

Winslow Neighbourhood Plan review – 2021

Report of initial consultation held February – April 2021

Background

Winslow's current Neighbourhood Plan has influenced development in the town for the past 7 years. With the expected adoption of a new Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP) later in 2021, the Town Council believes that the Neighbourhood Plan needs to be reviewed and revised to maintain its effectiveness as a Planning Policy framework for the parish. It has set up a Winslow Neighbourhood Plan (WNP) Review Steering Group to take this forward.

Between February and early April 2021 an initial consultation took place following Covid-secure procedures to gain an understanding of the issues which were of concern to those who live or work in Winslow, or have other connections with the town. About 2500 copies of a two-sided folded A3-leaflet "A plan for Winslow to 2033 – updating the town's Neighbourhood Plan" were circulated to all residential and business premises in the town, and to others with a known interest in the town's Neighbourhood Plan. Recipients were invited to respond, using a paper form that accompanied the leaflet, on-line, by e-mail or by letter.

A total of over 250 responses were received during or immediately after the consultation period, and these included more than 1000 different comments, many of which raised more than one issue. These have been analysed to form the basis of this report. Most of the responses were from residents of the town (some from individuals and others from households) whilst the rest came from businesses, developers or non-resident property owners. The steering group was very pleased with the number and quality of the responses submitted, and with the variety of the suggestions respondents made.

The consultation was designed to measure the level of support for and opposition to the steering group's suggestions, but more importantly to stimulate ideas – and that hope has been borne out by the number of respondents and the diversity of their responses. This report reflects on all of the points raised by consultees, but it cannot deal with every one of the different nuances found within the responses. The WNP Review Steering Group will, of course, have access to all of the individual responses and will be able to explore them in more detail as they find to be necessary.

However, as was indicated in the consultation leaflet, the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) can only deal with matters that are material to the planning of development within the town – and it also has to conform with the adopted district local plan (which, during 2021, will become the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan – VALP). This means that some concerns raised in responses to the consultation cannot be taken on board in the NP either because they would conflict with policies set out in VALP, or because the issues are not ones which are material to the planning of the town. Nevertheless, even those issues that cannot feature in the NP will be considered carefully by Winslow Town Council (WTC), to see what action it can take to address them.

As will be seen from the report below, there were several issues that were clearly significant for many respondents and these will be given careful consideration in the preparation of a draft revised WNP, on which further consultation will take place later in 2021.

In this report, the issues on which the consultation focussed are dealt with in the order in which they appeared in the response form. The steering group has identified the matters which appear to be of

greatest concern, and in the concluding section of the report it sets out what those matters are. It will now consider carefully how they are to be addressed – by changing the proposals, or by strengthening or removing them, if that is possible. But as indicated already, some issues cannot, or should not, be addressed in a Neighbourhood Plan.

General issues

Whilst several respondents commented positively on the quality of the plan as outlined in the consultation leaflet, others felt that the plan was old-fashioned and disappointing, or that it showed no long-term vision. In particular, some respondents were complimentary about its approach to the need for growth, whilst others commented negatively on the scale of growth expected in the town. Many were opposed to the projected development between Great Horwood Road and the railway line, and several expressed fears that the expected growth will engulf a fantastic market town, with an adverse impact on the nature of the town and its community.

Some respondents recognised that the NP depends on the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and in VALP, and that the NP cannot itself deliver anything – that depends on Buckinghamshire Council, the NHS and others, as well as property developers. Others felt that the plan was responding to the needs of Buckinghamshire Council and developers as landowners, rather than the needs of the Winslow community.

Some questioned whether the proposals for the NP took account of changes in society that have been brought about by the pandemic, and whether the proposals are likely to be affordable post-pandemic. The most significant issue that the pandemic has highlighted is the importance of green space, walking routes, and leisure provision. Of particular concern was the perceived shortage of areas where dogs could be allowed to run off the lead. One respondent specifically complained about the lack of spaces (indoors and outdoors) where dog training can take place, as this is not currently available in Winslow.

One suggestion was that Home Close (opposite Winslow Hall) is an area that could be acquired to provide much needed green space for the town.

Some questioned how the s106 money collected from new developments (for “local sport and leisure facilities determined by the [Buckinghamshire] Council in accordance with community needs as identified in the [Buckinghamshire Council’s] SPG [Supplementary Planning Guidance]”) is to be spent – on what facilities and where. And a number of respondents commented on the lack of a meeting place and recreational opportunities for teenagers and young people in particular.

Housing

One of the key responses to the consultation was a view that the scale of housing included in the proposals was too great, and the numbers were not justified. As noted above, the number of new dwellings is that set out in VALP which the NP is required to accommodate.

The VALP-allocated site for at least 315 houses east of Great Horwood Road attracted support as well as opposition. Specific concern was expressed about its impact on traffic on Great Horwood Road and therefore on its junction with Buckingham Road. More generally, several respondents expressed misgivings about the concentration of development to the north of the town, and how this will create traffic congestion not only in the immediate area but along the High Street.

Several respondents commented adversely about the choice of sites for housing, the strongest and most frequent criticism being of the proposal that about 75 houses should be constructed on the rugby field (although this allocation is within the current NP).

