

# WORMINGHALL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

*Let's set the future of our village!*

Draft July 2017



## CONTENT

|  |    |
|--|----|
| 1) Introduction .....  | 3  |
| 2) Background to Worminghall .....                             | 4  |
| 3) History of the Parish .....                                 | 5  |
| 4) Vision and Objectives .....                                 | 6  |
| 5) Public Consultation on Worminghall Neighbourhood Plan ..... | 7  |
| 6) Character and Heritage .....                                | 9  |
| 7) Village Envelope .....                                      | 10 |
| 8) Community Facilities & Recreation .....                     | 11 |
| 9) Traffic and transport .....                                 | 12 |
| 10) Housing .....  | 13 |
| 11) Implementation and Monitoring .....                        | 15 |
| 12) Annex 1 .....  | 16 |

# 1) Introduction

In 2011, the Localism Act introduced a new opportunity for local communities to shape their future formally as part of the planning system. Neighbourhood Plans can be produced by Parish Councils and when they have gone through all the required steps and processes, they become part of the development plan for the area. This means that any planning applications will have to take account of policies contained within the Neighbourhood Plan. It also provides local people with a say on how land use and buildings can develop over time, such as protecting open spaces and improving local character.

## The Village Plan

Worminghall Parish Council produced a Community-Led Plan ('the Village Plan') in Autumn 2014 following extensive consultation with the village. The Village Plan was well received and remains an important document. However, it is unable to influence and guide new development. The top priorities for Worminghall as identified in the Village Plan are set out below.

### Village Plan Priorities:

**Housing:** Top priority is to encourage a broader mix of age groups within the village, especially young families, by supporting more affordable housing.

**Community Facilities and Groups:** Top priorities are to support and protect our three key assets (Village Hall, Church and the Clifden Arms) and to provide a recreational space and play area in the village.

**Traffic and Connectivity:** Top priorities are to slow down traffic passing through the village and to achieve access to faster internet broadband.

**Environment:** Top priorities are to improve the quality and accessibility of the footpaths and enhance the visual attractiveness of the village.

The Parish Council decided in 2016 that a Neighbourhood Plan should be produced which would be able to fulfil this role for the future of the village. The Neighbourhood Area for Worminghall Parish was designated on the 19<sup>th</sup> September 2016 by Aylesbury Vale District Council (AVDC)

## 2) Background to Worminghall

Worminghall is a small village and parish with around 215 dwellings and around 534 residents (2011 census). It is set in the Aylesbury Vale, around 4 miles west of Thame. Its western border is with Oxfordshire, but the parish lies within AVDC in Buckinghamshire.

The population profile, in common with many such rural villages, is composed of mainly older residents. Over a fifth are aged over 60 and almost half are aged 45 or above, and less than a third of households have dependent children of any age.

Over a quarter of those aged between 16 and 74 are not in employment, the greatest proportion of these are retired. Over 20% of households are occupied by single adults (with or without dependent children) with a long term health problem or a disability.

Transport links are poor, so nearly half of all households have two or more cars and vans. Over half of the accommodation in Worminghall is detached, most of the remainder is semi-detached or terraced. Over 70% is owner occupied (2011 census).

The village does not have a school, which closed in the 1950's and the nearest shop is 2 miles in the next village (Ickford). The closest doctor's surgery is in Thame which is 7 miles away.

### 3) History of the Parish

Our place name of Worminghall comes from the Anglo-Saxon name Wermelle (meaning 'nook of land of a man called Wyrma'). Wermelle is recorded in the Domesday Survey of 1086 and shows the village population was '..26 households' comprising '16 villagers, 6 small holders and 4 slaves'.

Our village church St Peter & St Paul, with its classic Norman nave, doorways, and chancel arch, dates back to 1160 and the bell tower and stained glass windows were added in the 15th century. The vicarage was ordained in 1229 and for the past 750 years there has been a vicar of Worminghall (now shared with Shabbington, Ickford and Oakley).

