



## Sutton Courtenay Parish Council

### Sutton Courtenay Neighbourhood Plan

This is a brief overview of aspects of how Sutton Courtenay Neighbourhood Plan (SCNP) is specific to Sutton Courtenay, and once it is passed in the referendum (requires a simple majority vote of yes), the Vale of the White Horse District Council will have to give due regard to policies contained within the SCNP in making planning decisions on development applications submitted for our parish.

The main output from the process of producing a neighbourhood plan is a set of policies, on land use, that can be subsumed within the District Council's own Local Plan core policies when determining development applications in the Neighbourhood plan area (usually the same as the parish).

For SCNP, with reference to

<https://www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2024/02/Sutton-Courtenay-NDP-Referendum-Version.pdf>

If you scroll to page 7, Section 1.4. it gives the land use issues that were identified by the parish council through various consultation events held in the village and through the village news and questionnaires. These are included below for ease of reference:

- The design of any new development and compatibility with local character.
- The importance of protecting the heritage assets.
- The availability and quality of green spaces in the Parish.
- The role that the setting of the settlement and the gaps between the settlements plays in defining the character of the village.
- The appropriateness of previous developments and the scale of future development proposals.
- The problems associated with accessibility within the Parish, including existing traffic congestion, proposed transport developments, public transport connectivity and the availability of off-road parking.
- The maintenance and enhancement of the social and economic vitality of the Parish.

Now if you go to page 26, section 5.3 - you will find our policies listed which address the above issues. What makes the document cumbersome and slightly opaque is, that for each policy, extensive evidence has to be provided to justify why that policy should be adopted by the District Council for our parish. Arguments have to be made to demonstrate that we are complying with basic conditions including the District Council's core development policies and the National Policy Planning Framework. A Neighbourhood Plan has to be positive about development, and strategically, remain subservient to the District Council's Local Plan that is in force at the time the plan is made.

Once the Neighbourhood Plan document has been through various consultation processes, it is submitted for examination, by the District Council, to a planning inspector. The inspector's decision is final and once any amendments have been addressed, the Neighbourhood Plan is



## Sutton Courtenay Parish Council

subject to a referendum. Needless to say, lay people such as parish councillors do not have the expertise to draft policies and set the document out in terms expected of a Neighbourhood Plan – the parish council employed Bluestone Planning Consultants to do the drafting, but the input and evidence came from the parish.

Thus, our Neighbourhood Plan gives the community more say over what is developed in our parish, what new buildings should look like, what infrastructure is provided and protection of important Parish facilities and areas of open space.

Another big advantage is, in the receipt of the parish's share of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) that developers contribute to the District Council as the planning authority. Currently, the percentage of the CIL passed on to the parish is 15%. Once the Neighbourhood Plan is "made" (adopted through the referendum), the percentage passed to the parish increases to 25%.

A couple of examples of how the SCNP protects our key views and green spaces are at:

**Policy SC3:** Key Views and Vistas (table at page 39) – the figures preceding that table show where the key views are located and the Inspector has agreed to their designations which means developments will not be permitted to block those key views.

**Policy SC5:** Local Green Spaces (table at page 49) – preceding that is a map (Figure 6.11) that shows the Plan of Local Green Spaces to be protected – for example the Inspector has agreed that the Green Space off Mill Lane (LG11) be designated as a green space which means it has to be maintained as an amenity space.

**Policy SC8** residential development; and **SC10:** - Design, Heritage and Setting: sets out a requirement that the SCNP design code and landscape appraisal be used as the basis for planning decisions. Chapter 9 is detailed summary of the design codes that were developed and the area by area character appraisal undertaken to ensure developments are harmonised within their character area.

We have had one area of disappointment in that the Inspector did not accept all the areas we had identified as Green Gaps (SC1) to ensure a clear physical and visual separation between us and neighbouring parishes as he felt the extent to which we had identified the gaps, did not comply with the intent of the District Council's relevant core policy. However, the Vale of the White Horse and South Oxfordshire District Councils are currently producing a joint local plan which should address that issue. Once our SCNP has been adopted we then have the opportunity to ask for a review of our Green Gap policy in line with the new joint local plan.