The housing allocation for the Station Road business park site (which, again, is in the current NP) was also criticised by some, primarily because of the additional traffic it will generate on local roads, but several other respondents thought the replacement of the industrial units on the site by housing was a positive move. No residents supported the proposal (already submitted by a developer) that the allocation of the vacant land adjacent to Sir Thomas Fremantle School and the new railway station should be changed from industrial to housing, a proposal to which WTC has already objected.

There were few suggestions of alternative sites where housing might be located, although a couple of respondents mentioned the site between Little Horwood Road and Shipton as a possibility (one arguing that it would bring greater balance to the town than development to the north) while others were firmly against development there or at Glebe Farm (south of Verney Road).

There were also conflicting comments – “spread new housing across the town” says one, whilst “constant infill should be stopped” says another.

The mix of housing was also a matter about which several respondents commented – but not consistently. Whilst some felt the proposed mix was good, some others said there was too much, and yet others that there was not enough, social and affordable housing in the proposals. A theme of several respondents was the absence of open-market apartments to meet the needs of young homeowners (particularly those who might be attracted to the area by the train service) and bungalows-with-gardens for elderly downsizers – with the expectation that providing such housing types would help to free up existing housing stock for families.

Housing layouts and design came in for several comments, many of which reflected dissatisfaction with what has been built recently in the Glade and Grange areas. Criticisms from those areas related to the narrow roads, inadequately sized parking spaces, insufficient on-street parking, the small size of private gardens, and the lack of public open space suitable for walking, playing and exercising dogs. The implicit request was for new housing to be at a lower density in order to address these criticisms, and there was a suggestion that some additional allotment plots should be provided alongside new houses.

In terms of housing design features, there were several comments about the need to make better provision for working from home, and having good internet connections; and several respondents suggested that all houses should have solar photovoltaic panels, solar hot water systems and electric vehicle charging points at each house (or in communal parking blocks), and that all homes should have bike storage spaces.

And arising from the new housing developments there were concerns about there being adequate capacity in local schools, particularly the secondary school which many see as being too small, but which would be without the scope to expand if the adjacent land is taken up for other employment uses. There were also comments about the lack of sports facilities directly linked to the secondary school.

Employment

A wide range of responses was generated by the section on employment, and it was hard to find a particularly strong theme to them.

Some respondents accepted that Winslow at present has a significant net deficit of employment for its residents, so the town has a poor sustainability score. This was seen to justify the provisions suggested for new employment sites in the town adjacent to the station (as in the current NP), on land at Redfield (a relocation of an allocation in the existing NP) and as a re-development of existing workshop units at Tinkers End (for which a planning application is anticipated very soon).

However other respondents felt that Winslow was naturally a commuter town for jobs in Milton Keynes, Buckingham and Aylesbury (as well as further afield) – and the railway will make commuting more attractive. Others felt that the railway would encourage firms to locate in Winslow, particularly on the site adjacent to the station. But there was also a suggestion that post-pandemic there will be a change of working practices, making conventional employment sites less relevant – and suggesting that Winslow should focus on growing local employment in the education, leisure, hospitality and amenities sectors.

There were several suggestions that Winslow needed to keep jobs local, some arguing that efforts should be made to increase employment by making the town centre more vibrant – maybe arts and crafts studios, or hot desking hubs as an alternative for home working employees. Others, however, were concerned that increasing the level of employment in the town would have a negative impact on Winslow’s “small market town” vibe.

There were questions about whether Winslow would ever attract new employment, given that the site by the new railway station has been vacant for many years and that the Station Road business park has been in decline over the same period. For those who supported the idea of providing for new employment, there were diverse views about what sort of employment should be accommodated – a large site for a large employer, or small workshop units suitable for local businesses and (if the price is right) start-ups. Several respondents commented that, whatever the employment, it needs to be sustainable through using green energy.

The NP should, some suggested, promote diversity by attracting creative and innovative businesses, and the steering group should explore what employment sectors would be best for the town and what impact they could have.

In terms of sites for employment, again views were mixed. Some supported the existing allocation adjacent to the station, whilst others felt it was unsafe to have employment next to the school – and unwise to hem in the school so it could not expand when this became necessary. If it were possible to do so, there was a suggestion that this site should be restricted to office, light-industry, sports, leisure or medical uses. The site for employment development at Redfield was also supported by some and opposed by others, with the negative considerations being that it would be an unattractive gateway to the town, it would be an unsuitable neighbour for the historic house at Redfield, and that it would involve development on more green fields.

Retail

Yet again this topic generated a wide variety of often inconsistent responses.

There were respondents who wanted the High Street kept as it is, and who saw little need for expansion of the current retail offer, whilst there were others who felt there was insufficient retail in the town for the current community.

A few suggested that the town could do with a small (or, in the view of some, large) supermarket, possibly adjacent to the station, in addition to the recently-enlarged Co-op and other stores, as this would not only create jobs in the town but also reduce the need for residents to travel for food shopping. But others felt – in some cases strongly – that no additional supermarket was necessary.

In terms of premises there were questions about the quality and suitability of current High Street buildings for modern shops. But there was also a wish to try to avoid the conversion of long-established shops into housing.