We can deduce from old maps and earthworks visible on aerial photographs that the centre of our village was in former times clustered around the church, the vicarage (now converted to two cottages), and the Manor house (rebuilt in the 18th and 19th centuries and now known as Court Farm), and the village market and fair were probably held on the open area that still exists in front of the church.

In 1525 Henry VIII gave the rectory to Cardinal Wolsey before his fall from grace. In 1670 John King, grandson of the Bishop of London, founded the brick and stone Alms houses and charity with the legacy money left by his father. A memorial brass to the King Family can be seen in the church. The Manorial estate of the village, whose name had now become Worminghale, belonged to successive noble families.

Farm development on pastures around the village started from the late 17th century (examples are Court Farm, Lower Brook Farm, Town Farm and Wood Farm), as well as building of an extension to one of the 15th century timber-frame thatched houses which later was turned into the village's Public House.

The village population increased significantly after the Great Plague of London (possibly due to an exodus towards Oxford) and by 1722 the number of inhabitants in the village was '259 comprising 45 families'. The first official census in 1801 confirmed a slow down - '..266 comprising 61 families in 36 houses'. In 1851 the records show a higher level of 360.

The 2nd Viscount Clifden arrived in 1827 to become the most influential Lord of the Manor of Worminghall. He set about many tasks including thoroughly repairing and restoring the church, opening a school (today it is our Village Hall), '..had the farmland properly drained, had dry roads constructed and made improvements to the farm workers' cottages.

Many locals still refer to Worminghall with the old pronunciation 'Wornal'. This is also the name used for the 'Wornal Industrial Park' which has been created for private enterprise on land formerly used as an airfield site during WW2. In 1942-45 it served as a training ground for Wellington bomber crews and became the reception place for Dakotas and Lancaster planes returning with thousands of repatriated POWs.

The first major housing development was in the late sixties when the field behind Rose Cottage at the bottom of The Avenue was used to build the houses on the private road. Silvermead followed in 1976, then Old Farm Close, the houses to the east of Clifden Road and the aforementioned close in front of the old Post Office.

## 4) Vision and Objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan

**Vision: To improve the amenities, facilities and environment in our village, accompanying the gentle growth in housing and numbers of residents living in Worminghall, alongside encouraging a younger age demographic of our village.**

### Objectives

1. To allow carefully designed new housing on a small scale in village locations to reflect the rural character of the parish
2. To provide new recreational space and play facilities for children and support the existing community facilities.
3. To protect and enhance the natural environment and setting of the village and retain the rural quality of the area.
4. To manage and reduce traffic issues within and around the village

## 5) Public Consultation on Worminghall Neighbourhood Plan

The key stages in the consultation process are summarised below:

### **The Community Led Plan**

This was an earlier statement of the views of villagers as to the need for housing in the village. It took around two years to produce and was published in Autumn 2014. Housing was identified as the top priority issue for the village. Four visions for change to ensure its future as a thriving and active community were identified: housing, community facilities and groups, traffic and connectivity and lastly the environment. The detailed results of the questionnaire were posted on the Parish Council website. There were well over 100 respondents out of just over 200 households in Worminghall.

### **The Village Fete**

A stall was manned by the Steering Group at the village fete in early September 2016. The stall was advertised by flyers in the week leading up to the event. One was delivered to each household within the village. This was the first opportunity for the Steering Group to explain the purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan process and its significance in the light of the recently published draft Local Plan, the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan, proposed and subsequently withdrawn by Aylesbury Vale District Council. Copies of the draft Local Plan and the Community Led Plan were made available to interested villagers, together with information about the neighbourhood plan process. Given the poor weather on the day, many villagers sought refuge in the village hall and were invited to write down their views on their priorities for development in the village, including of course, if they felt that there should be no further development. This led to a good response from dozens of villagers, summarised and subsequently posted on the Parish Council website.

