

## 6. Development and Planning

In the last five years, and particularly in the last two, Woodhall Spa has been subjected to unprecedented pressure for new housing, not for local need, but to feed inward migration created in part by commercial development interests.

The draft District Plan for 2001-2021, still in the consultation phase, states that no major new housing developments should be permitted and suggests a quota of 283 new homes in the plan period. Within this figure, a large number of houses have already been built with more applications coming in every month. There has also been an upsurge in building in the part of Roughton that is in Woodhall Spa.

The first Village Plan of 1988, which has now run out, prevented sub-division of plots and protected the spacious gardens in the Spa. It also allocated housing numbers and proved a very successful guardian of the Spa's character. The need to protect the nature of the unique environment was spelt out in this document: "However, the capacity of Woodhall Spa to absorb further development without serious detriment to the environment is limited..." and "The provision of open space and comprehensive footpath systems along with the planting of forest trees, will be needed to reflect the established character of Woodhall Spa."

The current District Plan that replaced it has been much less successful, partly because of the planning authority's interpretation of new national planning guidelines on density and the designation of gardens as previously developed sites, thus making them legitimate targets for development; in addition, there appears to be an underlying assumption that every brown field site, even outside the village limits, must be developed on. The Parish Council is continuing to press the District Council for a more sympathetic interpretation of national planning guidelines. There is considerable scope within the policies of the current and new draft District Plan - as well as the County Structure Plan- and the guidelines in PPG3 to allow for a more sympathetic interpretation when approving planning applications for Woodhall Spa; following the Action Plan Summary, Section 18, we have provided a table that provides a cross-reference of policies that could be applied to this and other areas of our Plan. We are not unaware of the realisation within the ELDC that Woodhall Spa has sustained significant growth due to the large number of houses being built; "I have sympathy with the view of the Parish Council in view of how much Woodhall Spa has grown over the last 10 years- the allocation of 330 + dwellings has effectively increased the population of the parish by 25-30%" is quote from the ELDC after reviewing a draft version of the Plan. We need to work together to address the issue.

It is incontrovertible that Woodhall Spa has exceeded any housing allocation numbers set by any plans and that there is no sign of the pressure for development easing, in fact just the opposite appears to be happening. It is a major concern, as the questionnaire shows, that the speed, density and numbers involved are beyond the capacity of the Spa to absorb without irreversibly destroying the balance, sustainability and very character of the community that is its major asset, a fear shared by new and existing residents alike. The spacious and open character of the Spa, planned from the start, once lost, is lost forever.

Quote  
"No more housing. It will ruin the character of the village"

Despite the level of development in the Spa as a whole, there has been little in the way of low cost, starter homes in the Parish. Instead new developments have mainly been for large executive style, detached housing, luxury flats and expensive retirement bungalows. There is a substantial negative feeling toward further housing, due to lack of



Sympathetic modern construction in the middle of the village

services and infrastructure. It is also seen as spoiling the overall aesthetics and atmosphere of the village; 84% did not want the village to have more housing developments of any kind.

If the occasional building was still permitted, residents were clear that it should be in spacious plots, conform closely to existing design and should not be built in existing large gardens.

### Low Cost Housing

The only further development considered more favourably is low-cost housing, both for young families, single people, and for retirement housing. With the number of retired and elderly people well above the national average, the provision of suitable housing is of huge importance to ensure that these groups are not forced out of their home village, though they are better catered for than young single people and young families.

It is recognised that building low cost housing is not necessarily economically attractive to building contractors and can only be insisted upon on developments above a certain number. However, the housing association properties built on recent new developments, intended to address the low-cost issue, have, as the associations have admitted, failed to do so.

It is sad that local planning and development policies have, unintentionally, had the effect of driving out these categories of villagers who genuinely want to stay in Woodhall Spa. House prices have spiralled so that average prices are more than £80,000 higher than in the surrounding area. It is therefore impossible for young people to get on the housing ladder and the balance of the community will inevitably be distorted as families who have been residents for generations can no longer afford to remain together. There are complexes of rented sheltered accommodation for the elderly. The solution will require some innovative thinking and close liaison with authorities in other parts of the UK similarly challenged.