Several respondents praised Winslow's food shops and its Wednesday market and monthly Farmers' Market. In respondents' wish lists mention was made of an enhanced Post Office, a bank, more eating and drinking places, and a branded coffee shop, along with more excellent food shops and more variety to the shops available. It was suggested that there was a need to incentivise existing traders to stay in Winslow as well as to attract new traders to the town. Residents need to be persuaded to "shop local" – and there was a suggestion that rail users should be encouraged to shop in the town.

Some (but not all) saw parking to be a key issue to support retail trade – with a wish to see free parking maintained, at least for the first hour or two, and a suggestion that signing of parking spaces in the town needs to be improved. However, some argued that longer-stay parking needs to be discouraged to make space for shoppers.

Facilities for the town's residents

Heart of Winslow

A large number of those responding to this section of the consultation were unhappy with the Town Council's proposal to create a new children's playground in Tomkins Park & Arboretum as a replacement for the existing playground adjacent to Elmfields Gate on the recreation ground. The principal reason for the opposition appears to be the expectation that this would conflict with the quiet ambience of Tomkins Park which has been particularly appreciated over the past year of lock-down. However there was also a doubt cast about the playground being located in Tomkins Park because of the area's poor drainage. Some questioned the need for additional parking provision, and the rationale for moving the playground to make way for it.

Many of the responses offered further comments related to the replacement playground :

- Choose its location in Tomkins Park with care for the trees and the area's aesthetics
- Relocate it elsewhere on the recreation ground
- It must be at least as good as the existing one, and fenced to keep dogs out
- It should be locked at night to prevent vandalism and other anti-social acts
- Make sure the replacement is opened before the old one is closed.

Despite the criticism of the playground proposals, several responses were supportive of the general plans to enhance community provision, and for this to happen in the centre of the town. There was some recognition that the proposals made by the Town Council make the best of a difficult situation,

but it was also suggested that perhaps there was a lack of long-term ambition in these plans. Some respondents commented that the Heart of Winslow can be a long walk from parts of the town for those with disability, the elderly or those with young children – for whom more dispersed provision of play areas and green spaces is also needed (with these comments particularly related to the west of the A413 where it's felt that green spaces are very limited).

In relation to the Public Hall, there was a suggestion that it was too small – and there were questions about whether it could be made two-storey, or rebuilt (perhaps in a larger complex encompassing the Bowls Club and Royal British Legion hall site).

One response questioned whether the Town Council's offices at 28 High Street could be more of a community facility.

There were several questions raised about the future of the existing recreation ground – which is leased long-term to the Sports Club and accommodates Football, Cricket and Croquet (as well as the adult gymnasium equipment). Suggestions were made that the cricket ground should be made available for local schools to use, and that the cricket outfield should be freely available for public use when cricket matches are not being played. One response questioned why the recreation ground had to be locked when a football match is being played. Others made suggestions that the football and/or cricket and/or croquet should be relocated to the new sports hub to free up the Sports Club's land for parking and other purposes.

The proposals for a building to accommodate a new sports club and community hall on the recreation ground generated a number of comments. One asked whether there was a need for a community hall in addition to the existing Public Hall, and another questioned whether these two halls would be in competition with each other. With the new community hall being in the same building as the Sports Club it will be important to ensure it is not perceived as being only available to sports organisations. In terms of details, there was a wish to see the streetscape of Elmfields Gate improved, particularly by removing the fencing, and there was concern about the potential for noise and light pollution from the additional parking spaces affecting nearby housing.

Other comments included requests for bike racks at the public halls, and for decent accessible toilets near parks and sports facilities.

Sports Hub

Responses to the proposals for a Sports Hub were predominantly supportive, though a few questioned the need for it, on the ground that existing sports facilities in the town are already underused. However more generally there was a wish to see more detail of what is being proposed.

There were suggestions of alternative ways of providing for sports – such as keeping sports on the existing Winslow Centre site, or using the land adjacent to the railway station for sports.

Some respondents were concerned about safe access to the proposed Sports Hub, particularly for pedestrians crossing Great Horwood Road, and others that it was too far away for some older residents to get to. There was also a suggestion it would contribute to traffic congestion in the area.

Some thought the site was too big, others that it was not big enough and had no room for expansion.

Suggestions of additional features that the Sports Hub should offer included a ball-kicking area, a skate park and other interesting activities for young people, a multi-use games area (MUGA), a 3G

pitch and a full-sized croquet lawn. There were requests for it to include an indoor room for martial arts on a matted area, and also suggestions that a swimming pool would be good.

Others suggested that the area should be landscaped with publicly accessible paths suitable for dog walking, maybe with a small lake and a café – and even a sculpture trail was suggested.

There was concern about the potentially adverse impact on neighbouring houses of any floodlighting and evening noise – and criticism that the proposal will involve a loss of green space and farmland, and have an adverse impact on wildlife.

There was concern about how the Hub would be managed and that it might be a private rather than public facility, with high user charges.

Winslow Centre

Three principal concerns arose from these proposals

- A new Health Centre is seen as being the top priority for the town as the existing facilities are no longer fit for purpose and already have insufficient capacity to meet demand.
- A wish for a large public area of usable green space to be provided, primarily in response to a perceived shortage of green space for housing built recently to the west in the Glade and Grange areas.
- Difficulties of vehicular access to and from the site via Avenue Road and/or Park Road, with no alternative vehicular access routes apparently being considered.