### **The 2016 questionnaire**

A copy of this questionnaire was sent to each household in the village with a request for it to be delivered on completion back to a member of the Steering Group, whose addresses were given, by 16 January 2017. Some respondents chose instead to use the SurveyMonkey option and complete the survey online. The first surveys were delivered on 30 December 2016 and the process was completed in the next couple of days. No more than three or four were completed before a further note was delivered to each household to inform them of the recent grant of outline planning permission for a mix of 15 houses on two sites (sites 5 and 11 in the Site Assessment Document). The decision to provide this further information was taken because it was felt necessary to ensure that all residents had the same information about the full picture of planning permissions already granted in the village before responding. Several respondents would have been aware of these already, but many were not. This way every respondent had been notified in writing of these relatively recent developments. The total number of respondents, whether by completed paper questionnaire or by SurveyMonkey was over 70. The detailed numerical analysis of the responses and an extensive sample of all comments received were made available at the Village Hall event on 4 February 2017 and were subsequently posted on the Parish Council website.

### **The Village Hall event**

A special event was held at the Village Hall on 4<sup>th</sup> February 2017. This was extensively advertised in the questionnaire, in flyers and posters all over the village in advance of the event. The village hall was open from 10am to 4pm throughout Saturday, with never fewer than three Steering Group members in attendance to answer questions and explain the Plan process. The purpose of this event was twofold, to share with residents the results of the questionnaire and to invite their comments on the individual sites in the village that had been proposed as suitable for development by landowners.

It was agreed to set out the numerical and percentage responses to each question in the questionnaire together with a sample of the comments received against each question.

As to the sites, an enlarged map was put on the wall. This showed the individual potential sites with an indication of how many properties were proposed for each one, where this had been made known to the Steering Group. Those sites which had recently obtained outline planning permission were indicated separately. It was made clear how much development was already likely to take place in the village, so that residents could indicate whether they thought any further development of the village should take place, and if so the scale of that development. Residents were invited to comment on any site on sheets dedicated to each of the numbered sites on the site plan. There was a separate set of sheets for other comments, not specific to any of the sites. Detailed proposals for the sites that had been put forward by developers were not made available at the event.

It was made clear that the purpose of the neighbourhood plan was to indicate the development and land use that was suitable for the village.

Those visiting the hall on the day were invited to sign in with their address to identify whether or not they were residents. Any representations made by non-residents at the event were not taken into account for the purposes of the consultation. Anybody wanting to be kept informed about the progress of the neighbourhood plan was invited to provide their contact details and copies of the site plan and the questionnaire response analysis were sent to them directly.

A total of 36 residents, together with others, such as the local district councillor, attended during the day. Most left comments on the paper provided and some gave their views subsequently by email or otherwise.

### **Communications generally**

A range of different media, as noted above, have been used by the Plan Steering Group and Worminghall Parish Council (WPC) to inform their fellow Worminghall residents about the neighbourhood plan process and to seek their views about the right development for Worminghall. At all times information has been presented neutrally with a view to assisting villagers to reach their own opinion. Where a member of the Group has had a particular interest in the outcome of the Plan as a landowner this has been recognised and made clear to villagers.



## 6) Character and Heritage (CH)

The rural character of the village and its surroundings should be preserved as much as possible, whilst allowing some development of individual buildings and some new housing to ensure the future vitality of the village. Much of the village is characterised by small groups of similar properties where incrementally, housing has been added over the years. This is particularly true of The Avenue, the road which leads to the Church past the Village Hall, once the village school. Some of these additions are groups of larger houses, but these are of good quality design and materials and characterised by large front gardens and 'soft' boundaries such as hedgerows to maintain the rural feel of the area.

Any new development, whether extensions to dwellings or new dwellings or other buildings need to be carefully considered in its context to maintain this rural character. This can be done by ensuring that massing and orientation of buildings respect the adjacent buildings or street scene and that boundary treatment is 'traditional' such as hedgerows, or low walls. Large masses of building or extensive use of hard landscaping would represent inappropriate 'urbanisation' of the area and erode the character so much valued by the residents.

