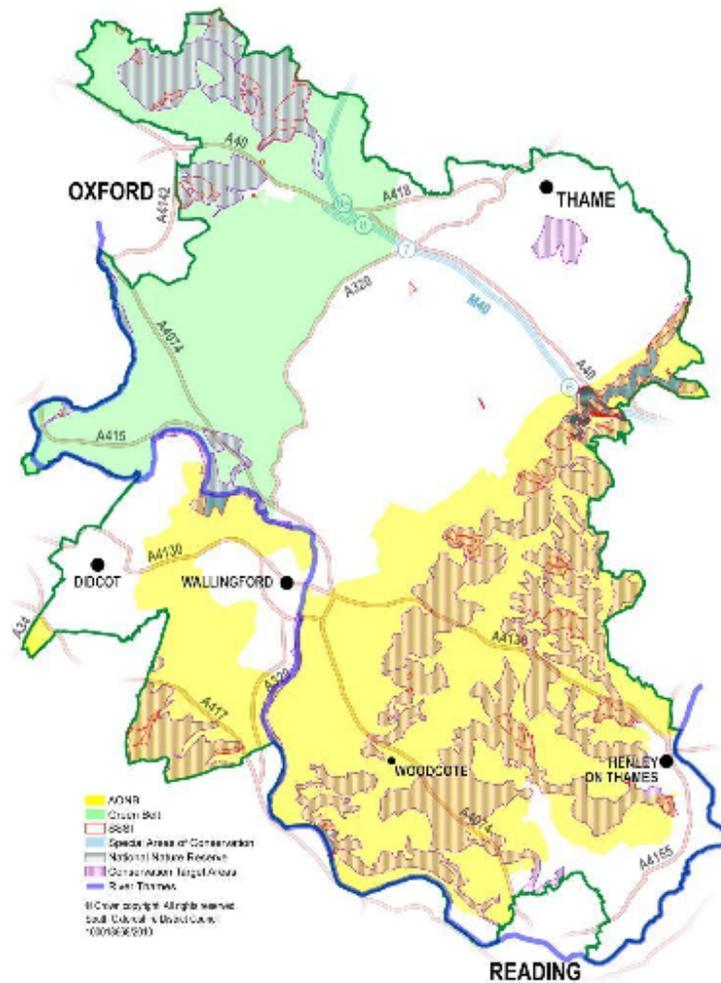
V. Size and Complexity of the Proposed Development Plan Document

16. The Development Plan Document will be prepared for the entire parish area. It is expected to cover the issues of identifying sites for housing, employment and leisure facilities, whilst at the same time seeking to address current inadequacies with, or threats to, the transport network and services such as a local library; the high level of out-commuting; and ensuring that the advantages of its location within the Chilterns AONB are fully realised.

Section 3 Deliverability and Timescale

17. If this application is successful, preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan would commence immediately after the grant is confirmed. The plan will be prepared alongside the District Council's Local Development Framework Core Strategy and will be adopted shortly afterwards in 2012.

South Oxfordshire District and Woodcote Parish



Section 4 Planning Context for the Area

18. The current development plan for the whole of South Oxfordshire District is comprised of the saved policies from the Local Plan, which was adopted in 2006. The District Council is currently finalising its Core Strategy².

19. It is proposed that the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan would be prepared alongside the District Council's Core Strategy and that it will be a Development Plan Document likely to make site allocations. As the Core Strategy will be setting the strategic direction for plan area policies, the Neighbourhood Plan will be prepared to be in conformity with this emerging document.

20. Once developed it is expected that the Neighbourhood Plan for Woodcote would be adopted by South Oxfordshire District Council as part of its development plans.

21. Adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan would be approximately 4 months after the date of adoption of the Core Strategy in 2012. The table below presents a draft timetable for preparing the Neighbourhood Plan and links these dates to the Core Strategy timetable.