A new Health Centre

For the proposed Health Centre it was felt that just having a site allocated in the NP was not sufficient – there needs to be a commitment from the NHS and the 3W Health practice to make it happen very soon. There were questions about whether new development was being asked to pay for it, and some lack of confidence that 3W Health supported it. There were some who felt that Norden House and the existing Health Centre could be refurbished to meet the requirements. And there were questions about the future of those two buildings if the new Health Centre is to be built on the Winslow Centre site.

Several respondents said that the new Health Centre must be fully accessible, and supported by adequate provision for car parking.

If it was not possible to site the Health Centre in this location, then alternative sites suggested included one adjacent to the railway station, or one in a more central location in town (on the existing football pitch), or even (with the Library) on a site alongside Little Horwood Road.

The Community Library

Whilst there was support for retaining a library at the Winslow Centre, some suggested that a site in the town centre (such as the now vacant bank building) would be preferable to make the library more accessible and add to footfall in the town centre. There was no suggestion of there being any close links between the library and other proposals for the Winslow Centre site. Other sites suggested for a library were at the Sports Hub or in a new community centre (presumably implying on a site within the Heart of Winslow area) or (with a health centre) alongside Little Horwood Road.

There were many comments that the existing library did not need to be reprovisioned on the site as the existing building is perfectly good. However if a new library were to be built at this location, it should include a café and a meeting space.

Extra-care accommodation

Support for this aspect of the proposals was subject to several caveats. Some thought that too many units were being proposed, whilst others saw the benefit of aiming for about 85 units. There was a suggestion that such accommodation would be much better spread in smaller units through the community rather than in a single development.

[Note: Some respondents asked for clarification of the meaning of “extra care housing”. It is also known as assisted living, and is a type of “housing with care” in which the occupant retains independence while being able to access assistance with tasks such as washing, dressing, going to the toilet or taking medication. VALP is expected to include a requirement for 83 extra-care units to be built on part of this site.]

Other issues with the Winslow Centre site

There were many responses suggesting that the Rugby Pitch and/or parts of the Winslow Centre site should be allocated as green space, particularly for residents of the Glade and Grange housing areas. Some suggested a small community hub might be possible, and any green space here should provide for dog exercising and walking. An additional children’s play area, and possibly a community garden area, were also suggested, as well as a MUGA.

The suggestion of having a full-sized Croquet lawn attracted both support and opposition. Those supporting it noted that it would need access to toilets and somewhere in which visiting teams could be provided with teas (a synergy with a café in the library, perhaps). Those opposing it thought that it would not be the most appropriate use for any green space when there is a need in the area for more active recreation space, noting there was already a croquet lawn (though not full-sized) on the recreation ground or that there must be an opportunity for croquet to be provided for at the Sports Hub.

Comments were made that the development of this area would be unsustainable, that it would displace wildlife from the area, and that environmental improvements were necessary such as a communal pond and wildlife-friendly green spaces. There was also some concern about what impact the proposals might have on the residential amenity of neighbouring properties.

Site Access difficulties

This was clearly a significant concern to a lot of respondents, and not only to those who live in Avenue Road and Park Road. Only two responses suggested potential ways of delivering an alternative access route to the site, though each would raise other problems.

Traffic and Transport

The Rail Station

There was broad support for the restoration of the railway and the construction of the new station – notwithstanding concerns about the need to undertake significant environmental mitigation for the evident loss of trees and wildlife habitats that has happened along the route. It was suggested that

the station's environmental credentials could be much improved if solar panels were installed on the car park.

A key issue of concern is the need for adequate reasonably-priced parking on site, alongside space for passengers to be dropped and picked-up, and for taxis and buses to serve the station. This will need to be accompanied by measures to prevent rail user parking in residential or town centre areas, or on the verges of roads.

There was also concern about the ability to increase parking provision in future should this be required, and a suggestion that at least part of the existing EWR construction compound on Furze Lane be retained as a potential overflow car park.

Facilities suggested for location near the station included a coffee shop, a small supermarket, and a children's nursery.

There was concern that the plan to run trains to/from Aylesbury had disappeared from the immediate proposals and this needed to be challenged.

There was still a question about whether the line will be electrified, and there was concern that the route may be used by heavy freight trains overnight generating disturbance for those living near the line.

Town centre parking

Opinions about town centre parking were quite divided – some thinking more parking capacity is needed (particularly to help retail businesses prosper), whilst others suggesting that there was already sufficient provision.

The plans for 50 extra spaces to support the proposed combined Sports Club and community hall on the Recreation Ground, that would also provide additional capacity for town centre users when not otherwise required, also divided opinions.

However there are few realistic options to provide more parking in the town centre. One suggestion was to make Greyhound Lane a multi-storey car park, whilst others suggested parking that is more distant from the town centre – at the Winslow Centre, at Norden House, at Piccadilly or on the edge of the town.

At the same time, there were suggestions for more parking controls – particularly on Elmfields Gate between High Street and Cricketers Row. Concerns about parking problems on Sheep Street and Horn Street were also mentioned, with the possibility of the need for a residents' parking scheme in those areas. There was also a suggestion that parking should not be permitted in Market Square to make that into a public space. Others suggested that enforcement of existing restrictions should be increased, and pavement parking prohibited.

Retention of a free period for short-stay parking was seen to be important, but charging for longer-stay users was suggested as a way of making more spaces available for those wanting to do business in the centre. It was also suggested that some High Street parking could be prohibited at peak times to reduce traffic congestion.

