

LEWKNOR PARISH
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN
Consultation Statement

March 2023

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Abbreviations

OCC	Oxfordshire County Council
Plan	Lewknor Parish Neighbourhood Plan for the period to 2040
SODC	South Oxfordshire District Council

1. Introduction

1.1 This Consultation Statement has been prepared to fulfil the legal obligations of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. These require that when a qualifying body submits a neighbourhood development plan to the local planning authority it must also provide a Consultation Statement. Part 5 of the regulations set out what a Consultation Statement should contain:

- details of the people and bodies who were consulted about the proposed neighbourhood plan and explanation of how they were consulted
- a summary of the main issues and concerns raised by the people consulted
- a description of how these issues and concerns have been considered and, where relevant, addressed in the proposed neighbourhood plan

1.2 This Consultation Statement sets out:

- the background to preparation of the Plan
- a summary of the engagement and consultation that has helped to shape and inform preparation of the Plan
- details of those consulted about the Plan at the various stages of plan preparation and the extent to which efforts were made to ensure the Plan was prepared with support and input from the local community
- a description of the changes made to policies as the Plan emerged in response to consultation, engagement and critical review

1.3 The process and techniques involved in seeking community engagement and preparing the Submission Draft Plan were appropriate to the purpose of the Plan. The extent of engagement is considered by the Steering Group to fulfil the obligations set out in the Regulations. The Consultation Statement supports and describes the process of plan making as envisaged through the Localism Act 2011 and the associated regulations, and sets out how it has been applied in Lewknor Parish. This has improved the Plan and ensured that it best meets community expectations and the aspirations of Lewknor Parish Council.

2. Approach to consultation

- 2.1. The aims of the Lewknor Parish Neighbourhood Plan consultation process were:
- a) To involve as many of the community as possible throughout all consultation stages of Plan development so that the Plan was informed by the views of local people and other stakeholders from the start of the Neighbourhood Planning process
 - b) To ensure that consultation events took place at critical points in the process where decisions needed to be taken
 - c) To engage with as wide a range of people as possible, using a variety of approaches and communication and consultation techniques
 - d) To ensure that results of consultation were fed back to local people and available to read via the Lewknor Neighbourhood Development Plan website after the consultation events
- 2.2. The Steering Group worked to a consultation strategy which included a plan of consultation activities (see Appendix A).

3. Engagement and consultation

3.1. Formation of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

- a) A questionnaire seeking support for the establishment of a group to develop a neighbourhood plan was included in the 2017 Summer edition of Grapevine, 169 copies were distributed to residents of the parish, 113 were returned with 99 offering an opinion, all but one in support
- b) An open meeting was held at St Margaret's Church, Lewknor on 7 Aug 2017 during which SODC explained the neighbourhood planning process to residents. Support for the process was gained from attendees
- c) A meeting took place on 30 August 2017 where the Lewknor Parish Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group was established and agreed to make an application for designation of the parish as a neighbourhood plan area
- d) The Steering Group spent several meetings formulating the draft vision, aims and objectives, and also identifying the issues and options

3.2. Throughout the process of consultation and engagement:

- a) Members of the Steering Group held individual conversations with local organisations, including schools, pubs, the Church of England, Chiltern Conservation Board, Natural England, SODC Planning team and OCC Highways. Where appropriate, dialogue was continued with some of these organisations as ideas matured
- b) Regular updates and progress reports have been published in the monthly parish newsletter, Grapevine
- c) The Steering Group has met regularly and the minutes of all meetings have been published on the website
- d) All appendices have been published on the website

3.3. Consultation on the designated neighbourhood plan area

SODC conducted a formal consultation, in 2017, on the proposed Neighbourhood Plan area under Section 61G of the Town and Country Planning Act. SODC issued the Area Designation Letter on 19 October 2017.

