



West Wycombe Parish Plan 2014

March 2014

Introduction

These pages form the last stage in the production of the West Wycombe 2014 Parish Plan process.

This process has included the formulation and distribution of survey forms delivered door-to-door throughout West Wycombe Parish, and the subsequent compilation and analysis of the results of the returned survey forms.

The analysis of the results, and their interpretation, were contained in a companion document to this one, published in October 2013 by West Wycombe Parish Council.

What became apparent during the analysis of responses is that many of the suggestions made by residents are not within the gift of West Wycombe Parish Council to procure, but would instead require the active consent and delivery of other local authorities or outside bodies.

In creating a Parish Plan to respond to the Parish Plan survey, therefore, we have sought to explain the structure of local government in Buckinghamshire, and to identify how best to take forward the results of the survey.

The Role of the Parish Council

From April 1974 local government in Buckinghamshire was established on a three-tier model, with Buckinghamshire County Council meeting its defined duties and responsibilities across the whole of the county, with five District Councils (Milton Keynes (which, since April 1997 has been a Unitary Authority), Aylesbury Vale, Chiltern, South Bucks, and Wycombe) administering their responsibilities within their defined parts of the county, and a large number of Parish Councils (some 218 currently) covering much smaller localities.

The County Council has a net budget of roughly £350 million per annum and is responsible for:

- Education (except Academies and Free Schools)
- Transport & roads
- Planning
- Fire and public safety
- Social care
- Libraries
- Public health
- Street and footway lighting
- Waste management
- Trading standards
- Administering body for Local Government Pension Scheme (in Bucks)

The District Council has a net budget of roughly £35 million per annum and is responsible for:

- Rubbish collection
- Recycling
- Council Tax collections
- Housing
- Planning applications

West Wycombe Parish Council has a budget of roughly £35,000 per annum and has powers to involve itself in providing:

- Allotments
- Burial grounds
- Public clocks
- Bus shelters
- Community centres
- Street and footway lighting
- Play areas and play equipment
- Grants to help local organisations
- Consultation on neighbourhood planning

Since 1974 there have been a number of modifications to the structure and responsibilities of local government. In addition, a number of functions of local councils have been modified or have passed to other agencies. These include the Police and Crime Commissioners, who now have responsibility for policing in their regions; and such bodies as the Highways Agency (which has responsibility for strategic highways).

The Parish Plan

The stark divergence in the size of available budget between the different tiers of local government, and the differing statutory responsibilities of the different councils, serves to demonstrate that many of the aspirations or observations that respondents to the Parish Plan survey have submitted to us, are incapable of resolution by the Parish Council itself.

Where West Wycombe Parish Council has no statutory responsibility for a service or policy, we will seek to lobby that body where we believe this to be appropriate and where such lobbying is considered capable of being effective.

The Parish Council will work with Wycombe District Council on the creation of the Local Plan which covers the period from now until 2031. We have considered creating a formal, statutory Neighbourhood Plan, but this is an expensive process which has to be developed in a prescriptive way and is an assumption to build. We do not have the funds for such an exercise but will use every opportunity to raise our concerns, submit our comments and suggestions and help develop the WDC Local Plan to the benefit of our parishioners.

West Wycombe Parish Council has enjoyed excellent relationships and an active partnership with the County Councillor and the two District Councillors representing West Wycombe. *The Parish Council is committed to continuing with this positive relationship and will continue to work pro-actively with the County and District Councillors, regardless of political affiliation or its absence.*

West Wycombe Parish Council is committed to work productively and positively with other outside agencies and organisations which have an impact on the parish and its community. Such outside agencies and organisations include (but are not limited to): the National Trust, Thames Valley Police and its associated elected Police & Crime Commissioner, West Wycombe Combined School, the Joint Consultative Committee of the Wycombe Air Park, West Wycombe Community Association, the West Wycombe Events Team, West Wycombe Community Library, West Wycombe Pre-School Playgroup and the many traders and businesses which are part of the parish.

As a proactive and listening parish council, West Wycombe Parish Council is committed to using its resources in effective and efficient ways to benefit the whole of the parish community.

This Parish Plan sets out how West Wycombe Parish Council intends to respond to the results of the 2013 Parish Plan survey in the period up to 2020.

1. *West Wycombe Parish Council will work to preserve and protect the historic nature and character of the parish, working alongside other organisations such as the National Trust to do so.*
2. *West Wycombe Parish Council will continue to lobby Buckinghamshire County Council and other relevant organisations to secure the most advantageous transport opportunities for the parish.* In particular we will seek wherever possible to mitigate the impacts of road traffic in the parish (recognising that the parish is traversed by two primary routes, the A40 and A4010) and will seek to work positively with bus operators and with Network Rail and Chiltern Railways to promote and encourage the use of public transport.
3. *West Wycombe Parish Council remains aware of and will continue to look for solutions to the problem of speeding traffic in the parish.*
4. *West Wycombe Parish Council will take steps to improve the condition and maintenance of verges and footpaths, and will explore ways in which disabled and mobility-impaired people can be enabled more easily to get around the parish.* We will work with other organisations to promote and encourage walking and rambling in the parish, with particular emphasis on the maintenance of safe crossing points on busy roads.
5. *West Wycombe Parish Council will work with West Wycombe Combined School in the development and implementation of a robust Travel Plan* with the aim of encouraging pupils to walk and cycle to school, and to reduce the impact of school-related car traffic on the village and parish.
6. *Car parking is an issue in parts of the parish and West Wycombe Parish Council will work with residents and with other organisations to seek to mitigate its worst effects.* However, West Wycombe village was not designed to accommodate the car, and to

adapt the village to do so would be to destroy the character of the village. This is also an issue in such streets as Copperfields and Beechwood Road. It is the responsibility of residents to determine whether they need to own a car or how many they should expect to be able to park. A residents' parking scheme might be a possibility if residents were willing to pay the costs of having one. A shared car scheme (such as the Commonwheels scheme in High Wycombe) might be worth investigation as a means of reducing car ownership.