Within all the town's car parks there should be disabled and family spaces as well as spaces equipped with charging points for electric vehicles.

Cycleways and paths

Footpaths are recognised as being a strong feature of Winslow's townscape – and creating more of them and having more cycleways was broadly welcomed. A suggestion was made for trying to establish a Winslow Greenway by connecting together green pathways. The proposals for a cycle route link with Great Horwood that does not run alongside the existing road was seen as good – but creating a circular cycle route in some way would be even better. Looking further to the future, cycle routes to Granborough and even Aylesbury were suggested.

However there was criticism that cycleways are expensive, need to be maintained, and the existing ones are not well used. Parts of the Winslow – Bletchley cycleway have become muddy and need maintenance, whilst the section of this route through the Public Hall and Greyhound Lane car parks is said never to be used. There was also concern about the roadside nature of the Winslow – Buckingham route which makes it a safety risk for young and inexperienced cyclists.

There was a suggestion that rural cycleways (such as Winslow – Buckingham) should have path lighting. And cycle racks are needed in the town centre.

Turning to footpaths, there were several comments about the need to extend the path northwards alongside the A413 from STFS to the allotments, and also to find a way to provide a footpath alongside Furze Lane.

On Great Horwood Road, there was a request for a path to connect with the existing older houses west of the road, whilst the new houses to the east of Great Horwood Road should also have a foot and cycle route into Winslow under the railway near The Spinney if at all possible.

It was suggested that the NP should include a plan of all paths, walkways and green spaces including the ones that will be reopened after the railway construction works are finished.

Traffic-related issues

Many commented that traffic volumes in the town are already high and include significant numbers of heavy lorries as well as farm machinery which create congestion through the narrow parts of the High Street, Sheep Street and Horn Street. The need to conserve the historic heart of the town, to promote its retail centre and improve its pedestrian environment indicates the need for some form of by-pass route. Some noted that it was disappointing that the previously proposed relief road from Piccadilly to Little Horwood Road had been abandoned more than 20 years ago, as it is now needed. Concern was expressed about the level of traffic generated by an enlarged Winslow also having an impact on Great Horwood and Little Horwood in particular, as well as on the usage of the A413 both north and south.

It was recognised that the scale of development proposed will also involve significant construction traffic over the coming years, whilst the occupation of the new developments will inevitably increase traffic on certain routes such as the A413, Great Horwood Road, Furze Lane, Station Road and Lowndes Way.

Many respondents anticipate significant traffic problems arising at the Great Horwood Road, George Pass Avenue and Furze Lane junctions with the A413 – with various suggestions for roundabouts or traffic signals being put forward. These issues are compounded by the pedestrian, cycle and vehicular traffic generated by the school at opening and closing times, and will be further exacerbated by traffic generated by the railway station and the employment sites proposed in this area. This needs a comprehensive solution, not just piecemeal tweaks to the traffic arrangements.

Measures to slow traffic on the northern A413 approach to the town were suggested including extending the speed limit to the allotments north of Furze Lane. Some even suggested that a 20mph limit should be applied to all roads in the town, whilst others suggested that more enforcement is needed of existing speed limits.

There was criticism of the absence of space for cars delivering and picking up children at Sir Thomas Fremantle School.

Roads in the Grange and Glade areas are considered to be too narrow and parking spaces there too small, providing lessons for all future housing development sites. There was also a wish to see Furze Lane bridge widened.

For pedestrians there is a general plea to improve the condition of pavements, which are very uneven, so that walking in the town is a more attractive option. Concern was expressed at the poor arrangements for pedestrians crossing the petrol station forecourt, and at the lack of pedestrian crossings on Burleys Road, Verney Road and Elmfields Gate.

Bus services are currently thought to be inadequate, with buses often full at peak times and unreliable. There is a need for more buses to discourage car use. Measures should be adopted that will encourage maximum use of walking, cycling and public transport.

One respondent put in a plea for the plan not to ignore bridleways, whilst another respondent suggested that the NP should consider the traffic and parking implications of autonomous vehicles and even delivery robots.

Settlement boundary

[Note: several respondents commented about apparent errors or omissions in the map which appeared in the consultation leaflet. The western edge of the settlement boundary runs along Furze Lane, and not to the side. There is an unfortunate inaccuracy at the south-western corner; the proposed settlement boundary continues to exclude Glebe Farm and runs past the rear of the gardens to the houses in Langley Close. The southern section, including part of Granborough Road, was omitted for reasons of space: no change to the existing boundary is proposed in that section.]

Many respondents recognised the importance the settlement boundary has on controlling where local development can take place. Extending the boundary only in the North of the town was broadly welcomed by most respondents, though some would prefer to resist these changes. Several commented on how the feel of the small market town might be lost, whilst others were concerned about the loss of farmland (and in one case, specifically the loss of some of the few remaining ridge-and-furrow fields in the area).

Some respondents, however, thought that the boundary should be extended further (with suggestions of Glebe Farm, or west of Furze Lane) in the hope that this would allow more green space within the town.

Among other comments, there was a suggestion that extending the boundary could lead to potential ribbon development, and another noting that the town centre would no longer be in the middle of the town. There was a plea that the boundary must not be allowed to creep ever further outwards and a thought that it was really meaningless as it can and will be changed again in the future.