Key stages in production	South Oxfordshire Core Strategy	Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan
Submission	March 2011	February 2012
Examination	November 2011	May 2012
Referendum	N/A	July 2012
Adoption	April 2012	September 2012

22. It is recognised that neighbourhood plans prepared as part of the Front Runner scheme should be prepared as quickly as possible. Hence, every effort will be made to accelerate the production to enable the earliest possible adoption date. The need for speed is underlined by the expectation that no planning permissions will be granted for any of the sixteen potential housing sites identified for Woodcote in the South Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment until the plan has been adopted by the District Council.

23. As the emerging Core Strategy will set policies for the period up until 2027, the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan is expected to have the same time span. To demonstrate its commitment to preparing the plan, the District Council will amend its current Local Development Scheme, which will include dovetailing the project plan for the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan.

² The current status of the Core Strategy may be obtained using the web link 'South Oxfordshire Submission Core Strategy' provided in the **Links to Background Documents** in Appendix I.

Section 5 Size and Complexity of the Proposed Development Plan

24. The Development Plan Document/Neighbourhood Plan to be prepared will be for the whole of Woodcote Parish and will complement the District Council's Core Strategy. It is envisaged that the Neighbourhood Plan would identify the growth opportunities and how these will be delivered.

25. As well as the District Council's own LDF evidence base, the Neighbourhood Plan will be strengthened by the findings of the 1984, 1991, and 2000 village surveys all of which have included the views of over 80% of local residents.

26. The Neighbourhood plan will be further strengthened by the Woodcote Parish Plan – a community led plan developed with input from over 80% of the residents. The recommendations therein have been endorsed by the Parish Council and can be built upon for the Neighbourhood Plan.

27. As identified in the plan area section, there are a number of key issues that will need to be addressed in the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan. These include:

- (a) identifying the amount and type of housing, employment, library and leisure facilities to be delivered;
- (b) recognising that housing will need to reflect the growing proportion of elderly and very elderly people in Oxfordshire villages;
- (c) recognising the need for affordable housing and housing that will enable younger families to live and remain in the village;
- (d) assessing, identifying and prioritising the most appropriate locations for new development, particularly housing and employment;
- (e) ensuring that the transport, shopping, social and other community facilities reflect the needs of an ageing population;
- (f) improving the sustainability of the community, reducing commuting and minimising the environmental impact of development;
- (g) protecting to the maximum extent possible the AONB; and
- (h) responding to the very high importance that the overwhelming majority of Woodcote residents continue to place on the maintenance of the "village feel", and the amenity and integrity of the surrounding countryside; and
- (i) identifying growth opportunities that are compatible with the aspirations and concerns of neighbouring villages.

28. Waste and minerals planning will not be addressed within the plan.

29. In summary, the Neighbourhood Plan will make every effort to reconcile the accepted need for development with the desires and needs of the local community, the urgent need to ensure that all development is sustainable and the protection of an economically, environmentally and socially important Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

30. In so doing the Plan will enhance the contribution that Woodcote makes to the whole Oxfordshire economy; help the village to maintain its essential balance with greater provision for the old and improved accessibility to housing for the young, and enhance the quality of village life and of our countryside.

Section 6 Strength and Experience of the Parish Council

31. One of the main reasons for selecting Woodcote for this bid is the District Council's confidence in the ability of Woodcote Parish Council to work effectively alongside ourselves and others to prepare this Neighbourhood Plan. This confidence stems from the Parish Council demonstrating over a long period that it has the ability to undertake and complete projects in an effectively researched, presented and time efficient manner.

32. The village has unparalleled experience of managing and publishing four village appraisals. Its community engagement record is impressive: nearly 90% of villagers responded to the detailed household and personal surveys supporting the 1984, 1991 and 2000 appraisals and the 2008 survey underpinning the 2008 Parish Plan. Furthermore the surveys have been similarly structured and so also provide a quantitative measure of trends in needs and views of Woodcote residents over the last 27 years.

33. The Parish Plan is recognised nationally as an example of outstanding good practice. Its key recommendation - that the village develop a 'Woodcote Housing Development Report' - anticipated Neighbourhood Plans by several years and the 27 years of data therein provide an excellent platform for the development of a model plan.

