

Highlights

- **FOW MEMBERS SPEAK OUT..**
- **DRAFT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – ARE YOUR VIEWS BEING IGNORED?**
- **AONB – IS PROTECTED STATUS GOING TO BE WORTH ANYTHING IN THE FUTURE?**

Winchcombe Issues

*The Newsletter of
Friends of Winchcombe*

April 2015

We must be vigilant

Alderton succeeds in stopping unwanted development, without having a Neighbourhood Plan.

The people of Alderton have succeeded in preventing further large scale development in their village. In a decision published on 17th March, 2015, the Planning Inspector stated that the planned development " would lead to the extension of the built-up part of the settlement into the adjoining countryside and affect the setting of the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)... This is an adverse impact to which I attach considerable weight." Yet Winchcombe's own Neighbourhood Plan appears to be actively encouraging development on land in the AONB around Winchcombe. Why??

It has often been said by the Town Council and the Steering Group that without a Neighbourhood Plan then developers will be free to develop all around Winchcombe. Alderton doesn't (yet) have a Neighbourhood Plan, but has still managed to prevent development.

Clearly, it would be in Winchcombe's best interests to have a Neighbourhood Plan in place, but not one that invites developers to build on AONB land and promote plans to ruin Winchcombe as a place to live.

Tewkesbury Borough Plan. The Winchcombe Town Council response was interesting.

WTC agreed a curious response to the Tewkesbury Borough Plan Consultation exercise which seemed to contradict the Draft Neighbourhood Plan. It seemed supportive of FoW concerns on development of AONB and the sites identified giving rise to problems. Included in the statement:
"In the case of Winchcombe and Bishops Cleeve, there appears to be a fundamental misunderstanding of the overall context and characteristics and setting of each settlement. Winchcombe is severely constrained by the AONB and associated SLA, has an historic core containing many Listed Buildings, relatively poor public transport connections, and limited employment opportunities. On the other hand Bishops Cleeve has none of these constraints, and is a much more sustainable location, as has been shown by the past rate of growth." And
"In the light of this broad analysis it would be inappropriate to comment at this stage on the suitability or otherwise of any of the individual locations listed. The WTC position should be to emphasise that both collectively, and in most cases individually, they amount to a scale of development that is entirely inappropriate, given the environmental and other

constraints, and to urge the Borough Council to reconsider this aspect of this policy."

AONB - Worth protecting?

The AONB is a national legal designation for protection of countryside deemed important in its natural state and requiring protection.

WTC through the Draft Neighbourhood Plan are actively promoting development of AONB.

This will create legal precedent to continue developing AONB around Winchcombe.

17 years of campaigning

FoW is over 17 old. A good percentage of our members have stayed with us through the various common issues we have commented and campaigned on.

I recently found original FoW newsletters from 1999 in my archive. We will put them on LoveWinchcombe.uk for you to review and see what's changed, or not, in the last 17 years.

It does seem appalling that in a core matter, we haven't moved on. We are still having to protect Winchcombe from vested interest, insensitive development and sacrilege of AONB status.

Printed By:

Promoted by: Friends of Winchcombe, Chairman, Rupert Chislett, 45 Gloucester Street, Winchcombe
on behalf of Rupert Chislett, 45 Gloucester Street, Winchcombe & Stuart Maughan, The Great House, Castle Street, Winchcombe

LoveWinchcombe postcard survey results

Below are the chart outcomes from LoveWinchcombe survey. We had 391 responses and a conclusive outcome which totally refutes what our Town Council want us to believe, that most residents agree with them on the current Draft Neighborhood Plan an it's contents.

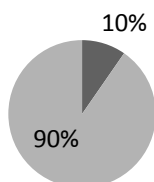
How important is it to you to preserve Winchcombe's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty?

- Very Important
- Somewhat important
- Not Important



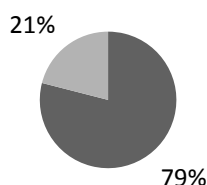
Would you like to be consulted further before the Neighbourhood Plan carries on?

- No
- Yes



Do you feel that you had a genuine opportunity to contribute your ideas to the Draft Neighbourhood Plan before it was sent out?

- No
- Yes



Let us engage in debate. The problem with the numbers!

The Neighbourhood Plan to date has been about telling us about policies and plans, already decided, rather than full open debate.

Anyone attending recent Town Council meetings and who has asked for further involvement with the electorate / community has been greeted with a total stonewalling of that request.

Repeatedly the NP Steering Group & WTC have referred to opposition to Draft Neighbourhood Plan as a small group or a couple of people.