3.4. Early Consultation in drafting the Plan:

- a) December 2017 - An article in Grapevine further explaining what a Neighbourhood Plan is, what it means for the Parish, and encouraging engagement in the process
- b) January 2018 – The first Consultation Questionnaire was undertaken to understand the importance that the Parish residents place on various aspects of the Parish; a 59% response rate was achieved. The findings were collated and a full report issued in June 2018 on the Neighbourhood Plan website. This survey was helpful in ascertaining the key issues to be

addressed

- c) April 2018 - Two feedback events on Consultation 1 were held. Members of the Steering Group were available to answer questions and to discuss the issues raised and attendees were encouraged to give further feedback
 - 14 April 2018 - Lewknor Village Hall
 - 22 April 2018 - England's Rose public house in Postcombe
- d) May/June 2018 - An article in Grapevine explaining what role a Neighbourhood Plan would play with regard to planning applications
- e) June/July 2018 - Consultation 2 was undertaken to look at housing needs within the Parish, views on housing development and other issues highlighted as important to the residents of the Parish in Consultation 1. The findings were collated during late summer of 2018
- f) September/October 2018 - Two further feedback events were held:
 - 9 September 2018 - at the Parish Horticultural Show, Lewknor
 - 7 October 2018 - in Postcombe at the corner of Box Tree Lane and London Road

These gave residents a chance to see and discuss the findings from the consultation carried out during the summer, covering issues such as housing need and housing development, including potential site allocations across the Parish.

- g) September 2019 - At the Lewknor Parish Fete and Show two consultations were carried out on:
 - views that it is considered should be protected from future development
 - open green spaces that it is considered should be protected from future development

3.5. Pre-Submission Consultation

- a) The formal Reg 14 statutory pre-submission consultation was carried out 13 June to 31 July 2020.
- b) After Plan was redrafted following this consultation, the revised Plan was submitted to SODC's planning staff for a final review before submission.

3.6. Consultation on non-designated heritage assets

In April 2022 a consultation on proposed non-designated heritage assets was included in Grapevine

4. Summary of issues raised and changes to the Plan

4.1. Early Consultations

Many issues were raised in the early stages of consultation which helped shape the Plan. These included:

4.1.1. Consultation 1

This generated a 59% response rate and highlighted:

- the importance to residents of the rural nature and environment of the parish, as a result an assessment of iconic views within the parish that should be protected was carried out
- the need for open green spaces, this led to a consultation on what green spaces should be designated
- the existing character of the parish and its housing
- maintaining a balanced housing mix

4.1.2. Consultation 2

This generated a 58% response rate and considered:

- housing needs in the parish
 - although there was likely to be a need for properties to move into over the next few years it was concluded that this was likely to be met by existing properties becoming available, several were available at the time of different sizes
- although housing developments are not required, if any were to take place the view was:
 - small developments of 1-9 houses were overwhelmingly preferred
 - brownfield and infill spaces were much preferred and extending the villages was rejected, which led to the inclusion of a settlement boundaries policy in the plan
 - housing styles should be sympathetic to the current character of their surroundings. A character assessment was carried out to understand the character of each area of the parish
 - affordable housing should be included

4.1.3. Call for Sites

A call for sites to all landowners for any sites that had not previously been submitted to South Oxfordshire District Council, but who had an interest in promoting their land, including small and infill sites, for alternative uses was included in Grapevine, posted on the neighbourhood plan website and displayed on parish noticeboards. Responses were

received from three landowners in respect of the following sites:

- A field east of Watlington Road, Lewknor
- Land at Byeways, Hill Road, Lewknor
- Various land of Adwell Estate around Postcombe

The responses were noted for consideration in the course of the development of the plan. Further to assessment of each it was decided that where these sites were outside the settlement boundaries they were not appropriate for development.

4.1.4. Consultation on protection of views

It was overwhelming agreed that the views proposed should be protected. No other views were put forward for protection

4.1.5. Consultation on Open Green Spaces

The green spaces presented were commented on with varying levels of support. These responses are detailed in the Appendix M and were included in the consideration of which open spaces should be included in the plan

4.2. Pre-submission consultation

4.2.1. The formal Reg 14 statutory consultation was originally scheduled to take place from 27 March, on 23 March due to the COVID-19 lockdown this was delayed. When lockdown was eased and the government announced that neighbourhood planning consultations could go ahead it was decided to carry out the consultation, running for seven weeks, rather than the required six weeks, from 13 June to 31 July 2020.

4.2.2. After this consultation the Plan was re-drafted to take account of comments received.

4.2.3. As a result of the formal Reg 14 consultation comments were received from:

- a) Oxfordshire County Council
- b) South Oxfordshire District Council
- c) Chiltern Conservation Board
- d) Thames Water
- e) Historic England
- f) Landowners
- g) Parish residents

4.2.4. Pre-submission consultation responses from residents:

	Distributed	Returns (duplicates removed)	
Lewknor	178	61 (58)	34.3% (32.6%)
Postcombe	85	31	36.5%
South Weston	19	6	31.6%
Elsewhere in the parish	36	4	11.1%
Total	318	102 (99)	32.1% (31.1%)

6 responses came from outside the parish (3 from representatives of Adwell Estate)

Residents were overwhelmingly in favour of the plan and each individual policy (Appendix S).