### Policy CH1

**The rural character of the village and its surroundings should be respected through new development by ensuring that the scale and character of new buildings reflect and enhance the street scene. Boundary treatment and landscaping schemes should be carefully designed so as to prevent undue urbanisation of the location.**

There are 15 listed buildings in the Parish (source: [historicengland.org.uk](http://historicengland.org.uk) - British Listed Buildings). Some of the most notable include The Clifden Arms, the Church and the Almshouses, the last two of which are Grade 2-starred. Whilst there is no designated Conservation Area, the village includes several areas where the historic development of the village can be seen and the rural character is one of the most highly regarded elements of the village which the residents wish to see preserved. (Village Plan). An example is the view of the Church approaching it from the public footpath which leads from the South of Clifden Road.

### Policy CH2

- **The historic environment of the parish and heritage assets (both designated and undesignated) will be conserved and enhanced. All new development should preserve and where possible, enhance the historic character and appearance of the area and applications will explain how the design of proposals have sought to retain or enhance positive features of the area.**
- **Construction materials and finishes should reflect the surrounding area and the character and heritage of the immediate environment. Where approved, modern replacement and/or new build materials should visually compliment the immediate environment.**

## 7) Village Envelope (HVE)

The current village envelope (i.e. the built up area of the village) is mostly easily definable, both visually and functionally. The map at Annex 1 shows the extent of the village envelope, which includes a location for new homes. Beyond the village envelope, in open countryside there should only be development allowed which is suitable for the countryside location, including farming, employment and small scale tourism.

### **Policy HVE1**

**Within the Village Envelope, defined in Annex 1, proposals for new homes will be supported where they respect the character of the immediate locality; contribute to local distinctiveness; and maintain appropriate amenity of adjacent dwellings.**

**There is a presumption against development of new homes outside the Village Envelope in the open countryside.**

**Development proposals in the open countryside will only be supported where they;**

- **respect the character of the countryside and are appropriate in terms of highway capacity**
- **assist the sustainable growth and expansion of a business or enterprise in the countryside area, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings;**
- **promote the development and diversification of agriculture and other land use based rural businesses;**
- **support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments that benefit businesses in the countryside area, communities and visitors.**

## 8) Community Facilities & Recreation (CFR)

Worminghall is a small village with few community facilities remaining. There are only the pub, the Clifden Arms, the Village Hall and the Church.

The pub has been registered as an Asset of Community Value. It is an attractive thatched and timber framed building, which dates from mediaeval times and has substantial gardens attached. It serves meals as well as the usual pub fare. But it has been closed for months at a stretch in recent years. The current licensees have to work hard to make it popular and well-attended, especially in winter months when its garden is naturally less enticing to customers.

The Village Hall is a Victorian polychromatic brick structure which was originally the village school, and is flanked by two dwellings of the same age and construction. It is popular and well used for a range of village events as well as by the parish council and village hall committee, which manages it for charitable purposes.

The Church of St Peter and St Paul is Norman. Its north and south doors survive from this time. It has a well kept graveyard, which contains a tomb to the north of the vestry which itself is listed. It is valued by all villagers, whether they attend regularly or not. It is part of the benefice of Worminghall with Ickford, Oakley and Shabbington. The Vicar lives in the village.

It is essential that these assets are retained and remain supported.

The footpaths around and through the village are very well used, for dog walking, informal recreation and getting to the community facilities without using cars. The networks should be protected and indeed increased wherever possible to ensure the continued outdoor recreation and sustainable travel opportunities. If diversion is proposed of a footpath or bridleway, the diversion should be appropriate and convenient.