7. *West Wycombe Parish Council will continue to work proactively to support the local Community Policing Team and will continue to participate fully in the Neighbourhood Action Group.* We will encourage and enable the police to provide a more visible presence in our community.
8. *West Wycombe Parish Council will continue to promote and manage the Chorley Road allotments, and will consider whether a mains water supply might be installed to serve the allotment holders.*
9. *West Wycombe Parish Council will examine the feasibility of employing a Community Warden, with a general remit to assist in keeping the parish free from litter, maintaining signage and notice-boards, public toilets, flower-beds, the Play Area, and the general condition of the parish.*
10. *West Wycombe Parish Council will continue to work with and support the West Wycombe Events Team in producing the Annual Fete and the Christmas Fayre, and will work with locally-based sports and social organisations and other volunteer-led bodies to encourage widespread public participation in the communal life of the parish.* However, such organisations cannot exist, still less thrive, without the willingness of parish residents to devote their own time and energy to making things happen. The Parish Plan survey showed widespread support for the principle of more social activities and events in the parish, but an apparent expectation that 'other people' would do the work! Nothing will be achieved without a wider willingness to 'join in'.
11. *West Wycombe Parish Council will continue to support "Contact" magazine and to publicise its activities there, and will continue to host and develop the Parish Council website.* The Parish Council will explore ways in which the website can be enhanced to further

promote the businesses and voluntary activities of the parish, by cross-linking the website with those of other appropriate bodies such as Tourist Boards, Ramblers' Association, to encourage more visitors to the parish and thereby enhance its economic vitality.

12. *West Wycombe Parish Council will explore with local businesses ways in which the retail 'offer' of the parish can be enhanced and the local economy improved.* The Parish Council wants to see West Wycombe continue to benefit from having a healthy spectrum of local businesses in the parish and will publicise parish businesses on its website and support traders, the National Trust, and the West Wycombe Events Team in creating events that draw people into the village and parish.
13. *West Wycombe Parish Council will continue to support the provision of re-cycling facilities in the parish, both roadside and at specific localities.*
14. *West Wycombe Parish Council will continue to provide a well-maintained burial ground for qualifying residents.*

The Parish Council serves to conserve the unique characteristics of West Wycombe Parish. This includes all aspects of this unique historic village, the National Trust status, as a Conservation Area and as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. We recognise the importance of preserving the transition between the more urban High Wycombe and the rural character of West Wycombe. This extends to all areas within the West Wycombe Parish boundary including those areas immediately outside of the Conservation Area, for these act as an approach to the historic village and rural amenities of the parish.

With regard to property within the parish, we believe we will endeavour to promote a clearer vision for the parish with regard to the mix of residential, commercial and retail units. Given the unique qualities and character of the parish this will always err on the side of least impact on the existing character. The majority of respondents to the recent parish survey stated in response to aspirations for the future of West Wycombe, that it should 'stay as it is now/no development' and when asked how they felt regarding protection of the environment and countryside the majority (81%) rated this as 'extremely important'.

Whilst planning falls under the control of county and district council we acknowledge our responsibility to represent the views of local council tax payers within our parish. This is to ensure that parishioners' views are fully represented and that the character of West Wycombe is preserved for them now and into the future. We recognise the important role we play and the input we provide as a Parish Council with regards to 'localism'. We seek to reinforce this position wherever possible so as to reflect the views of our local community and to take action in their best interests.

We acknowledge that planning applications will occur from time to time within our parish. We have not created a Neighbourhood Plan for our parish due to the cost as outlined, but we will re-evaluate our position on this issue periodically so as to best serve our parishioners. A Neighbourhood Plan also is 'a presumption to build' which we also take objection to. We would like to take this opportunity to outline a few recommendations for any prospective developments that may arise. Historically we have strongly objected to developments which have been seen as predominantly over-intensification and out of keeping with the parish. We will continue to challenge planning applications in the future which:

- Are out of character with West Wycombe parish
- Are seen as over-intensification
- Do not provide adequate parking for new residents (one space per flat is considered inadequate) and as such are inconsiderate to other parishioners
- Do not provide adequate amenity space for residents which is practical and usable
- Do not provide sufficient green space so as to complement the development/developments which are predominantly brick and tarmac (i.e. hard sterile surfaces) will be considered unacceptable. We feel any new development should have at least 30% green space coverage (excluding tree canopy)
- Do not take into consideration the impact on infrastructure, including on street parking, transport, waste disposal etc.
- Which impact existing residents detrimentally e.g. privacy
- Are not seen to be an 'improvement', 'contributing' or 'beneficial' to the neighbourhood/local community

- Are not built to the highest possible quality of specification, design, construction and materials where possible. West Wycombe is seen as a 'sought after' location within High Wycombe and this latter statement is required to ensure standards are over and above mere policy requirements. So as to ensure that this situation remains and is further enhanced by good planning decision making.
- Do not take into account local opinion, of residents, the Parish Council and other bodies such as the High Wycombe Society.

This Parish Plan was formally adopted by West Wycombe Parish Council in March 2014