Environmental policies

There was a wide range of responses on this topic :

- No special measures needed
- Don't drop environmental policies for sustainability and tackling climate change
- Be bold and brave and go beyond national standards (eg Wildlife Trust standards)
- Set up comprehensive environmental monitoring.

It was suggested that WTC should provide information about best practice in biodiversity, energy efficiency and carbon reduction, and should help to turn climate emergency declarations into actions.

As suggested above, all new developments including the railway station should be equipped with electric car-charging points – for houses this should be at each house or each parking space. All houses should be fitted with solar panels and should use air-source heat pumps for central heating. One response suggested that a wind turbine should be installed at Redfield – make Winslow unique!

Lost wildlife habitats need to be replaced elsewhere. It was suggested that the number of trees in the town should be increased, with street-side trees and a tree canopy policy for all new developments. Swift bricks, bat boxes, hedgehog highways and wildlife corridors should be promoted, along with the use of green walls and permeable driveways.

Human well-being should be a key target, for which the preservation of existing green spaces and the creation of new ones in association with new developments is important.

The historic core of the town needs to be conserved and promoted.

Someone asked if we are sure there is sufficient capacity at the local sewage treatment works to handle the flows from extra development without risking pollution incidents?

Matters to be omitted from the revised WNP

Whilst most of those responding were content for the suggested sections to be omitted from the revised WNP, there were some who variously wanted the NP still to include a Local Green Spaces policy, a Children's Nursery policy, a Community Land Trust policy, an Assets of Community Vale policy and a policy seeking a larger supermarket.

Other responses noted that housing seems to get priority over everything else, and one (reassuringly) that it is still possible to rely on the wisdom of town councillors.

Other issues raised in responses

Issues not referred to in the consultation

Concerns about the housing proposals for the Oxford-Cambridge arc even though the expressway has been cancelled.

Is it possible for the secondary school to expand to meet growing local need?

Could the town council look out for land to buy as open green space?

Post Covid there is a need to look again at the adequacy of recreation spaces within the town.

The Government's White Paper in 2020 and other guidance from the Government has stressed the importance it is attaching to Design Codes, and has suggested that communities' NPs could or should concentrate on this aspect. In view of this it was suggested that it might be advisable to obtain expert help to deliver a Design Code for Winslow.

Process-related matters

A range of complimentary comments were submitted :

- Good attempt to make the best of what's available.
- I applaud the work that has been done ... current WNP has served us well ... important to have a revised WNP following set-up of the new Local Plan.
- the WNP seems to support what we need.
- thank you for your hard work which balances the needs of our town.
- in line with national proposals for Neighbourhood Plans.

However there were also many more cautious general comments :

- It is limited to what you can do – if the County or Government want something different we won't stand a chance.
- an odd time to revise the plan as the pandemic has brought a period of unexpected change to how many people live their lives.
- important to have a plan that looks at the longer term needs of the town, but it must be constantly revised ... it needs to be a dynamic document.
- more complex issues than can be described on four pages of A4.
- greater definition and clarity would make interpreting, understanding and potentially agreeing to the plan easier.
- to draw up a plan for the future ... so soon is not correct. I think many people ... will be asking for more time.
- We wholeheartedly supported the original WNP but wonder if it is really worthwhile when it so obviously needs a drastic update only 7 years later, and before many of the original proposals have even been implemented.

There were also pleas for more radical thinking :

- think outside the box. Think of others rather than self-interest and preservation. Look at what is wrong with the social fabric today This is an uninspiring plan which... is not there to serve the needs of those that use [the town] but of those whose land it sits on and the construction companies who build it.
- Now is an opportunity to propose ambitious plans to provide for the long term future rather than piecemeal changes to existing outdated infrastructure (Public Hall).
- Too restrictive with no foresight.
- It needs more focus on the young, economic regeneration and growth.
- It would be good to see more experience and expertise brought in to support the development of this plan ... to make Winslow not only a nice place to live but also an active community where people can engage in sport and physical activity easily The lean towards employment feels outdated and perhaps represents the age and views of the town council members rather than the population and newer residents.

- The revisions largely accept the reduction of Winslow to a giant housing estate and railway car park, and don't include much for revitalising the town with more employment, more shops and more visitors to one of the most attractive and interesting town centres in Bucks.
- The biggest change to Winslow in many years is the return of the railway but this is not considered in the plan.
- Town is growing disproportionately towards a social and affordable demographic. Crime is increasing.
- Be prepared for challenges from developers wanting other areas designated [for housing]
- Where will development take place after 2033?
- Understandable that Winslow may wish to do only a minor update to align [its NP] with the VALP. However an alternative approach would be to proactively grasp the opportunity to develop a longer term vision and seize the initiative on strategic growth that will inevitably be part of the Buckinghamshire Local Plan.
- We need to fight some of these government proposals made by people who have an agenda and do not live in these places.

Conclusions and steering group comments

This document presents a structured summary of most if not all of the individual points made in responses to the recent consultation. As one response noted, the scope of the proposals is much more than could be fully described on just four pages of A4 in the consultation leaflet – but as a first consultation, it is reasonably clear what are the most significant local concerns that the Neighbourhood Plan Review Steering Group need to consider in detail.

