

Great Somerford Parish (incorporating Startley) Neighbourhood Plan

As you will know, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (SG) has recently completed a Parish survey asking Parishioners whether they agreed or disagreed with the Steering Group's recommendation regarding sites to be developed and numbers of houses to be built in Great Somerford. Wiltshire Council previously advised that the SG should recommend sites for development which would provide a total of 33 houses, of which 12 would be affordable homes.

The two September meetings provided valuable feedback to the SG, in particular:

1. The development behind the old police house was considered to be too large – now reduced from 10 houses to 6,
2. The 3 houses in Frog Lane were considered to be excessive – now reduced to 2 houses
3. The Hollow Street development was opposed by many due to narrow road and difficult access – SG did not recommend this development
4. The Dauntsey Road site was opposed as a terrace development of 5 affordable houses – The SG agreed with the landowner a mix of 7 affordable and market value detached properties,
5. Some parishioners recommended development on two open spaces, one opposite the church and the other on the field behind The Close. There is a restrictive covenant on the field opposite the church, so the landowner withdrew. In addition, in the survey conducted earlier last year, and in the most recent consultation, the overall view was that both areas should be kept free of development. For these reasons, the SG did not recommend these sites for development.

Having taken into consideration findings, and actions taken, from previous consultations together with the need to balance the requirement for total and affordable homes, the SG recommended that five sites were considered. These sites are, Seagry Road, Dauntsey Road, Frog Lane, Adjacent to Brook Farm and behind the Old Police House. Earlier this year forms detailing this recommendation were delivered to every house in the Parish requesting Parishioners to state whether they agreed or disagreed with the recommendation of the SG. The results are as follows.

- Households consulted -----326 Great Somerford 274, Startley 52
- Households responding-----141 Great Somerford 135 (49.3%)
- Parishioners responding-----278 including 6 Startley residents
- Parishioners agreeing-----179 (64.4%)
- Parishioners disagreeing-----93 (33.4%) 34 disagreed with the total recommendation, 59 disagreed with one or more of the sites.
- Spoilt papers-----6 (2.2%)

There were a number of comments and questions raised both on the return forms and in previous consultations/correspondence which we will try to address.

- Flooding may be an issue with some sites. Any possibility of flooding will be addressed by experts at the planning stage and preventative measures instigated.
- Increased traffic. The NP will highlight this and request 20mph limits in certain areas.
- There is concern that if building is allowed on certain sites advantage will be taken and further, uncontrolled, building will occur. This is the point of having a NP which will give the village a level of control over what happens.
- Why is there no development in Startley but its residents are allowed to have a say in building in Great Somerford? Startley is officially designated as open countryside and no development is planned there. However, Startley is in the Parish of Great Somerford and residents are officially entitled to contribute to the NP.
- Why do we need any more building at all in Great Somerford considering the large scale development taking place in neighbouring villages? The now approved Wiltshire Core Strategy designates Great Somerford as a “large village”, along with four other villages in the Malmesbury area, and has to share in the extra homes needed in this area of Wiltshire.
- Who will be eligible for the affordable homes? The NP will specify that these will be for current residents of, those wishing return to, or those with relatives in the Parish.
- Who has determined the number of affordable homes needed? The Wiltshire Housing Needs Survey conducted last year, together with advice from the Wiltshire Housing registry identified the required need between now and 2026.
- Why is the Brook Farm development being increased? The original 30 houses planned in this development were already taken into account when the allocation of 33 houses in Great Somerford was decided by Wiltshire Council and so the extra 8 now proposed are the only ones which are allowed to contribute to our target.

The next stage is for the draft NP to undergo a six week period of consultation by the Parish before going to Wiltshire Council for another six week consultation. Following this there will be an independent examination before the final step, which is the Parish referendum. If greater than 50% of those voting in the referendum approve the NP, it will become part of the development plan for Wiltshire, thereby ensuring that the wishes of the majority of our Parishioners are reflected therein.

We realise that it will be impossible to satisfy everyone but we have tried to strike a balance that satisfies the requirements of the Wiltshire Core Strategy and the majority of the residents of the Parish. To this end the sites and house allocations detailed above will be incorporated into the NP and it is only on these sites and houses that the final referendum will be held.

Whether or not to have a NP will be the decision of the Parishioners. With a NP we will have a level of control over where and how much development takes place in Great Somerford. Without a NP we will have very little if any, other than the normal planning process.

I am sure that there are still unanswered questions and/or clarifications needed. To this end we will be holding two consultation sessions in the Community Room of the School on Sunday March 8th. from 10am to 12 noon and on Thursday March 12th. from 7.00 to 9.00 pm. All are welcome.

Sid Jevons (on behalf of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group)