



# A Neighbourhood Development Plan for Sonning

Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> February 2020 – Public Meeting in Pearson Hall

## Introduction – Tony Farnese

- Welcome
- Why have we called this Public Meeting?
  - To introduce the idea of a Neighbourhood Development Plan for Sonning
  - To establish if the community is interested in having a voice in what happens in the Parish
- How this evening will work:
  - The Threat – Trefor Fisher, SPC council
  - The Solution – Jeremy Gilmore, S&SES Executive Member
  - Environmental View – Prof. Alastair Driver, Director of Rewilding Britain, S&SES Exec Member  
*Break for refreshments and informal discussion*
  - Q&A Session  
with SPC: Tony Farnese and Trefor Fisher  
S&SES: Mike Hart, Bob Hine, Alastair Drive, Jeremy Gilmore
  - The Next Steps – Mike Hart & Bob Hine, S&SES Executive

## The Threat – Trefor Fisher

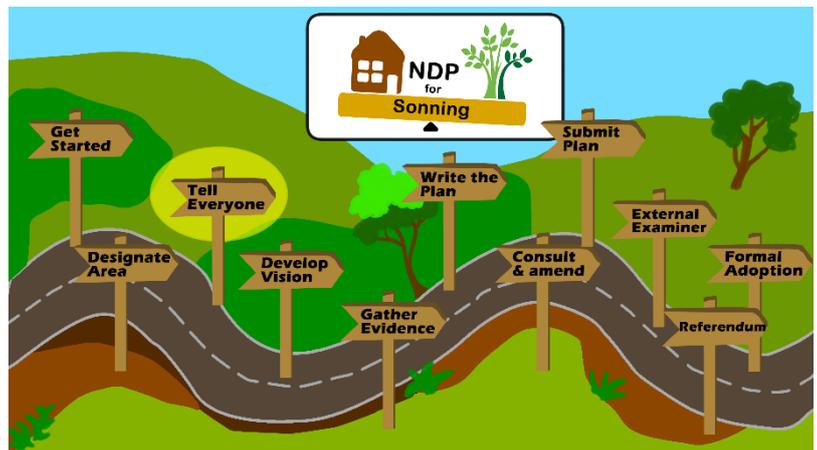
- WBC's Local Plan – “Right Homes, Right Places”
  - Draft Consultation happening now - for the period to 2036
    - Wokingham are planning for 6,500 new homes
    - Grazeley Garden Town – 3,750 (eventually 10,000)
    - 1,350 spread over Wokingham, Winnersh, Charvil, Twyford and Barkham
    - 99 new homes and 9 Gypsy & Traveller pitches across Finchampstead, Hurst, Ruscombe, Shinfield and Sonning
  - One site in Sonning now – show map
    - Land at Sonning Farm – 25 houses
    - Both SPC and SSES recommended that some land is used for a car park
  - Other sites on hold but not forgotten – show map
    - 5 potential sites, with a potential of XXX houses
- Developers
  - WBC's planning people are completely overstretched
  - The Conservation Area Assessment is only advisory
- Other Factors
  - Sustainability
  - Water and Flood Risk
  - Road traffic – car parking/congestion/air quality
  - Respect requirements of local businesses

## The Solution – Jeremy Gilmore

- Neighbourhood Development Plan
  - Will allow us to develop a shared vision for Sonning
  - Will let us propose where new homes, shops, schools, amenities, car parks etc. should be built
  - Will let us define the type and style of housing that is appropriate to our neighbourhood
  - It has a legal standing, will guide the planning authorities on future applications by developers
  - It must go hand in hand with WBC's Local Plan
    - We can say that we are happy to accept the Local Plan's view of development
    - We cannot say we don't want **any** development
    - We could say we want more development
  - It must concern planning but can make mention of traffic etc.
  - Will allow us to promote sustainable development and transport solutions
  - It will help to protect us from opportunistic developers until 2036
  - 25% of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) money (on average £47,000 per new house) will come to SPC (currently 15%)
    - CIL money can help to fund projects like the new pavilion, open spaces, play areas etc.
- Shinfield and Arborfield & Barkham have successfully agreed on NDPs, many others are in development including Eye & Dunsden, Hurst, Twyford, Ruscombe

## The Process of an NDP

- It will take a year or two
- It will need help from all the community
- WBC have been formally notified and must now work with us to ensure it is taken into account within the Local Plan
- Need to determine what is important to our community:
  - Housing
  - Safeguarding Heritage & History
  - Ecology and Landscape
  - Sustainability
  - Traffic
  - Local Businesses and Services
- Questionnaire(s) to build an Evidence Base
- Write Plan
- Consultation and amendments
- External Examination
- Referendum – more than 50% of the vote



## Key environmental issues and opportunities – Prof Alastair Driver

1. What evidence do we have?
  - Conservation Area, listed buildings and gardens and Scheduled Ancient Monuments, Ali's Pond LNR.
  - Phase 1 Habitat Survey 1995.
  - Misc. wildlife data collected by AD.
2. How can we enhance what we have?
  - Opportunities for wildlife corridors – eg. buffer strips in farmland.
  - Possible new habitat creation areas – eg. in association with Reading Uni. Farm, as part of the Glebe Gardens development if that went ahead, or through acquisition of sites like the old disused village sewage treatment works, owned by the EA.
3. What value does our natural and historic environment provide?
  - Ecosystem services eg flood risk, water quality, pollination, carbon sequestration, health and wellbeing, etc.
  - Value of gardens for wildlife habitat, pollinating insects etc.
  - Quality of existing park areas and green spaces.
  - Mature trees.
4. Related planning considerations?
  - Ensure they take account of the knock-on effects of development – eg associated infrastructure, insidious “slippery slope” development, dependency on cars, etc.
  - Encourage renewable energy where appropriate.
  - Designate “valued landscapes” eg the Thames and its immediate corridor and the Sonning Cutting and connected woodland.
  - Decide on whether we want to support infill development or not – bearing in mind the impacts of downsizing gardens.
  - Ensure the design of new developments to be genuinely carbon neutral and to routinely include Sustainable Drainage Schemes (rain gardens etc).
  - Designate Local Green Space – open farmland, woodland and wetland around the western, northern and eastern edges of the village. Fundamental for retaining village status.

### *Break for Discussion and Refreshments*

#### Q & A

SPC: Tony Farnese and Trefor Fisher

S&SES: Mike Hart, Bob Hine, Alastair Driver, Patrick Hamblin and Jeremy Gilmore

#### Summary and Next Steps – Mike Hart & Bob Hine

What have we achieved to date?

- Agreement of the Parish Council and other invested individuals to start down the road and establish if there is a desire for an NDP
- Designation of the Area - in our case everything within the Parish borders
- Dedicated website: SONNING.INFO will be used to share the progress, host copies of the presentations and documents used, email list

What do we need?

- We are looking for anyone from the community who is willing to give of their time. In particular: People with experience of – planning, land management, research projects, infrastructure, heritage & history, ecology, those who worked on the previous CAA, IT (word processing and web site)