Some respondents expressed surprise that the NP needed to be revised “so soon” after the existing one was made, while others were frustrated by the lack of ambition and longer-term vision in the proposals. The legislation expects NPs to be updated every five years or so (and ours has already lasted seven years since it was made). Once VALP is adopted, it will become the most recent and, for that reason, most important, planning policy document for the area – and the existing NP will lose influence in any planning decision making. It is therefore necessary to update the NP as soon as possible after adoption of VALP for it to become the most recent policy document, and thereby regain its influence and weight in planning decisions within Winslow.

We know already that a further revision to the NP will be required once the Buckinghamshire Local Plan is adopted (expected in 2025) which will set longer-term requirements for development throughout Buckinghamshire. By then changes in planning law are likely to have been introduced and to have made a significant change to the context of NPs, and hopefully there will be much greater clarity about proposals for development across the Oxford – Cambridge Arc. So the current review of the NP is deliberately only intended to be a minor review of the existing NP.

The one topic on which there was unanimity among all those who commented on it was the need for the preservation of, and if possible increase in, the green space available in and near the town. Many were hostile, in particular, to the plan to build on the rugby pitch. Other topics on which there were numerous comments, though they were not unanimous – and in some cases there were widely divergent views – were:

- the number of new houses Winslow is expected to accommodate, and the consequent increase in traffic;
- the nature and scale of the retail offering in the town;
- whether Winslow should aim to provide employment for its residents or become a dormitory town;
- whether the sites allocated for employment are appropriate;
- the parking and traffic pressure the new station will bring with it, and whether there should be more parking provision in the town centre;
- the facilities which will be provided at the station;
- the proposed move of the children’s playground into Tomkins Park;
- the plans for the Winslow Centre, and in particular the future healthcare provision;
- the proposals for the Heart of Winslow;
- the detail of what is to be provided at the Sports Hub; and
- that Winslow should set high environmental standards.

Some respondents will be disappointed that some of their specific comments cannot be taken into account because they stray onto matters which are outside the scope of a Neighbourhood Plan. Nevertheless such comments are helpful in pointing the Town Council to other issues which are of concern within the community.

Many respondents whose comments were against the scale of housing growth, or the allocation of housing to particular sites, will be frustrated that these are not matters that a revised WNP can take on board. Seven years ago the community of Winslow adopted its first NP with an overwhelming vote of support at a referendum – and the allocations of land in that NP can only be changed if there is a very material change in circumstances within the town. There have been no such big changes, and therefore the allocations of land in the existing NP will remain substantially unchanged in the revised NP. In particular, the allocation in the current NP of the rugby pitch for about 75 houses cannot be changed by simply amending the NP; such a change can come about only if the landowner requests it, or there is a material change in the planning context.

The most significant change proposed to the allocations in the current NP is the addition of housing on land east of Great Horwood Road (identified in VALP as WIN001), where VALP specifies that at least 315 homes should be built. The allocation has been considered at a public inquiry, following which it was confirmed, and it is not now possible for WTC or local residents to change it, for example by omitting it from the new NP. Since the NP initial consultation took place, Buckinghamshire Council has concluded that they are minded to grant the two outline planning applications which cover the WIN001 site (subject to conditions). However, for procedural reasons a further consultation has to take place before these decisions can be confirmed.

The other significant change is the enlarging of the site allocated for a Sports Hub, and the relocation of the business park allocation, to the west of Great Horwood Road – brought about following Buckinghamshire Council's detailed review of the originally proposed site which it found to be too small to accommodate the sports it has to relocate there alongside the necessary protection of a significant wildlife reserve in the middle of the site.

The steering group understands that Buckinghamshire Council (BC) will be publishing and consulting on its proposals very soon. The fundamental requirement is for BC to make, as a minimum, like-for-like provision for those sports facilities that will be displaced from the Winslow Centre site – a move endorsed by the policies in the current NP. It is not possible at present for the steering group to respond to other comments about the site, save to say that WTC has already indicated to BC that it wishes to invest in a skate park and, if possible, other facilities for younger residents though some (for example a youth club) might be more suitably accommodated in the Heart of Winslow.

Development of the Winslow Centre site is also part of the current NP, but some of the detail has evolved over the past 7 years. It is clear that there is considerable concern about access to and from this site, however, and this needs to be resolved before any development takes place there.

The most important aspect of the proposals is to allocate a site for a new Health Centre – and to find a way to ensure that it is implemented as soon as possible given the inadequacy of the current premises at Norden House and the adjacent health centre. However, the NP can do no more than allocate space for health provision. WTC cannot provide health facilities, or specify what is provided; that is the province of the NHS. Fortunately the landowner, Buckinghamshire Council, has indicated that it is willing to make a suitable site available, and it is already in discussions with the local Clinical Commissioning Group in the NHS and with 3W Health, both of whose support for this development will be essential.

Retention of a Community Library in the town is also important – but it is clear that there could be benefits if it were to be located in the town centre rather than at the Winslow Centre site, and this option will be discussed with Buckinghamshire Council.

The provision of extra care accommodation on the Winslow Centre site appears to be accepted with some understanding why it is now set to provide about 85 units rather than the 30 previously anticipated.

