

# CURRENT ISSUES – UPDATED – 14th March 2017

The Downton Society tries to monitor and investigate all planning applications within the Parish. However we may indeed miss some or not be aware of detailed issues. If you have concerns please let us know.

## CURRENT HOT ISSUES

- The Neighbourhood Plan was ratified on 9th January 2017
- The Developer's appeal against Council rejection of the proposal to build 36 houses opposite Trafalgar School was heard on 22nd February in Salisbury. The Inspector's decision is expected by early April.
- Public consultation on 4th March overwhelmingly supported the Parish Council proposal to take out a loan to cover costs for the Memorial Hall development.
- Major society effort to enforce the lorry ban has started with a meeting with our MP.
- The Society has written to the Parish Council raising a number of planning concerns.

## NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

A resounding YES to the plan.

The overwhelming support for the Neighbourhood Plan and its ratification by Wiltshire Council is a major success. What does it mean? In a nutshell, it means that the plan has to be given considerable weight in any future development or changes proposed for the area – the wishes of the people of Downton have to be considered and cannot be ignored.

The importance of this can be seen from a development appeal discussed below.

## NEW HOUSING –DEVELOPERS APPEAL

Sale of houses has begun at the Charles Church site. The planning approval document from Wiltshire Council stated that 99 dwellings would be designed “in the interests of visual amenity and the character and appearance of the area.” The developer is adding another two units to the original figure of 79 houses and 22 flats; all of them will be leasehold.

In the Wiltshire Core Strategy, Downton, a designated “service hub”, was allocated a total of 190 new houses to be built between 2015-2026. There is already pressure on that number (and a recent tally by Wiltshire Council suggests it may have been exceeded) : in addition to the new site, 50 houses have been built in Wick Lane and 14 at Charlotte Close; 4 others are under construction in the village, and at the end of February 2016 outline planning approval was given for 17 houses on the site of Scott's House (Total 186 + a number of other individual builds). An outline application for 36 houses on land opposite the secondary school was also submitted in 2016, but rejected by Parish and County Councils – one of the reasons being that it would result in excess housing numbers for Downton. The Downton Society fully supported this decision.

However, the developer, Foreman Homes, registered an appeal in December. The Parish Council has sustained its objection to the development, Trafalgar School and neighbouring residents have also objected and the Downton Society has responded, raising infrastructure concerns including road safety, drainage, housing density and pressure on local facilities which would result from excess housing numbers.

The formal Appeal hearing was held on 22nd February 2017 in Salisbury. Both the Parish Council and Downton Society were represented throughout the day long hearing and spoke against the proposal. The Inspector will make a judgement once he has assessed all the evidence: and the outcome is expected in early April.

This appeal highlights why your endorsement of the Neighbourhood Plan on 24th November was so important. In the face of government policies, which favour housing development, the Society's focus is to ensure that our Plan is taken into account when planning decisions are made, that development is sustainable and proportionate, and legitimate concerns of residents are not ignored. The appeal decision will be an important one. If the appeal is dismissed by the Inspector it will reinforce our Neighbourhood Plan; if the appeal is upheld and development proceeds, it will undermine the concept of local and neighbourhood planning – and could, potentially, encourage further development in our area..

## TRAFFIC

Traffic flow and parking in Downton is problematic and extra housing is likely to exacerbate it. We address this issue whenever a planning application is made for new development.

A Parish Council working group, in which society members were involved, found that there were few ways of improving the availability of parking in the village. Restricting parking areas or making parking available to certain groups only (e.g. residents, visitors) simply pushed the 'problem' elsewhere and there were no realistic ways of increasing parking spaces

There is continual flouting of the HGV weight limit of 7.5 tons. The problem is largely down to poor signage and all attempts to address this at various levels (including Area Board and County council) have failed. We feel strongly that, unless there is clear signage at major access points (especially from the M27) lorry drivers will be tempted to use the B3080 as a short cut through the village.

Having failed at local level, and even through the Area Board, the Society has escalated the issue and had a very positive meeting with our MP John Glen earlier this month. He has agreed to write to appropriate bodies to instigate action. We will keep you posted.

## THE SCHOOL

The final design for the extension to the school has been approved by Wiltshire Council - and will feature (previously rejected) Redeco Panelling. The society is extremely disappointed with what we feel will be an inappropriate and unimaginative finish for a building in the middle of a Conservation area, but we, and especially residents in listed buildings nearby, will have to live with it. Despite design setbacks, the society will continue to monitor environmental or infrastructure issues which may arise from the development. The work is due to start in May.

## THE MEMORIAL HALL

It is proposed to increase the size of the Memorial Hall to accommodate meeting rooms and accommodation for the pre-school. As developers contributions will not cover the full cost the Parish council plan to take out a public works loan for the difference, with the community asked to fund this by a charge levied on local tax. A public consultation was held on 4th March in the Memorial Hall and those residents who voted overwhelmingly supported the extension and the increase in the council tax.

## OTHER ISSUES

Bridges.

In co-operation with the Parish Council we had a very successful clean up of the bridges last June. The Society is keen to co-operate with the PC on other similar community projects, and discussions to this effect with their Amenities committee has already resulted in the footpath initiative (see below) We feel there are other areas where the community, working together, can significantly improve our village environment, so if you have suggestions, let us know

Footpaths

At a Parish Council Amenities meeting in September, it was agreed unanimously to delegate the promotion of use and any footpath maintenance issues to the Downton Society Footpath Group. The Footpath group will report back any issues, raise working parties and work in partnership with the Parish Council Amenities committee. The Footpath Group has walked the Parish paths and beyond for over 10 years; members have worked together with the Parish Council to obtain grants for kissing gates, and to help Wiltshire Council install them over the Southern Wiltshire area. If you would like to raise any issues about the state of stiles or any parish path issues, please contact Susan Barnhurst-Davies 01725 512963 [susankirsten@btinternet.com](mailto:susankirsten@btinternet.com)

Proposed bridge

You may be aware of the proposals to link the southern area of the village (Moot Lane) with The Borough by a footpath and bridge. We understand that the owner, Longford Estates, has given approval in principle but subject to more detailed proposals. There is also the not insignificant issue of funding. The Downton Society supports the idea of the footpath and bridge but, again, subject to more detail and consultation.

Wiltshire Council.

Some departments seem better resourced than other but telephone messages left requiring a call back are rarely responded to. So be aware and you may well have to persist, e-mail or write.

Reporting issues.

Members might like to know that the old "Clarence" system of reporting pothole and maintenance issues to Wiltshire Council has been replaced by "My Wiltshire" online reporting. Go to [www.wiltshire.gov.uk/report](http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/report) and register your concern (anonymously, if preferred) "My Wiltshire" covers a range of issues including dog mess, street litter, graffiti and litter bins, potholes, verges, traffic lights and trees (a full list is provided on the site).

Another site to try is "Fix My Street" ([www.fixmystreet.com](http://www.fixmystreet.com)) particularly useful for reporting potholes and flytipping which can be identified using map co-ordinates.

The Community Policing Team can be contacted on [southwiltshirecpt@wiltshire.police.uk](mailto:southwiltshirecpt@wiltshire.police.uk)