### Policy CFR1

**Proposals for change of use of the Village Hall or Public House to domestic or other business use will be unacceptable. Loss, reduction or diversion of existing footpaths will strongly be resisted and the addition of new footpath links will be supported.**

One of the overriding concerns for residents is that there are no recreational facilities at all for children or adults. It is therefore critical that any new housing development should facilitate the provision of such a facility, particularly as much new accommodation is likely to be occupied by families. Preferably a new play area should be provided on a new development, but should be located so as to be accessible for all residents. The village is sufficiently compact for anyone to walk to such a facility wherever it is located in/adjacent to the village.

### Policy CFR2

**All new housing development must support the provision of play and recreational space, either by on site provision. Where on-site provision is not feasible or appropriate, contributions towards off site provision will be required.**

## 9) Traffic and transport (TT)

In common with many rural villages, Worminghall is within easy reach of some major employment centres, including Oxford, Aylesbury, Thame and London (via rail). The vast majority of residents will use their own cars for individual journeys to work and most households with more than one resident in employment will have a car each.

Residents expressed serious concerns about potential accidents due to the speed of traffic through the village, especially the risk to children and pedestrians at the sharp bend by the road to The Clifden Arms; to drivers at the Ickford Road crossroads, and along the Menmarsh Road, including at Wornal Park. With increased housing stock planned for Thame, Wheatley and surrounding villages, we expect traffic to increase throughout the day. Additionally, there is a 750,000 sq ft new storage facility being built in Bicester which will increase traffic flow for large vehicles as they will be unable to use the A41 due to low bridges and will therefore have to go through Oakley.

Many of the village's older residents and young adults who do not drive, and also parents with children, would like to have more regular bus services to Thame (shopping, friends etc), Haddenham (rail station), Aylesbury and Oxford (schools, shops, entertainment). As matters stand, the only public transport is the number 110 bus, which runs only four times a weekday and takes villagers to Thame and Aylesbury, which takes an hour, and a few surrounding villages. The only way to get to Haddenham or Oxford is to catch connecting services in Thame.

There is some concern about the increasing trend to park cars on pavements and block the path of pushchairs, wheelchairs and emergency vehicles. Often, this is because some housing has inadequate parking for modern usage.

Whilst issues such as speeding, parking and the provision of bus services are not directly land use issues and therefore outside the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan, all new development will be required to provide sufficient parking to meet modern needs and incorporate traffic calming where possible.

### **Policy TT1**

**For new homes with one, two or three bedrooms, two parking spaces within the plot must be provided. If this is not possible, for example where new terraced development is proposed, spaces should be provided for each home within close proximity to the home. For new homes with four bedrooms, each property must be provided with three spaces within the plot. (Generously sized garages (6m by 3 m) may count towards parking provision).**

**New development in the village will only be supported where it is demonstrated that there is no unduly adverse impact on the road network and pedestrian safety would not be compromised. Mitigation measures will be required for proposals resulting in significantly increased traffic movements which have negative impacts.**

**Proposals for traffic calming measures, additional off road parking for residents, parking for village facilities and improvement works to aid the through-flow of traffic will be supported.**

## 10) Housing (NH)

There has been little development over recent years with only 24 new houses being built between 1992 and 2015. This is fewer than any of its neighbouring villages of Ickford, Oakley or Shabington, and indeed less than half the number of completions in Oakley.

Recently planning permission has been granted for a total of 15 new houses of mixed sizes at land to the rear of Clifden Road and Coldstream Farm. (Known as sites 5 and 11 in the Site Assessment Document)

All public consultation related to this Neighbourhood Plan and indeed the Village Plan before it, which elicited a substantial response, is in favour of further development in Worminghall beyond the rate of new builds in recent years. This is less to meet housing need within Worminghall than to ensure a sustainable future for the village and to generate resources and land suitable for shared green space and play/recreation areas for the village's current and future residents. The appropriate number of new homes is seen as 10-15 in addition to recent permissions in the Parish.

