**Windsor Neighbourhood Plan**

**Housing and Heritage Topic Group Report – for Evidence Base**

The Housing and Heritage Topic Group (HHTG) was one of four Topic Groups set up by the Windsor Neighbourhood Plan Forum these groups started work under the WNP in May 2014 although similar groups had been set up under the previous NP Forum.

The initial Membership of the HHTG was as follows:

Andrew Melville Chairman (then Chairman of the Windsor and Eton Society Heritage and Environment Committee)

George Bathurst

Jane Carter

Wisdom da Costa

David Eglise

Alison Logan

Claire Milne

Raewyn Porteous

Susy Shearer

The purpose of the topic group was to research, discuss and develop objectives and policies in its subject areas in order to put forward proposals to the WNP Forum and then to the Windsor population via a consultation process. As well as holding a number of meetings, Members carried out research and reported back to the Group on a number of early Neighbourhood Plans including Ascot, Thame, Uppingham and Kensington in order to understand better the kind of aims and policies which were within scope. The Government’s National Policy Planning Framework and the saved policies of the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead’s Local Plan and many of its background papers and reports were also studied along with several different guidance papers on how to develop policies for a NP. A number of HHTG Members attended an English Heritage study day on the Oxford method of area character assessment and a workshop on heritage assets organised by the former RBWM Conservation officer Gillian Butter. Members of the group went on to carry out local area assessments and to develop the Windsor list of non-designated heritage assets.

Many of the policy ideas initially generated by the HHTG and received from the Forum and the wider community turned out not to be realisable through the planning system and had to be abandoned or treated separately as suggested “projects”. It took several meetings to narrow down appropriate aims and policies which the HHTG felt should be taken forward to consultation. The policies also had to take account of the “saved” policies in the out of date Local Plan. It was decided that the HHTG policies should not replicate any of the saved policies but where there was doubt whether non-saved policies would be carried forward to a new Local Plan then it would be legitimate for the NP to draft policies which might have to be deleted later when the RBWM intentions became clearer. The aim would always be to add detail and local flavour to the wider RBWM policies.

The HHTG decided to develop policies under three objectives – one each for Heritage, Development and Housing.

After much discussion the following objectives were agreed upon:

***1. Heritage*** *– to conserve and enhance the town’s world class historic environment and its setting.*

Although the concentration was on conserving and enhancing the historic core of the town, there were strong feelings that there were other character areas further from the centre and a spread of non-designated heritage assets which ought also to be taken into account during the design of new developments. With easily accessible information on heritage assets and early consultation with developers, it ought to be possible to enhance existing character and heritage with sensitive and appropriate new buildings.

***2. Development*** *– to encourage high quality well designed development which adds value to the town both in terms of character and sense of place and in terms of ease of use and movement within the town*.

The Group was anxious to provide guidance to developers on the kind of designs and materials which they felt would enhance the appearance of the town both for residents and for the many visitors. In the recent past several developments had been allowed which it was felt were inappropriate and even eyesores which let the town down. The Group recommended the production of a series of design guides for sensitive areas of the town so that developers would be able to have before them at the design stage examples of the kind of buildings which would find favour with residents. They would also point developers to the advice already set out in conservation area guides and town and landscape assessments.

***3. Housing*** *– to encourage the provision of a range of new homes which are sympathetic to and enhance the character of the town.*

Consideration of housing policies was a difficult issue for the Group. Many felt that Windsor was currently a family friendly town and wanted to try and find ways of keeping it that way. However there were no sizeable housing sites to allocate within the NP area, the Borough appeared to have a policy of not supporting social housing for rent but only assisted purchase and the local Housing Association did not have the funds to redevelop the only large potential affordable housing site at Salters Close. Policies relating to the conversion of offices to residential were also affected by the relaxation of policies for this by Central Government.

The attached table sets out the policy ideas which the HHTG group came up with under these three headings and which went forward to the Forum for consideration.

*AML 2017*

**Heritage, Development and Housing**

The aim of this plan is to promote new development which complements the historic settlement of Windsor and preserves and enhances the existing townscape. The setting of the historic town core and its gateways and approaches, are important in themselves and make a vital contribution to the impression of the town.