Alongside all this there is pressure to ensure there is a significant allocation of usable open green space for recreational purposes on the Winslow Centre site, alongside the maintenance, enhancement and extension of the wildlife zone that lies between it and the rugby pitch.

The Town Council's proposals for enhanced community facilities in the Heart of Winslow area have been reached only after extensive consideration of all achievable options. However, while there is broad support for the proposals, it is clear that more have expressed opposition to the proposed relocation of the children's play area into Tomkins Park than have expressed support for it. The Council has already asked its architects to look yet again at whether there are any other ways of achieving the goals that have been set for providing better community facilities in this area.

At the time of the consultation the plans for improving the Public Hall had not been finalised – but these have now been published in a planning application submitted to Buckinghamshire Council. The advice the Council received was that a more ambitious project – adding a second storey, demolition and replacement or a scheme combining two or more of the buildings around the existing car park – would be prohibitively expensive, and these ideas have not been pursued.

The driver for the new children's playground to replace the existing one, leaving space for extra car parking, is that no new or extended community building will be permitted if it does not provide sufficient additional parking spaces to meet its own needs. The additional parking is a requirement of the planning rules, and cannot be avoided. The only available space near to the Sports Club large enough to accommodate the required parking spaces is the site of the playground. Some respondents suggested alternative sites for parking, but they are all too remote, too small or unavailable to WTC. Further detail of WTC's proposals for the provision of additional and enhanced community facilities will be published in the near future.

On-street and some off-street parking is controlled by BC, as the highway authority, and it also owns the Market Square and Greyhound Lane off-street car parks; WTC makes an annual payment to BC so that parking at Greyhound Lane remains free of charge. The Public Hall car park is owned by WTC. It will remain WTC's policy that adequate disabled parking should be available and its plans include the provision of more bike racks at the Public Hall and elsewhere. The approved plans for the station include a small shop unit and a two-deck car park accommodating 365 cars, plus motorcycles and bikes. At present WTC has no information about the level of parking charges which will be imposed, over which it will have no control.

The proposals for allocating land for employment generated diverse responses. It seems clear that there is a demand for local workshop-style units which will accommodate businesses displaced from the older Station Road business park as well as new small businesses. And there is a hope that perhaps some larger businesses will be interested in the sites available adjacent to the railway station and/or on Redfield Farm. However there is a lot of uncertainty about future employment arrangements post-Covid – so maintaining the availability of suitable land on which businesses can be established remains important.

Another key issue identified from the responses is a concern about the scale of development in the north of the town, and whether the road network will be able to handle the volume of traffic this will generate. This in turn leads to concerns about traffic through the town and how this can be managed better (or diverted elsewhere) in order to protect the historic retail centre and improve its

pedestrian environment. WTC will seek to impress on Buckinghamshire Council the need for a comprehensive rather than piecemeal approach to address these overlapping concerns.

There is also feedback which suggests that the nature and scale of road and parking provision within the Glade and Grange areas is not adequate and this needs to inform all future housing developments. At the same time there is also concern that these areas are deficient in open green space, the importance of which has greatly increased over the past year of lockdown. These and other comments highlight the need to ensure that there are adequate policies in place to address environmental, ecological and climate-change concerns.

Several respondents commented in detail about environmental policies, and there was some opposition to the proposed dropping from the NP of those policies which appear in the current NP. However, the steering group does not intend that the policies themselves should be dropped: the latest revision of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in February 2019, contains comprehensive guidance, particularly in section 15, about the preservation of green, and other biologically important, spaces. It provides a clear, consistent and enforceable framework for such policies. We have suggested dropping the relevant policies from Winslow's Neighbourhood Plan because, in the absence of some special feature peculiar to Winslow, there is nothing we can realistically add to the national policies, and it is best practice not to duplicate policies between National, Local and Neighbourhood Plans. The NPPF is at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/810197/NPPF_Feb_2019_revised.pdf. It would not be possible for Winslow to insist on policies which go further than national government requirements as they would be open to challenge by developers. WTC does, however, have an environmental policy which encourages several of the measures suggested by respondents: see <https://www.winslowtowncouncil.gov.uk/climate-action.html>.

The steering group will look carefully at cycling provision within the town. WTC has no control over cycle tracks outside the parish, but has been in discussion with the promoters of the developments east of Great Horwood Road to ensure there will be an off-road cycle and footpath connecting both with the paths at Buckingham Road and potentially with existing paths to the north of the site leading to Great Horwood.

These, and many other concerns identified from the responses to the consultation, will inform the Steering Group's preparation of a pre-consultation draft Plan over the coming months. During that time some further explanatory information may be published to ensure that the next round of consultations is as fully informed as possible about the topics dealt with in the revised NP. Regular updates will be e-mailed to those who have asked to be kept informed about the NP review, and will appear on WTC's website at <https://www.winslowtowncouncil.gov.uk/neighbourhood-plan.html>. The WTC page in the Winslow Parish News will also include periodic notes on progress.

Following the next round of consultation, a final draft version of the NP will be prepared for submission to Buckinghamshire Council. That will then be the subject of a formal consultation before being considered by a Planning Inspector and (if the Inspector considers it to be necessary) a local referendum; only then will the new WNP be approved (or not).

Although the consultation period has ended, the steering group remains interested in further comments and suggestions. Please email any you would like to make to plan@winslowtowncouncil.gov.uk.