

1. Executive Summary

I am the Chairman of our Parish Plan Steering Group and I would like to take this opportunity to introduce the Plan to you and let you know more about what it is, how it all came about and some of the key points it contains.

What is the Parish Plan

Taken from the official guidance issued by The Countryside Agency:

“A Parish Plan is a statement of how the local community see itself developing over the next few years.”

The key elements are that the Plan is generated by the community and for the community. The ultimate purpose is to influence the actions and decisions of local government in order to protect, maintain and develop Woodhall Spa along the lines that we, the residents, wish. It is a constructive document which, hopefully, provides a sensible, rational and plausible direction for the development of our village.

What this Plan is not is a list of endless “no this” and “no that” statements. None of us want to live in a stagnant, dying community fearful of change and shutting ourselves away from the real world. But we also want to preserve all that is good and wonderful about our village. And quite frankly, it is down to us to apply the pressure and guidance to our local government to ensure the future of Woodhall Spa is what we want and not what some faceless bureaucrat or property developer wants.

The development process

We started out in May 2004 at the Annual Parish meeting. From then, the Steering Group was formed and work started on canvassing the community for issues and concerns to be addressed in the Plan. Several busy months later, we produced the questionnaires to send out to the community. The household survey was distributed (by hand!) to 1800 houses in the community; over 40% of those were returned, which was a tremendous response. For the more technically minded, the questionnaire was also available on the Internet. A business survey was also produced, although the response to that was disappointing. We also sought the views of the over-11's by a survey sent to QEGS, Gartree and Banovallum schools. Not to be left out, the under-11's are also represented by their vision of Woodhall Spa in the Section - Young People - where you will find quotations from the contributions made by the children of St Andrew's Church of England Primary School. Finally, a Housing Needs Survey was produced by the Community Council of Lincolnshire and distributed along with the household questionnaire.

The results from all the questionnaires were analysed by our consultant and the key issues identified. A summary of the key points was made to a packed Annual Parish Meeting in June 2005. Following on from that several draft of the Plan were produced and reviewed by the Steering Committee to reach a version that was suitable for distribution for further comment and consultation with the community and interested parties which included an open evening for views and comments, a special comments e-mail address and provision of boxes for receiving written responses. The Committee took those comments and incorporated them into this, the final version of the Parish Plan of 2005. Our final act was to present the Plan to the Parish Council for formal adoption.

What does it contain?

As you read on you will find that the document is broken down into Sections addressing separate areas of concern. Each Section looks at the issues involved, reports on the findings of the various questionnaires and identifies steps or actions to take to ensure that the community's desires and wishes are enacted or taken forward, as appropriate. A complete Action Plan is included in the

back; this Action Plan is detailed, providing timescales and identifying partners with whom we as a village need to work.

Key Issues

It should come as no surprise to anyone that the key issues of this Plan are:

- The preservation of the village atmosphere, appearance and general ambience
- The enforcement, through stricter planning control, of the scale and type of building development that will both meet the demand and preserve the “look and feel” of the village
- The preservation of Jubilee Park, through an increase in support and funding by ELDC
- The maintenance and upgrading of the woods in and around the village
- Promotion of the village to a clientele that appreciates the natural beauty, leisure facilities and appearance that we have to offer
- More attention paid to anti-social behaviour and the root causes
- The future of the Spa Baths
- The need to ensure Woodhall Spa remains a balanced and sustainable community

Who did all the work?

The donkey work in producing the information that has gone into this Plan has been done by a group of 18 volunteers from our community (the number varied slightly from meeting to meeting) over the last year. These volunteers have put in several hundred hours of unpaid personal time because they believe in this Plan and what it will mean to the village. You will find their names in the back of the Plan and I would like to thank them all on your behalf for their contributions, patience and perseverance. At times it has been an interesting experience, to say the least!

It is appropriate to acknowledge here those who have also contributed to this Plan. The Countryside Agency provided the funding, without which the cost would fall on us. Guidance and technical support was given by the Community Council of Lincolnshire and our consultant, Joss Nicholas of 15-22 Consultancy. Joss was responsible for guiding us in preparing the questions, analysing the results and preparing the drafts of the Plan for the Committee to develop. Acknowledgement is also due to Councillor David Hill for providing the impetus to kick start the whole project.

But the Plan is not the Committee’s vision or that of any of the other supporting agencies. It is your vision as expressed through the responses to the questionnaires we sent out in January and through the suggestions, ideas and concerns raised at the various public meetings or made directly to the Committee throughout the year.

Where do we go from here?

The Action Plan towards the end of this document identifies agencies and organisations to take forward some of the issues we have identified. But many of the other issues are those that we ourselves must address. The Parish Council can and should take the lead and provide the umbrella organisation in forming working groups and committees to look at specific issues; but, it is down to us to volunteer our time and expertise to support those groups and committees. This Plan is only a document; it needs people to implement the goals identified within. It also needs a willingness in our local government to listen to the needs and aspirations of those who live and work in the village.

The Parish Plan Committee will continue to meet occasionally to help oversee the implementation and support the groups which are formed to take the action forward.

We recognise the need for a balanced and sustainable community. We have separated out the Plan into the main interest areas but these areas are not to be viewed in isolation. For example, the heritage of the village is vital for the tourism industry which supports the economic regeneration; adequate services and infrastructure and sound development management underpin everything. To that end, all the issues raised in this Parish Plan need to be viewed as part of a whole; this is a Plan

for the future and not just a list of “more things to do”. We need to ensure that the Parish Council when it takes the lead in managing the outcomes of this Plan does so in a “joined up” manner and looks at the totality and not just the individual elements.

The Future

If this Plan is successful in its aims, and we are confident that it will be, then we can look forward, with a greater degree of security, that our village will maintain its charm, attractiveness, vitality and prosperity. We felt it appropriate, then, to start this Plan with a newspaper article from 2020 about the Woodhall Spa of that time, as it *could* be.

David Clarke
For the Woodhall Spa Parish Plan Steering Committee