Facts however are unarguable:

Draft Neighbourhood Plan consultation had returned circa completed 400 forms.

The number of people who responded to an audited response of the LoveWinchcombe online and postcard survey are currently 391.

Under any assessment that means that **our results are equal in response and validity** compared to Draft Neighbourhood Plan forms returned.

We are no less a minority view than any inference drawn from Draft Neighbourhood Plan.

Real voices of Winchcombe from www.LoveWinchcombe.uk

These are quotes from residents who have registered their dissatisfaction with the Draft Neighbourhood Plan

- 'There is not enough school or preschool places for the children we have already, this is before the new builds are completed. Isbourne Valley have just had their application for a desperately needed Foundation stage department refused on their new Didbrook site which could have in some small way helped with the lack of preschool places in

Winchcombe. It seems like a crazy and uninformed decision." –C.P

- The town has already taken a significant increase in local housing and lacks the facilities and transportation links to accommodate more. To consider building on areas of outstanding beauty that the vast majority of residents hold very dear is outrageous and not representative of the view of wider community. The town council should not take silence as agreement on such an important issue. – C.O
- I have raised my considerable concerns about the plan in the original survey which were ignored and more recently in the new survey with little hope that they will be considered. – G.D.
- As an active member of the Ramblers Association and a Walkers are welcome committee member, I am concerned about anything which detracts from the delightful and unique opportunities for pedestrian visitors and residents. – D.C.

Parking problems – It is going to get a lot worse!

Vineyard Street

- The town council is pursuing a plan to remove parking from one side of Vineyard street and leave the other side parallel parking only. This will remove greater than 30 car spaces.

WHY?

- To make it easier for the Almsbury site development?

Abbey Terrace

- Plans are being discussed to remove parking from Abbey Terrace and to replace this with a permanent market stall area, even though it will trade infrequently....
- What effect will this have on local businesses?

Friends of Winchcombe

WORKING FOR A BETTER WINCHCOMBE

Representation at local elections?

The forthcoming elections are not just for Westminster. Our local Councillors are up for election as well!

There is much we can do to improve better strategic thought and actions.

FoW committee members have put forward two candidates for WTC so we can get representation and get our elected voice heard.

We will encourage the WTC to further improve democratic consultation on all matters, but particularly the current Draft Neighbourhood Plan.

If you vote for the FoW committee members, Rupert Chislett and Stuart Maughan, as candidates for Town Councillor election, on May 7th; you will be voting for an immediate representation by us to bring the current Draft Neighbourhood Plan back into the community, for greater clarity, discussion and revision; before anything more is taken forward.

Please feel free to ask us any questions on how you feel we could improve representation and democracy in Winchcombe. Our intention is to listen and represent the views of FoW.

Our vision is wide and many of the issues we do not have space to cover in this newsletter.

FoW was never CREATED to be fence sitters; we are a campaigning organisation. It is important not to bend our principles and to be clear that we represent what you have voted us to.

If you feel that we represent your view, perhaps you would like to join FoW. Just visit [LoveWinchcombe.uk](http://www.LoveWinchcombe.uk).

Committee update

FoW will strive to be open, transparent and accessible to our members. We will seek to allow discussions to take place with a rounded cross section of views being allowed to be presented. We may not agree with them but we will allow them to be heard.

The committee is now constituted as follows:

- Rupert Chislett, Chairman;
- Stuart Maughan; Treasurer
- Alan Cogbill, Secretary
- Phil Parker
- David Lindgren
- Allan Jenkins (31/3/15)

If you have an email address or access to internet please visit www.loveWinchcombe.uk

Housing needs for all

In February, 2012, the results of a housing surgery commissioned by the Winchcombe Town Council was published. It was a comprehensive survey, with over 800 responses spread fairly evenly across the demographic age range (in contrast with the responses to the public consultation of the draft Neighbourhood Plan).

The survey revealed a need for approximately 75 houses, of which 40 should be for affordable homes. The survey revealed **insignificant** need for additional homes for the elderly. Since then over 200 houses have been built in Winchcombe.

Why is the draft Neighbourhood Plan ignoring the findings of Winchcombe's own housing survey, both in quantity of housing as well as in the type of housing.

There is not one shred of evidence that Winchcombe supports or needs up-market housing for **wealthy, early retired** people, and yet it appears to be a core part of the draft Neighbourhood Plan. **Why?**

Because it increases the value of Almsbury Farm site if it was sold and made available for development.

Where did the idea to build a retirement village on Almsbury Farm come from?

What do local businesses think? Read below..