34. Over 25 years of Village Appraisals and the 2008 Parish Plan underline the Parish Council's keen interest and enthusiasm for high level of community engagement in planning matters. This enthusiasm extends to the preparation of their own Development Plan Document and will both use and extend this Parish Council's particular ability to engage and mobilise the community it serves.

35. Further evidence of the pro-active approach taken by the Parish Council in meeting the housing challenge was its recent role as a housing enabler when it made available surplus allotment land for affordable housing and sheltered housing (working with a housing association).

36. The Parish Council is comprised of councillors with a range of skills and experience that include substantial Public, Private and Not-for-profit management expertise. The membership of the Parish Council was refreshed following the local elections in May 2011 with a number of energetic new councillors joining councillors with significant experience in both the Parish and District roles.

37. The Parish Council is supported by a very effective community who have, among other achievements in recent years, created a village library, created a youth centre, fought to save sheltered housing for the elderly in the village and produced a Woodcote conservation group that has the highest number of members in Oxfordshire. This is in addition to ongoing voluntary village activities such as publishing a monthly village magazine and mounting the nationally acclaimed Woodcote Festival of Steam and Veteran Transport. External evidence of the strength of the community may best be judged by the award of 'Oxfordshire Village of the Year' to Woodcote in 2008.

Section 7 Key Benefits of this Bid

38. South Oxfordshire District Council is keen to embrace, and help facilitate, the successful take-up and implementation of neighbourhood planning. We see the Front Runner scheme as an ideal opportunity to help achieve this and to gain the experience and benefits of being 'an early adopter'. While the Front Runner scheme would only involve working alongside one Parish Council, our intent is to make the benefits obtainable from Neighbourhood Plans visible to, and achievable by, other Parishes and neighbourhoods in the District. We will disseminate lessons learnt from this Front Runner scheme to other Parish Councils and community groups using a 'learning set' to be established soon after the District Council holds Neighbourhood Planning briefing events with our Town and Parish Councils in early December this year.

39. There is particular benefit in working with Woodcote who have proven mechanisms in place for obtaining very high levels of community input and distilling these into documents such as the Parish Plan which in many ways anticipates, and is an early version of, a Neighbourhood Plan. This enables this Front Runner project to direct its entire attention to addressing the complex issues of providing the right mix of housing and other development in an AONB for a highly articulate, engaged community committed to sustainability and protecting the countryside that surrounds it. Working with Woodcote presents a rare opportunity to inject both pragmatism and momentum into neighbourhood planning in South Oxfordshire, the Chilterns and beyond.

40. The District Council and Parish Council are both committed to ensuring that the views of everyone in the Parish are considered and will incorporate a referendum or similar mechanism into the process of preparing the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan. Therefore, if this bid is successful, part of the grant will be used to support this village wide review. A second part of the grant will be used to fund the cost of the Examination with any remainder being set aside to cover the cost of any technical advice required to support the otherwise voluntary effort.

41. In return for the grant funding, the District Council will provide the Parish Council with advice and support throughout the plan production process. This will include the sharing of the District-wide LDF evidence studies and identifying how this relates to the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan area.

In conclusion, it is envisaged that Woodcote's proven track record in neighbourhood polling and planning will, as part of the Front Runner scheme, produce a Neighbourhood Plan that will both show early results and accelerate the adoption of neighbourhood planning by many other parishes and neighbourhoods.