4.2.5. The key issues raised during the pre-submission consultation and the actions taken are summarised in the following table:

Consultee	Subject	Summary of comment or recommendation	Action taken
SODC	SS1 (Settlement boundaries – Lewknor & Postcombe)	Consider consequences of including or not including certain uses and buildings within the settlement boundary you draw. Presently, you have included what appear to be farm buildings within the boundary on Weston Road. You have used the Cheshire East Council Boundary Assessment Guidance. Generally agricultural buildings of modern construction should be excluded	The boundaries were reconsidered and revised
SODC	CH1	This policy is overly restrictive, it does not appropriately capture the relationship between heritage assets and their settings as set out in the NPPF	Revised policy to include a non-designated heritage asset list
OCC	CH1 (Conserving Heritage)	The policy does not include consideration of archaeological remains	Reference to archaeological remains added to the policy
SODC	CH3 (Protection of views)	This policy is over restrictive	Revised wording included
SODC	DC2 (Design Principles)	Revise wording re dark skies	Policy revised

Consultee	Subject	Summary of comment or recommendation	Action taken
Chiltern Conservation Board	EN1 (Wildlife and Biodiversity)	Enhance wording regarding location of the parish as a constituent part of the setting of the AONB	Policy revised
SODC	EN1 (Wildlife and Biodiversity)	Policy could encourage developments to be designed to reflect the arboriculture constraints influencing the site	Policy revised
Thames Water	FI5 (Utilities)	Add wording: "Developers need to consider the net increase in water and waste water demand to serve their developments and also any impact the development may have off site further down the network, if no/low water pressure and internal/external sewage flooding of property is to be avoided."	Policy revised
SODC	FI6 (Employment Economic & Commercial Development)	Elements of this policy are overly restrictive and do not have regard to the NPPF	Policy revised
SODC	HO1 Housing Mix	The objective is not in accordance with the Council's housing policies. Unless the development is a rural exception site, any affordable housing requirement will meet the needs of anyone in the district	Change text in Theme Housing Objectives to where policy refers to wording of HO1

4.3. Consultation on Non-designated Heritage Assets

As a result of comments from SODC that proposed policy CH1 was overly restrictive, one option suggested was the inclusion of a list of non-designated heritage assets.

In April 2022 a consultation on proposed non-designated heritage assets was included in Grapevine. Responses were in favour of the proposed list. Suggestions were received to add one property and a funeral path. The results of the consultation were included in the December 2022 edition of Grapevine.

5. Conclusions

- 5.1. The various elements of the consultation process were important in shaping the Neighbourhood Plan. Early dialogue with various key organisations such as SODC, Natural England and Chiltern Conservation Board were very valuable and had a influence on the shape of the plan. The effort which went into obtaining a high response rate to the parish surveys was very worthwhile as it was felt the survey results gave a good overview of the community's views on future development.
- 5.2. The various events to which residents were invited assisted the Steering Group in identifying important issues. Themes which repeatedly emerged included motorway noise, broadband & mobile phone signals and parking; which cannot be addressed through the Neighbourhood Plan; as well as the character of the villages and access to the countryside, community spaces and community facilities.
- 5.3. The Reg 14 pre-submission consultation demonstrated overwhelming support for the draft Plan and was helpful in ensuring that the policies met the wishes of residents whilst complying with the regulatory requirements.

Appendices

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Appendices included as separate documents:

Appendix E - Consultation 1 - Questionnaire	
Appendix F - Consultation 1 - Report	
Appendix G - Consultation 1 - Feedback events	
Appendix H - Consultation 2 - Questionnaire	
Appendix I - Consultation 2 - Feedback	
Appendix J - Consultation 2 - Reports	
Appendix K - Call for sites	
Appendix L - Protection of Views Consultation - Report	
Appendix M - Green Spaces Consultation - Report	
Appendix N - Protection of Views and Green Spaces – Report in Grapevine	
Appendix O - Pre-submission Consultation - Questionnaire	
Appendix P - Pre-submission Consultation - Statutory consultees contacted	
Appendix Q - Pre-submission Consultation - Statutory responses	
Appendix R - Pre-submission Consultation - Non-statutory responses	
Appendix S - Pre-submission Consultation - Response analysis by location	
Appendix T - Non-designated Heritage Assets Consultation - Questionnaire	
Appendix U - Non-designated Heritage Assets Consultation - Summary	
Appendix V - Non-designated Heritage Assets Consultation - Report	