We are the owners of Abbey Green Vets, Abbey Cottage, Abbey Terrace, Winchcombe.

We provide veterinary services for pet owners and the local farming community, the business is long established (1893!) and employs 24 people, 5 of them at the surgery at Winchcombe.

Most of our clients will bring their animals to the surgery by car. We are well aware that adequate availability of car parking for our clients around the surgery is absolutely critical to our business. Car parking around Abbey Terrace and Vineyard street is already problematic at busy times of day.

We were therefore alarmed to learn of the proposed changes to car parking in this area. The loss of the existing car parking around Abbey Terrace and Vineyard street for our clients would be extremely detrimental to our business and might well make our current premises untenable forcing us to relocate.

We were astonished to learn that the proposed changes to car parking were apparently displayed at the library along with the "plan for Winchcombe" since we went to look at this display specifically with this issue in mind and left none the wiser.

We hope that our needs and those of other Winchcombe businesses in the area are given due consideration when the decisions around car parking are made for what we regard as an important local service.

signed

Ian Maisey

Martin Clark

Graeme Sanderson

Friends of Winchcombe

WORKING FOR A BETTER WINCHCOMBE

Almsbury Farm Site & West of Winchcombe

- All the sites being put forward are in the AONB.
- Both locations are havens of wildlife and tourist welcome these features.
- The Barns of Almsbury Farm are grade 2* listed. This is one of the highest protection status a structure can have.
- Bats have roosted in the barns for over 20 years and are protected.
- The Farmhouse has undergone expenditure and transformation in the last decade to a rental high value private residence.
- The Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty West of Winchcombe (see photo below) is part of the heritage that we believe should be passed on to future generations. The land has been proposed for development in the Draft Neighbourhood Plan and the proposal has been supported unanimously by Winchcombe Town Council.



We need to act together now to preserve this land.

The Inspector considering the previous Tewkesbury Borough Local Plan to 2011 made the following observations on this beautiful landscape:

The site "forms an important part of the ANOB and the setting of Winchcombe".

- *In relation to use of the lower slopes for development this "would still be prominent and obtrusive. The site is visible in*

longer distance views from the south within the AONB, and its development would appear as an extension of the urban area into the open hillside setting of the town". Further he went on to state "from closer by the visual intrusion of the proposed development would likely be very significant".

- *In conclusions on a smaller scale of development, the Inspector still found that "given the **high landscape sensitivity** of the site..... I have concluded that there remains a sound landscape reason for rejecting it".*

What Has Changed?

It was relevant then, and is even more relevant today, as countryside in Winchcombe is disappearing fast!

Development on this land would be clearly visible from Sudeley Hill Farm & beyond and from Rushley Lane, further damaging this wonderful setting of Winchcombe.

Let us join together and protect this beautiful land.

A manifesto. The past and present.

The Friends Of Winchcombe has a heritage of standing up for the wonderful setting that Winchcombe sits within.

We all benefit greatly from a viable sustainable working town.

The town and surrounding AONB countryside brings people to live here as well as visit; by foot, cycle, bus and car.

This makes it important that we encourage our local hospitality and B&B places to stay, as well as making sure there is adequate and suitable parking to encourage use of our local shops and Inns. It is important that we defend the nature of Winchcombe and not strive to replicate mistakenly

development that may have been tried in other Market Towns, without considering impacts on our unique town and existing retailers.

We need a balanced vibrant community. We need to plan for making houses available to a good cross section of our community without being foolish and promising more than we can sustain or deliver. In the end Winchcombe needs to live within its ability to service, every day, the people and the traffic they generate as they go to work and return each evening. We need to make the town and outskirts safer from speeding traffic and reduce the excessive through flow of large lorries using the 'main' roads as a cut through.

Much is spoken about sustainable travel. We are surrounded by hills, and so encouraging cycling for the masses has its limitations. We can encourage it, but in reality we are a car and bus community. We have inadequate bus services to our core centre for health services, Tewkesbury, and bus services to Cheltenham hinder the younger population (and those older as well) from being able to access the social life of Cheltenham as they might wish.

If we choke Winchcombe through insensitive plans and development, for whatever reason, we all lose; including existing and new residents.

Our schools need to be supported so that they are great places to learn, available to the local community and not overcrowded centres with too many students crammed into a finite space.

We need spaces for all the community and this needs consideration so that it is sustainable and really needed.

As a town we need to be strategic in developing how and where we grow, without destroying what makes Winchcombe such a great place to live. We can all remember towns that have been sacrificed to development / regeneration and now bear no resemblance to what originally made them great places to live.