Quote  
"More housing for 1<sup>st</sup>  
time buyers"

Nearly 84% of the survey respondents own their houses; 15% live in rented accommodation. This again shows the affluence of most of the village in comparison to the national average where only 69% are homeowners. The style and size of homes vary across the village although on face value there does seem to be more executive housing than average to low cost housing. The number of rooms would be commensurate with this, with an average of 6.2 rooms per home in comparison to 5.6 and 5.3 in East Lindsey and nationally respectively.

During the consultation period it was suggested that Woodhall Spa might benefit from more industrial style units. This was quite fiercely debated, with the end result being marginal majority in favour of units under strict conditions that they were for small, light industrial use that did not require or generate large amounts of commercial traffic. This should now be put forward to ELDC for further talks and feasibility.

### Parish Boundary

The consultation period also allowed the Parish Council to consult more widely on ways of cooperating with the outlying parish of Roughton Parish Council on planning policies and issues, or alternatively on extending the parish boundary to include part of Roughton. This area has, over the years, become in reality a part of Woodhall Spa. The boundary proposal is to extend along Kirkby Lane to Wellsyke Lane and across to Horncastle Road. For this to be done a formal request must be sent from the Parish Council to the District Council and onto the Boundary Committee.

There were a large number of complaints received relating to over-development and inappropriate development and suggesting that the conservation area should be extended as far as possible to protect the unique character of the village. The existing conservation area includes all the unique features of the village and excludes all the modern development; it is highly unlikely that an attempt to extend the area would succeed. However, Policy C1 of the current District Plan, and associated policies in the draft Plan as identified in Section 19, controls development outside the

conservation area that might affect the character or setting of the area. This is an issue on which the Parish Council should engage with ELDC.

The Spa Baths were always going to be an issue of significance to the people of Woodhall Spa. Many say the current building is nothing more than an eye sore and the majority of parishioners want something to be done about it. Most are just desperate to see something positive done with the site. Local people will not support it being turned into housing.



**The Derelict Condition of the Spa Baths Today**

There was also significant support for further development and improvement to The Broadway and Royal Square, highly valued by 74%, although they both were shadowed somewhat by issues relating to Jubilee Park. The residents felt that both The Broadway and Royal Square have become ‘tatty’. To continue the move towards a better visitor experience, 70% of residents felt some development was required in these areas. Thoughts ranged from smartening shop fronts and cleaning up the roads to moving the recycling centre and having more planters.

**What we want to achieve**

**What do we need to do**

<p>We want to stop the constant building and infill going on; no more estates - it will ruin Woodhall Spa as we all know it and the infrastructure can't take it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Press for limits on housing development in line with district and county plan housing allocation numbers</li> <li>• Engage with ELDC on a more sympathetic application of existing policies and planning guidelines contained in the District Plans, County Structure Plan and PPG3, as identified in Section 19</li> <li>• Engage with ELDC on the rigorous application of Policy C1, and associated policies on conservation areas</li> <li>• Engage with Roughton Parish Council on common planning and development issues</li> <li>• As a last resort, consider an application to extend the Parish boundary on the north side up the Horncastle Road to Sandy Lane and on the south side up Kirkby Lane to Wellsyke Lane and Moor Lane</li> </ul>
<p>Ensure all aspects of design is sympathetic with Woodhall Spa's character to both preserve and</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Street lighting and furniture to be of Edwardian design (but compliant with light pollution regulations)</li> <li>• General road signage to be of Edwardian design</li> </ul>



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refurbishment of glass shop canopy along The Broadway is required</li> <li>• Produce a Village Design Statement</li> </ul>
We do need to provide low cost housing for local young people and retired people so that they can continue to live in Woodhall Spa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We need to decide on public land that can be used for this purpose</li> <li>• We need to have tight rules about who is eligible (e.g.: first time buyers, local connections etc.)</li> <li>• We should create a working group to take this forward</li> </ul>