HERITAGE OBJECTIVE

**To conserve and enhance the town’s world class historic environment and its setting.**

DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVE

**To encourage well designed development which adds value to the town both in terms of character and sense of place and in terms of ease of use and movement within the town.**

HOUSING OBJECTIVE

**To encourage the provision of a range of new homes which are sympathetic to and enhance the character of the town.**

**WINDSOR NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - DRAFT DEVELOPMENT, HOUSING AND HERITAGE POLICIES FOR DISCUSSION (draft 26 February 2015)**

**WARNING – numbering may have changed rely on policy title not number where possible**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **No.** | **policy** | **Policy wording** | **Comments/evidence** |
| He1 | Enhance historic character  (for specific character areas see map) | All development will seek to enhance the character of this historic town and in particular the surroundings of and approaches to Windsor Castle.  (Developers should consult in particular any Townscape assessment, list of listed buildings, conservation area assessment ,non- designated heritage assets list and community assets list for the time being in force.)  New buildings in the Royal Park will make a positive contribution to the Park and be in sympathy with the generally vernacular design of its buildings. | X% of survey respondents rated preserving the distinctive and authentic character of our streets as a high priority.  Evidence in area assessments of loss of character from inappropriate development (cross reference to evidence base)  Expressed concern in consultation that over or inappropriate development will seriously damage character in future.  Project – identify buildings and areas which are detracting from the area and seek to improve them . |
| He2 | Preserve heritage | Any new development or external building work to an existing building must give the highest priority to preserving and enhancing heritage assets. Development affecting heritage assets will be accompanied by a “Heritage Statement”.  *(Heritage assets will be given the widest possible definition they may be buildings, green spaces, parks, river banks, islands, gardens, boundary features, surfaces, street furniture, statues, monuments, marker posts, or indeed the pattern of streets, and paths or the spaces between buildings and including views of an asset or historic townscape from a distance.)*  *? move this to glossary* | X% of survey respondents rated the preservation of heritage a high priority.  Evidence in area assessments of undesirable and unnecessary loss of heritage. (cross ref to area assessments and photographs)  Evidence in Conservation area assessments.  Projects – Non-designated Heritage Assets list; strengthen conservation area controls; extend conservation area to cover Essex Lodge; new conservation area based on the listed Clewer St Stephen’s Church; review tree preservation orders; publish guidance to householders on how to repair and upgrade property while maintaining heritage features. |
| He3 | Streetscape  (could this be deleted and incorporated in DE3 ?) | Street furniture provided in association with new development should respect the heritage of the area | Photographs, survey comments. |
| De1 | Design of new development  (This policy can probably be shortened ) | All new development should demonstrate good design and should enhance and respect the local character and appearance of the surrounding area. A central part of achieving good design is responding to and integrating with local surroundings and landscape context as well as the built environment .  Developers should take account of any approved design brief for the site or area concerned and provide a reasoned argument for any departures from the brief.  Developments should use good quality materials which complement the existing palette of materials used within the area.  Good design and respecting character can be achieved through contemporary design in appropriate circumstances and at times this will be preferable to copying past styles. In particular, neo-Victorian will not normally be appropriate where the surrounding townscape is mid 20th century.  The design of development proposals should respond positively to townscape character using the latest RBWM Townscape Assessment report (or other local area assessment report approved by the RBWM). The extent to which this is demonstrated in the development proposals will determine whether the proposal is in keeping with the character of an area.  The incorporation green landscaping will be a priority; highway boundaries should incorporate green hedging and/or trees wherever possible to generate a greener feel to the town. Developments should preserve open garden areas where these are important to the character of an area. | Consultees commented on examples of buildings which do not respect their surroundings and appear out of place. There is concern that further development will exacerbate this problem.  Area assessments provide further evidence of some badly designed and inappropriate buildings and also examples of developments which enhance character and street scenes.  There was strong support in consultation for further greening of the town.  Projects: design briefs; collaborative planning and report on the contribution of development to the formation of enhanced community centres in West Windsor. Townscape Assessment review.  Maps identifying specific character areas. |
| De2 | Density, scale, footprint, bulk, separation | New development should generally be similar in density, footprint, separation, scale and bulk of the buildings to the density footprint, separation, scale and bulk of buildings in the surrounding area and of neighbouring properties in particular.  All new development should respect:   * Established building lines and arrangements of front gardens, walls, railings or hedges, * Established plot widths and rooflines within streets particularly where these establish a rhythm to the architecture in a street * The separation between buildings, and between buildings and the site boundaries * Provide adequate areas for waste and recycling storage and drying * Provide appropriate car parking provision (seeHo4 below)   Where buildings of more storeys than the surrounding buildings are permitted, measures should be taken to reduce the bulk of the development. | There was considerable concern in public consultation that over development had already adversely affected the character of the town and could do so to a greater extent in the future.  There are several recent examples of building lines being breached and buildings which are too bulky in relation to their neighbours and which provide too little amentity space. The cumulative effect of these is detrimental to the character of the area. (photos ??) |