### **Housing mix**

There has (ever since the Village Plan) been an expressed preference for a mix of housing, which should include properties that are more likely to be less expensive to young families with children. This could point in favour of some more flats and two/three bed terraced or semi-detached accommodation. There remains affordable housing in the village with some Housing Association dwellings and the Almshouses.

### **New Housing Development**

There was a strong sense that new development should be modest in scale and sensitive to the rural character of the village, so it should disturb existing dwellings and views as little as practicable. There should be space for occasional permissions for infill along roads with well-spaced out residential properties within the village boundary. However, ad-hoc development would not be able to provide the much needed play facility for the new residents and the village.

The Site Assessment Document, which is a technical background document to the Neighbourhood Plan, shows the process that the Steering Group went through to ascertain which site or sites would be most appropriate to bring forward such modest development in the Parish. Most potential sites around the periphery of the village were assessed and subject to public consultation at the event held on the 4<sup>th</sup> February 2017.

The resulting outcome was that a combination of 2 sites would provide the most appropriate location for new housing development.

This Neighbourhood Plan accordingly allocates development of land at ColdStream Farm and to the rear of the Clifden Arms (sites 10 and 11). This includes the area for which conditional outline permission was granted in December 2016 for three homes, and occupies the area of what is currently Coldstream Farm, on Waterperry Road, and the contiguous enclosed field to the rear of the car park of the Clifden Arms. This site includes previously developed land including a bungalow and chicken sheds – used for egg production. The development of this land would also remove the unneighbourly chicken farming use and whilst there will be an impact on traffic and increased activity on the site, this is outweighed by the cessation of this activity resulting in removal of the use and the provision of new homes of mixed sizes, a play area and accessible green space on the site. In addition, there is an important opportunity to add to the network of paths around the village, by providing a path through the sites to the back of the Clifden Arms. There should be no more than fifteen dwellings within this area (plus the three already been given planning permission), and they should comprise of a mix of sizes of homes, around half should be more affordable houses, whether semi-detached, terraced or flats.

#### **Policy NH1**

**New houses to be built as infill in Worminghall will be modest in scale and sensitive to the rural character of the village. Any development should disturb existing dwellings and views as little as practicable and provide a safe access. New development shall comprise a mix of housing, including properties affordable to young families with children. This will include flats and two/three bed terraced or semi-detached accommodation.**

#### **Policy NH2 - Coldstream Farm and land to the rear of the Clifden Arms**

**Coldstream Farm and the rear of the Clifden Arms is allocated for no more than a total of 18 dwellings. They should comprise a mix of units including both larger and more affordable houses. At least 9 of the dwellings should be smaller, more affordable units whether semi-detached, terraced or flats. The site will also provide:**

- **an equipped play area and accessible green space on the site,**
- **a footpath through the site linking the play area/green space with the back of the Clifden Arms car park.**

## 11) Implementation and Monitoring

The Neighbourhood Plan will be delivered and implemented over a long period and by different stakeholders and partners. Flexibility will be needed as new challenges and opportunities arise over the plan period.

The Plan will be used by the Parish Council to:

- guide comments on planning applications
- negotiate with landowners and developers to achieve the best possible outcomes from new development
- direct financial resources to the village in a structured way
- bring together groups or working parties to improve the village environment
- lobby local authorities to support the parishioners wishes and aspirations

It is important to check that progress is made towards meeting the objectives and policies of the Plan. The Parish Council will report on the implementation of the Plan every 5 years and consider

- if progress is being made to achieve the vision and the objectives of the Plan
- if progress is being made towards the implementation of the policies in the Plan
- if financial contributions available to the community arising from development is being targeted towards the identified plans and projects
- if the Plan remains based on the most up to date information
- if the Plan is being taken into account by AVDC when determining planning applications

It will then conclude whether a review is required. If so, it will secure opinions of residents and stakeholders to update the Plan.

## 12) Annex 1 WNP Policies Map

(Only sites 10 and 11 to be developed for 18 houses in total, 3 of which have outline planning permission)