Section 8 Contacts

As South Oxfordshire District Council is taking on the lead role for this bid, all correspondence should be directed to the District Council in the first instance. The contact details are as follows:

Toby Warren
Community Partnerships Manager
Corporate Strategy
South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse District Councils
Benson Lane
Crowmarsh Gifford
Wallingford
OX10 8AX
Tel: 01235 547695 (Vale)
Tel: 01491 823316 (South)
Text phone users add 18001 before you dial
Mobile: 07717 779171
Email: toby.warren@southandvale.gov.uk

If you wish to make direct contact with Woodcote Parish Council the contact details are as follows:

Jenny Welham
Clerk to Woodcote Parish Council
Parish Office, Village Hall
Reading Road
Woodcote
RG8 0QY.
Tel 01491 681861
Email pc@woodcote-online.co.uk

Appendix

I. Links to Background Documents

[South Oxfordshire Submission Core Strategy](#)

www.southoxon.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Web%20-20Complete%20Core%20Strategy%20Reg%2027%20v6.pdf

[Woodcote Parish Plan 2008](#)

www.woodcote-online.co.uk/docs/woodcoteparishplan2008.pdf

Additional material to that published in the Woodcote Parish Plan may be found at the addresses below:

[Woodcote Built Environment](#)

www.woodcote-online.co.uk/docs/wppbuiltenvironment.pdf

[Woodcote Business and Employment](#)

www.woodcote-online.co.uk/docs/wppbusinessemployment.pdf

[Woodcote Natural Environment](#)

www.woodcote-online.co.uk/docs/wppnaturalenvironment.pdf

[Woodcote Social Activities and Sports](#)

www.woodcote-online.co.uk/docs/wppsocialactivitiesports.pdf

[Woodcote Youth and Education](#)

www.woodcote-online.co.uk/docs/wppyoutheducation.pdf

II. Letters and E-mails of Support

- (a) From Woodcote Parish Council
- (b) From Mr David Sexon
Oxfordshire County Councillor - Goring Division
- (c) From Mr Christopher Quinton
South Oxfordshire District Councillor - Woodcote
- (e) From Mr Colin White
Chiltern Conservation Board
- (f) From Ms Meryl Smith
Deputy Chief Executive, Oxfordshire Rural Community Council
- (g) From Mrs Karen Woolley
Oxfordshire Rural Communities Council
- (h) From Mr Jerry Green
Chair, Woodcote Parish Plan Steering Group

WOODCOTE PARISH COUNCIL

Village Hall, Reading Road, Woodcote,

Nr Reading, Oxon, RG8 0QY.

Telephone and Fax: 01491 – 681861

Email: pc@woodcote-online.co.uk

Councillor Angie Patterson - Planning
South Oxfordshire District Council
Benson Lane, Crowmarsh Gifford
Wallingford
Oxon OX10 8ED

17.6.2011

Dear Councillor Patterson,

Neighbourhood Plans: Front Runner Application

The Department for Communities and Local Government is offering grants of up to £20,000 to assist local planning authorities gain insight into how the provisions for neighbourhood planning are likely to work in practice following the commencement of the Localism Bill. In this 'Front Runners' scheme Councils will be expected to undertake a planning project in close collaboration with an established community group or parish council in a manner similar to that envisaged in the Localism Bill.

Woodcote Parish Council would like to work in partnership with SODC to develop a Neighbourhood Plan for the village and so asks SODC to apply now, before the deadline of 8th July, for a Front Runner grant to support this joint project.

Woodcote is ideally placed to produce a successful Neighbourhood Plan. The village has unparalleled experience of managing and publishing four village appraisals: nearly 90% of villagers responded to the detailed household and personal surveys supporting the 1984, 1991 and 2000 appraisals and the 2008 survey underpinning the 2008 Parish Plan. Furthermore the surveys have been similarly structured and so provide a quantitative measure of trends in needs and views of Woodcote residents over the last 27 years.

Woodcote has a long record of proactive community engagement. Our Parish Plan is recognised nationally as an example of outstanding good practice. Its key recommendation - that the village develop a 'Woodcote Housing Development Report' - anticipated Neighbourhood Plans by several years and the 25 years of data therein provides an excellent platform for the development of a model plan.

The Parish Council notes that SODC is not yet among the nearly 100 local planning authorities already awarded Front Runner status. We believe this scheme to be a good opportunity, as the Core Strategy is finalised, for SODC and Woodcote to take the

lead in developing the neighbourhood planning models that will be of great value to both the District and the other communities therein.

