

OLD ALRESFORD PARISH COUNCIL 'BLUEPRINT' COMMUNITY PLANNING SUBMISSION

The Parish of Old Alresford is located on the northern boundary of Alresford with a population of approximately 640. The parish includes the hamlets of Fobdown, Pinglestone, Nettlebed, Armsworth and Godsfield with the majority of the population being based in Old Alresford village. The proximity of the village to Alresford limits the viability of local facilities and the village no longer has a shop, pub or school. Residents are generally very satisfied with the village and its environs and are keen to preserve what is special about it rather than bring about significant change. Villagers are very proud of their relationship with Alresford and are concerned with and want to be involved in its future development.

1. LOCAL HOUSING NEEDS

Old Alresford is predicted by the South East Plan as requiring an increase in the number of homes from the current 226 to 278 by 2026. This represents an increase of 3 – 4 houses per annum. Many of the residents who responded to a recent survey (70%) feel that this rate of increase is too great and are concerned about the effects of such development on the village

Residents have indicated that the village is short of one and two bedroom accommodation and single storey accommodation for the elderly and are concerned that future development rebalances the village housing mix. They feel that the stock of privately owned three and four bedroom housing is currently sufficient.

They are also concerned that the style and scale of any future development is appropriate to the village setting.

The potential for infill is limited and in many cases not desirable and it may be necessary to identify areas for sympathetic small-scale development to accommodate future development.

Old Alresford does not have mains drainage and it has been pointed out that this may influence future development if local water and river quality is not to be adversely affected.

Concern was also expressed that there was insufficient nursing home care within the wider locality.

The village is prone to groundwater flooding and this should be a consideration in all future developments.

2. LOW COST HOUSING

75% of residents who responded to the survey have indicated that 25 – 50% of new housing should be social housing available for low rent or shared equity. They are concerned that such housing once built should continue to be available for social housing and should remain affordable. There was a very strong feeling that those with genuine connections with the village should get priority for this housing and that the Parish Council should be more involved with the allocation and management of such housing. Winchester City Council and the A2 Housing Association should be compelled to liaise with the Parish Council about housing allocation and to consider recommendations they may make.

The source of much of this information is a village Blueprint meeting on the 23rd November 2010 and an on-line questionnaire and a paper questionnaire distributed with the village magazine.

December 2010

3. RECREATION NEEDS

The village currently has two small playgrounds suitable for 3 – 15 year olds. The village has an attractive village green which is suitable for informal games and ball games and community events. 63% of residents who responded have expressed satisfaction with the recreation available given that many such facilities are available in Alresford. Although the Alresford Young Farmers is based in the village hall there is no youth club and social facilities for teenagers from 14 – 18 are very limited in Old Alresford and Alresford. Sports facilities are generally well catered for in Alresford through the Alresford Recreation Centre, Perins School and the various sports clubs and there seems little point in trying to duplicate this in Old Alresford. Requests have been made for community tennis courts in Old Alresford and Preston Candover has a very successful tennis club as a model.

The local footpath and bridleway network is a highly valued resource and path maintenance is important to villagers and others for walking, riding and cycling. The paths are also used by Alresford residents for recreational walking, riding and cycling to Old Alresford

4. TRANSPORT

The B3046 runs through the parish and provides access to Basingstoke and Alresford and via the A31 Alton and Winchester. A bus service runs from Old Alresford hourly from 8 – 4.30. Many residents felt this service terminated too early and restricted residents from using it for travel to and from work or for social purposes. The Cango provides a useful link to outlying areas and should be better publicised. The Alresford Town Trust mini-bus provides an invaluable service to the elderly and others in Old Alresford and it was felt this was a valuable resource which should be protected. In the absence of frequent service buses it was suggested that some form of car-share scheme should be considered. 58% of survey respondents never used service buses. Pedestrian access to Alresford was very important and maintenance of paths should be a high priority. Lighting was considered essential but preferably low level and on a time switch to minimise light pollution. The main paths should be suitable for mobility scooters.

The footpath along Basingstoke Road should be extended from Southdowns to Barton Cottage.

5. FACILITIES

The main village facility is the Christy Hall. This is the centre of village social activities and it was considered essential that this was maintained to a high standard to make it an attractive venue for village and private events.

St Mary's Church is another important focal point for the village.

Concern was expressed that the trend away from community volunteering was detrimental to village life and that this trend needed to be reversed if the village was to continue to function as a village and not become a dormitory. Village events were considered essential to the fabric of community life.

6. TRAFFIC

Despite recent improvements to speed restriction signage it is still felt by many residents that the average traffic speed through the village is too high

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and that further measures are necessary in the form of traffic calming or mini roundabouts. Traffic speeding through the village is the most common complaint to the Parish Council. A Speed Lit Sign scheme is shortly to be introduced

7. EMPLOYMENT NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES

The main local businesses are agricultural – cereals, beef, leaf salads and watercress and there were no adverse comments with regard to local farming activities. There is however concern about the local fresh produce packing and distribution businesses which generate a large volume of HGV movements. These vehicles are unsuitable for the size of the local roads and cause damage to road edges and verges.

A number of small business units have been developed at Upton Park and The Winchester Diocesan Office has moved into Old Alresford Place bringing good quality employment opportunities with it. Old Alresford Cottage also provides quite a number of employment opportunities.

Given the limited availability of employment in Old Alresford a good public transport network is essential for those unable to afford their own transport if they are to find work beyond Alresford.

The slow speed of broadband and poor mobile phone signal are a significant barrier to local business and home working.

It was felt that small businesses could be welcomed to Old Alresford where the scale and type of business was appropriate to the village setting and the local road network. However the potential for the development of further premises is very limited as there are currently very few existing potential premises.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS

Residents were on the whole very happy with the environment in and around Old Alresford and their main request was to preserve it. There are some significant green spaces along the B3046 within the village which they would like to see maintained as they are essential to the village setting.

9. COMMUNITY

Crime and anti-social behaviour within the village is low but rural crime within the wider area is an increasing problem. The Neighbourhood Watch, Farm Watch and Country Watch schemes are very valuable and should be encouraged. Contact with a locally based policeman who knows the area is invaluable for those in isolated areas.

Residents are very keen that the village maintains a strong sense of community and that the village should not become a suburb of Alresford and remain distinct but interdependent. Community organisations such as The Old Alresford Amateur Dramatic Society (TOADS) and the Old Alresford Village Fair provides the glue that holds the village together and a well resourced village community centre is essential to support such organisations.