| De3 | Streetscape | Everything placed on our streets must add to its surroundings by serving an essential purpose or by being beautiful in itself. Nowhere in the town should be excluded from a thoughtful approach to the treatment of street furniture, seeking to bring out the best in an area.  Proposals for street furniture should demonstrate adherence to the following principles:   * Respecting local character * Willingness to consider innovative design * Reduction of clutter * High quality materials * Simple clean designs | Project – develop a plan to reduce clutter in our streets and improve their appearance. |
| De5 | Advertising | Fascia and banner advertising signs should be in sympathy with local character. | Project We will work with the Royal Borough on a plan to control such signs and consider the introduction of an Advertisement Control Area |
| Ho1 | Housing mix | New dwellings should be, in size and type, in keeping with the size and type of dwellings in the surrounding area except where there is a demonstrable need for an alternative type or size of home in the area and these can be delivered to be in keeping with the surrounding area and respecting any approved design brief for the area concerned. | The need for affordable housing was mentioned several times in the public consultation.  Project: Work with Radian to identify ways the NP might contribute tp improvements at Sawyers Close and other social housing locations. |
| Ho2 | Development Briefs  (needs work on this - ask consultant for help? Standards may be changed) | Development Proposals which include 10 or more dwellings or on sites larger than 0.4 hectares shall be required to submit a Development Brief (as set out in………) to RBWM and actively to engage in consultation with the community as part of the design process prior to any planning application being submitted.  Planning applications for developments which require a Development Brief must be accompanied by a Statement of Community Consultation, as set out in …. | Project: set up consultation mechanism as Windsor has no Parish Council |
| Ho4 | Parking | Priority will be given to development which provides adequate car parking within the boundaries of the site.  Garages should be set back from the street frontage.  Where parking is located in front of houses, the area should be designed and landscaped to minimise the visual impact. Parking to the front should be in courts and mews, where the spaces can form not only a functional space for cars but an attractive setting for the buildings.  Where parking cannot be provided in-curtilage, rear parking areas should be kept small and serve no more than six homes so that there is a clear sense of ownership.  Parking spaces should be allocated for visitors and deliveries. | Traffic and parking was one of the major concerns raised during the consultation.  Any new development will mean more vehicles on the roads of the town. |
| Ho5 | Residential Amenity | All dwellings of three or more bedrooms should provide sufficient private garden amenity space to meet household recreational needs. These should be in scale with the dwelling, reflect the character of the area and be appropriate in relation to topography and privacy.  Screened and easily accessible bin storage areas should be provided on site, adequate for the number and size of bins required.  Flats should have access to sufficient amenity space, preferably private. | Are there standards for amenity space and bin stores?? |
| Ho6 | Allocated Sites | Development will be permitted on the sites identified in the Borough Local Plan provided the development conforms to the policies set out in this plan and to any approved design brief. Criteria for specific sites are set out in appendix …… | What is the mechanism for approving design briefs?? |
| Ho7 | Windfall, infill and Garden sites | Residential development on small windfall and infill sites will be acceptable provided it complies with the policies relating to development set out in this Plan.  Proposals for new dwellings on private residential gardens should:   * not result in an unacceptable reduction of the green space created by the garden itself or in combination with surrounding gardens AND * not result in an unacceptable impact on the landscape and environmental value of the site.   New dwellings on gardens in Conservation Areas are not permitted except in very special circumstances, preserving the garden areas and spacing in these already very densely populated areas. | Infill development was not favoured by consultees but is inevitable and so the aim is to mitigate the negative effects of such development and to seek development where it will have benefits. |
| Ho8 | Extensions and ancilliary Development | Proposals for extensions and buildings within the curtilage of an existing property will be permitted so long as they comply with the policies set out in this Plan and in particular that they :   * Retain a satisfactory level of amenity for the occupants of the existing building and those of neighbouring properties. * do not lead to the loss of spaces between detached or semi-detached houses so as to create the appearance of a terrace. * do not create a separate self- contained dwelling separate from the original property * avoid creating large blank areas of façade facing public areas. * maintain the existing roofscape where this contributes to the character of a street or group of properties. |  |
| Ho9 | Conversions | Conversion of business premises to residential use will normally be permitted particularly where this returns a building to its original use and provided that :   * the development does not result in an unacceptable loss of business space * the development complies with the policies set out in this Plan   The subdivision of dwellings will be permitted provided the development complies with the policies set out in this Plan and the proposal would –   * not result in the loss of family accommodation; * respect the character and appearance of the original property; * be compatible with the character and appearance of the area; * provide satisfactory levels of residential amenity for future occupiers * provide a satisfactory standard of accommodation, including adequate living space, appropriate noise insulation and layout of rooms between units of accommodation; * provide outdoor amenity space; * provide space for refuse and recycling storage and drying area; * provide adequate access, car parking and secure cycle parking. | Can we specify which of these require planning permission as we cannot prevent development which does not require permission ? conversion of one house to 2. |
|  | Allocated sites | Alma Road/Goslar Way - 84 med rise flats  Windsor Fire Station, St Marks Road – 10 houses  Territorial Army Centre, Bolton Road – 25 small/med houses  Vale Road Industrial Estate – 110 units  Sawyers Close – net extra 200 units |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  | Non-allocated sites  (what sort of sites do we want to put in here? Just sites that could accommodate several dwellings ?) | Police Station Alma Road ; Smiths Lane Clinic  Texaco Garage, corner of Clarence Road and Goslar Way, | Several more can be identified |