The closing date for grant applications to be received by the DCLG is 17:30 on Friday 8th July 2011. To date, requests to SODC from our District Councillor for information have failed to provoke a response and we would ask, therefore, for your early reply which hopefully will ensure that SODC can be included in the list of planning authorities awarded “Front Runner” status by the DCLG. To avoid any delay in the completion of a grant application please send copies of your response by email to both the Chairman Mr. Robin Peirce peircerg8@aol.com and Vice-Chairman Mr. Geoff Botting goffrey.botting@btinternet.com of the Parish Council as I will be on leave for several days before the end of June.

Yours sincerely,

Jenny Welham
Clerk to Woodcote Parish Council
Parish Office, Village Hall
Reading Road
Woodcote
RG8 0QY.
Tel 01491 681861
Email pc@woodcote-online.co.uk

From: David Sexon [davesexon@yahoo.co.uk]
Sent: 01 July 2011 23:27
To: Geoff Botting
Subject: Re: Woodcote/SODC Neighbourhood Plan

For the Attention of Robin Pierce, Chairman, Woodcote Parish Council

Dear Robin,

I was delighted to hear that Woodcote Parish Council, together with SODC, is submitting an application to the DC and LG for a grant, under their Front Runner scheme, to support the development of a Neighbourhood Plan for the village.

Because Woodcote has substantial experience of managing and publishing village appraisals, such a plan could act as a template for other villages in the area and so benefit the wider Oxfordshire community.

May I offer you my full support and I hope that your application is successful.

With best wishes,

Dave Sexon

Oxfordshire County Councillor - Goring Division



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CHRISTOPHER QUINTON
Member for Woodcote
South Oxfordshire District Council
Black Lion Cottage, Greenmore,
WOODCOTE, OXFORDSHIRE, RG8 0RD
Email: cjq@quincom.co.uk
Tel: Office: 01491 682419
Mobile: 07973 540044

4th July 2011

Dear Sirs,

WOODCOTE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

I write in strong support of the application for a grant for the development of a Neighbourhood Plan for Woodcote, South Oxfordshire.

As will be seen in the documentation the village is an extremely vibrant one, with extensive experience in the compilation of such plans.

The timing of this application is particularly apt, as it can be prepared in tandem with South Oxfordshire District Council's own Core Strategy, which is to be in place next year. Indeed, the timing could not be better.

Yours faithfully,

CHRISTOPHER QUINTON
Member for Woodcote

**The Chilterns
Conservation Board**

The Lodge
90 Station Road
Chinnor
Oxfordshire
OX39 4HA



Contact: Colin White
Tel: 01844 355507
Fax: 01844 355501
E Mail: cwhite@chilternsaonb.org
www.chilternsaonb.org

Chairman: Mike Fox
Vice Chairman: Cllr Bill Storey
Chief Officer: Steve Rodrick

1st July 2011

Robin Peirce
Woodcote Parish Council
Parish Council Office
Village Hall
Reading Road
Woodcote
Oxfordshire RG8 0QY

My Ref.: Development plans/Oxon/SODC/Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan 010711

Dear Robin,

Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan

I write in connection with the above following a very useful conversation with Dr. Geoff Botting the Parish Council's Vice-Chairman.

I am writing to let you know that the Chilterns Conservation Board supports in principle the production of a neighbourhood plan for Woodcote. I would also like to ask that, should the Parish Council decide to proceed with the plan, we are involved in some way in its ultimate production.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Colin White'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke underneath.

**Colin White MRTPI
Planning Officer
For and on behalf of the Chilterns Conservation Board**

From: Smith, Meryl - ORCC [meryl.smith@oxonrcc.org.uk]
Sent: 05 July 2011 13:22
To: Robin Peirce
Cc: Geoff Botting; Toby Warren
Subject: Woodcote Parish Council's Neighbourhood Planning Front runner application

Dear Robin,

ORCC is happy to support your partnership application with SODC to become a Neighbourhood Planning Front Runner. From our long-standing experience of delivering a community-led planning support service to communities in the county, including yours, we are aware of Woodcote's strong track record of successful and inclusive community action planning and community action.

