

# Woodcote Parish Council

## Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan 2013 – 2035

### Statement Assessing the significance of updates to the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan 2013 – 2027.

#### 1. Introduction and Purpose

Woodcote Parish Council is submitting a proposed revision to the made Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan 2013 – 2027. This revision, the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan 2013 – 2035 is required because:

- i. a new South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2013-2035 (SOLP35) was adopted on 10th December 2020; and
- ii. a new version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) has come into force.

Woodcote Parish Council note the Regulation 14 requirement for the Parish Council, as the qualifying body, to include a consultation statement to the local planning authority when submitting a Neighbourhood Plan. When the submission modifies an existing, made, neighbourhood plan the qualifying body is required to:

- (a) set out, with reasons, why the qualifying body considers that the modifications to the made neighbourhood plan are so significant or substantial as to change the nature of that plan; and
- (b) submit a document which:
  - i. contains details of the persons and bodies who were consulted about the proposed modified neighbourhood plan;
  - ii. explains how they were consulted;
  - iii. summarises the main issues and concerns raised by the persons consulted; and
  - iv. describes how these issues and concerns have been considered and, where relevant, addressed in the proposed modified neighbourhood plan

Woodcote Parish Council have submitted a Consultation Report in respect of the requirement of paragraph (b) above. This statement is submitted to comply with the requirement of paragraph (a).

#### 2. Background

On the 15<sup>th</sup> May 2014 the South Oxfordshire District Council formally adopted the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan 2013-2027 following successful examination and the support of more than 90% of the 60% of voters who voted in the Referendum.

In December 2020 the SOLP35 was adopted. This, together with amendments to the NPPF, led Woodcote Parish Council to resolve, in September 2016, to update the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan to reflect the changes. Of particular significance was the need to reflect the strengthened NPPF requirement to '*conserve and enhance the AONB*' whilst finding sites for the increase in the number of new homes allocated in the SOLP35 to the parish.

An Advisory Group of residents reviewed the existing objectives and policies and recommended changes to the Parish Council. The majority of policies were retained, some modified to align more closely with the Local Plan and the requirements of the community, some added in response to the

allocation of additional housing and the growing concern about climate change and a few deleted as no longer relevant.

The proposed modifications to the neighbourhood plan were published for Regulation 14 consultation on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2021 and continued until 17:00 on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2021.

### 3. Objectives

Woodcote is a parish entirely within, and washed over by, the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. A strong requirement to conserve and enhance the AONB is present in both the NPPF and the SOLP35. In addition, the existential crisis of climate change and the declaration of a climate emergency by the District Council caused greater emphasis to be placed on the sustainability of development. Thus:

- (a) A new goal '*to reduce the contribution to climate change by seeking to minimise or reduce the impact of pollution and greenhouse gas emissions*' was added; and
- (b) The goal '*To minimise the impact of new development on the surrounding countryside and ecosystems*' was replaced by the goal '*To seek opportunities for landscape, recreational and biodiversity gain while minimising the environmental impact of development*'.

### 4. Policy Changes

Policy changes considered sufficiently significant to change the nature of the Neighbourhood Plan are concerned with Employment; The Countryside and Environment; Housing and new Homes; and Design.

#### 4.1 Employment

Three new policies allocate new sites for employment. This is a material modification but one that fully supports the unchanged employment objective of the existing neighbourhood plan, the employment objectives of the SOLP35 and the NPPF.

#### 4.2 Countryside and the Environment

Policies on the countryside and local environment have been added in response to the strengthened requirements to conserve AONBs in both the NPPF and SOLP35:

- i. To support the SOLP35 allocation of new homes for Woodcote whilst protecting the AONB puts pressure on the open spaces within the developed area. To maintain these community facilities, amenity, and the local character a policy identifying Local Green Spaces has been added.
- ii. Woodcote is located on the peak of the escarpment above the Goring Gap. This location provides views across the open countryside of the Chilterns AONB and across the Goring Gap to the North Wessex Downs AONB. A policy has been added to maintain these local views for residents and visitors alike.
- iii. Woodcote is recognised in the Oxfordshire Wildlife Survey as one of the ecologically richest parishes in the county. A policy on Biodiversity and Wildlife Support has been added to require all development to produce a net biodiversity gain.
- iv. A lack of brownfield sites and undeveloped land in the built-up area of the parish puts the majority of new development into greenfield sites and the landscape of the AONB. A policy has been included to identify a settlement boundary that will help to meet the NPPF requirement to conserve the AONB and the SOLP35 strategic policy requiring '*the highest level of protection to be given to the landscape and scenic beauty of the Chilterns and North Wessex Downs AONBs*'.
- v. To support the need for an increase in renewable energy a new policy permits solar arrays in the countryside.

These are material modifications.

#### 4.3 Housing and new Homes

New policies support the addition of new housing in the parish:

- i. the number of new homes allocated is increased from 76 to 129; and
- ii. five new policies allocate sites that can, with suitable mitigation, be developed for housing without failing to comply with the NPPF and SOLP35 policies protecting the AONB.

These are material modifications.

Policies reinforcing the need for smaller open-market and affordable homes remain.

#### 4.4 Design

Three new policies address the urgent need to limit CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. All new development should:

- i. contain solar photovoltaic panels and/or solar water heating panels and new buildings aligned to maximise renewable energy generation;
- ii. have effective insulation, sustainable drainage systems and be aligned to maximise passive solar heating; and
- iii. Provide electric vehicle charging points and secure bicycle storage to encourage a reduction in the use of the internal combustion engine.

#### 4.5 Minor Amendments

There are minor amendments to the policies for Community Well-being and Transport, but these are not considered to be material modifications.

### 5. Conclusion

The essential objectives of the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan remain the same as that for the existing Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan albeit that a greater emphasis has been placed on measures to reduce the parish's contribution to climate change.

Sites for new housing and employment have been allocated which achieve a balance between the requirement to conserve and protect the AONB whilst finding sites for new homes and workplaces.

The most significant modifications relate to the sustainability of new homes, the need to encourage the use of renewable energy and the need to respond to the increased emphasis placed on the conservation of the landscape of the AONB.

In summary, these modifications build on the objectives and policies of the current neighbourhood plan by increasing the parish's contribution to meeting the need for more new homes while protecting the natural world and meeting the challenge of climate change.