Appendix A: Lewknor Parish consultation strategy

The strategy which evolved included:

- 1) initially ascertaining confirmation from the parish, through a simple questionnaire included in the parish newsletter, Grapevine, that the creation of a Neighbourhood Plan was supported
- 2) identifying a preliminary group of volunteers from the parish, through an open meeting, who expressed a wish to drive forward the formation of a Neighbourhood Plan group
- 3) engaging the parish early in the process by conducting a comprehensive survey, Consultation 1 and subsequently a survey requesting more detail on certain issues, Consultation 2
- 4) keeping residents informed throughout the process by publishing updates in Grapevine and by making copies of steering group minutes, consultation results and other related documents available on the Plan website and also links and event invitations on parish social media sites
- 5) engaging with various statutory bodies early in the process e.g. SODC Planning Team, Chiltern Conservation Board and Natural England
- 6) engaging early in the process with parish organisations such as the school and the church
- 7) open meetings which were held in the villages of Lewknor and Postcombe to feed back findings of Consultations 1 & 2 and to engage the community in the wider process
- 8) making best use of advice provided by consultants, primarily Community First Oxfordshire
- 9) continuing a dialogue with SODC, whose input was identified early on as key to the Plan
- 10) running a neighbourhood plan stall at the parish fete where views of residents were sought regarding certain key policies
- 11) asking a 'lay reader' to comment on an early draft of the Neighbourhood Plan
- 12) involving landowners who do not live in the parish in the process through the Pre-Submission (Reg 14) consultation
- 13) conducting, for the Reg 14 Consultation, drop in sessions at Lewknor & Postcombe
- 14) conducting a consultation on the inclusion of a list of non-designated heritage assets

Appendix B. Programme of Consultation Activities

Date	Event	More information in:
July 2017	Initial questionnaire	Appendix C
August 2017	Parish Open Meeting –Launch Event	Appendix D
January – February 2018	Consultation One	Appendix E to G
April 2018	Consultation One feedback event in Lewknor	Appendix G
April 2018	Consultation One feedback event in Postcombe	Appendix G
June - July 2018	Consultation Two	Appendix H to J
July – August 2018	Call for sites	Appendix K
September 2018	Consultation Two feedback event and discussion - Parish Fete and Horticultural Show (Lewknor)	Appendix I
October 2018	Consultation Two feedback event and discussion - Postcombe	Appendix I
September 2019	Drop in session - Parish Fete and Horticultural Show (Lewknor) Green Spaces and Protection of Views	Appendices L to N
October 2019	Drop in session - Postcombe	Appendices L to N
June – July 2020	Pre-submission Consultation	Appendices O to S
July 2020	Pre-submission Consultation drop in Q&A session - Lewknor	
July 2020	Pre-submission Consultation drop in Q&A session - Postcombe	
April 2022	Consultation on Non-designated Heritage Assets	Appendices T to V

Appendix C. Questionnaire - Grapevine Summer 2017

An analysis of responses to the questionnaire in the summer 2017 edition of Grapevine, gauging support for the development of a Neighbourhood Plan, is set out below:

Number of questionnaires distributed by village & number of questionnaires returned:

Village	Distributed	Returned	Response %
Lewknor	169	100	59.2%
South Weston	25	7	28.0%
Postcombe	88	6	6.8%
Total	282	113	40.1%

Support received for the setting up of a group to develop a neighbourhood plan:

Village	Return	Support	Do Not Support	No Firm Opinion
Lewknor	100	86 [86%]	1 [1.0%]	13 [13%]
South Weston	7	7 [100%]	0 [0%]	0 [0%]
Postcombe	6	5 [83.3%]	0 [0%]	1 [16.7%]
Total	113	98 [86.7%]	1 [0.9%]	14 [12.4%]

Appendix D. Initial Open Meeting - 7 August 2017

A Parish Meeting was called, following on from the questionnaire in Grapevine, in order to advise residents of the nature of Neighbourhood Planning and to seek practical support for setting up a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. Approximately 30 people attended.

Ricardo Rios, Planning Policy Team Leader (Neighbourhood) of South Oxfordshire District Council, outlined the process for developing a neighbourhood plan. Attendees were asked to give their details if they were willing to assist in developing the neighbourhood plan, 20 gave their details.