We welcome your stated aim of reconciling the accepted need for development with the desires and needs of the local community; the need to ensure development is sustainable and the protection of the AONB. This, and the methods of achieving widespread community engagement, should be a useful example and area of learning to pass on for other communities in the county, as you propose. We would be keen to assist you with spreading the word.

We hope your application is successful and, if so, we look forward to working with you on the Neighbourhood Plan, as we have done on all four previous Appraisals/Plans.

Good luck!

Meryl

Meryl Smith
Deputy Chief Executive
Oxfordshire Rural Community Council
Jericho Farm
Worton
Witney
OX29 4SZ

Tel: 01865 883488
Fax: 01865 883191
E-mail: meryl.smith@oxonrcc.org.uk

Charity no: 900560
Company no: 2461552

Oxfordshire Rural Community Council 1920 - 2010
Supporting rural communities in Oxfordshire for 90 years

The Farthings
South Stoke Road
Woodcote
Oxfordshire
RG8 0PL

28th June 2011

Dear Robin

I understand that Woodcote is being put forward under the Front Runner Scheme for a grant to support the development of a Neighbourhood Plan as part of the Government's Localism Agenda.

I was delighted to hear that Woodcote is being considered as one of the pilot parishes, as it has an impressive track record in managing high quality community consultation projects, followed by effective delivery on the findings.

Having lived in Woodcote for 22 years, serving 12 years as a Parish Councillor, and on the committee of the 2000 Village Appraisal, I have seen for myself the impressive range of skills and expertise given so freely by the large numbers of individuals who support our community.

Not only is Woodcote a village with a true community spirit, but it is also a village capable of delivering impressively high responses to *any* consultation it carries out. This ensures that it can accurately state the views of local people, which is a powerful argument when considering any major issue that concerns the whole village.

As a Trustee of the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council, (ORCC) I am also able to see Woodcote from an external perspective. I am delighted to say that it is always regarded as one of the most pro-active and effective communities in Oxfordshire, and has led on a number of initiatives that have benefitted the whole County.

May I offer the Parish Council my full support in applying for this funding, and the very best of luck in its endeavours.

With kindest regards

Yours sincerely

Mrs Karen Woolley
Trustee and Director
ORCC

From: Jerry & Isobel Green [jerobel@byways.me.uk]
Sent: 27 June 2011 20:24
To: Geoff Botting
Subject: Woodcote/SODC NP application

Dear Geoff

Thank you for updating me on the Parish Council's request to SODC that they, with Woodcote as a partner, develop a Neighbourhood Plan and apply for Front Runner status.

You will know that I have been associated with 2 of the 3 Woodcote Village appraisals, and was chairman of the Committee responsible for the preparation of the 2008 Woodcote Parish Plan (see www.woodcote-online.co.uk/parishplan). Following the plan, further work was undertaken by various sub groups (see website links) - eg Built environment. We regard this work as an important step towards a neighbourhood plan that Woodcote is keen to develop in order to plan and influence the future development of the Parish.

In many ways this Parish Plan anticipates Neighbourhood planning and would give a SODC-Woodcote Front Runner partnership a head's start. Our strong and consistent record of public consultation, with methodology that gives over 80% response rate to Questionnaires distributed to households and individuals in the Parish not only means that the Parish Plan accurately reflects residents' views, and gives the Parish Council strong direction in its work but also that the expertise, contacts and local enthusiasm vital to success are already in place.

I believe that Woodcote will, given its record, develop a Neighbourhood Plan which would become a template for others, but more importantly provide a way in which the strongly held views of the residents of the Parish can be successfully reconciled with the need for development, in its widest sense, and so lead the way for Woodcote to contribute to the achievement of the SODC Core Strategy objectives.

Best wishes

Jerry