

## **Hermitage Neighbourhood Development Plan – July 2021 update**

Although things may appear to have gone quiet on this topic, I can assure you that the Steering Group (SG) has been steadily progressing our Neighbourhood Development Plan over the past few months, despite Covid restrictions, and have met remotely (via the wonders of Zoom) each month to review progress and discuss future plans.

### **What have we done so far?**

In October last year, we held a successful open day at Hermitage Primary School where we gleaned thoughts from residents about how they want Hermitage to develop (or not!)

In February this year we engaged arc4, a specialist organisation, to conduct a survey of all households in the village to find out what our housing needs are. Although only 34.6 per cent responded, this gave us valid evidence to suggest we need affordable housing rather than mansions. You can see their report summary on the Hermitage Parish Council website under Neighbourhood Development Plan <https://hermitage.org.uk/parish-council/>

We are also actively involved in reviewing the West Berkshire Housing Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) which has identified two potential sites for development in Hermitage. These are in addition to sites already in the planning application pipeline ie behind the White Horse Pub, Charlotte Close, the Old Farmhouse and the old butchers shop.

### **What happens next?**

Based on this feedback, we have developed a draft **Vision for Hermitage to 2037** which is also on the Parish Council website. For those without access to a computer, it is reproduced below. Please send any comments to [Hermitagendp@gmail.com](mailto:Hermitagendp@gmail.com)

We would like to hold a further event in the autumn where we will share an outline of our draft NDP document and invite comments.

### **How long will it take to produce the NDP?**

What you may not know is that, because of other pressures, the Steering Group is now down to four people – ordinary people from our village, who care passionately about the potential impact of future developments on our way of life in this pleasant green corner of the Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)

As you might imagine, creating an NDP is a lengthy process, as ultimately it becomes a legal document with which future developers must comply. We are at the stage now when we have to question whether this task can be completed by just four volunteers in their spare time. Other villages have been fortunate in having many volunteers willing to roll up sleeves, research, gather and collate evidence, draft documents, engage stakeholders, identify relevant statistics and national planning policies and perform a myriad of other tasks that contribute to the development of this document.

Reluctantly, we must accept that without further support from active members, the Steering Group will fail to produce the NDP.

As a result, the Steering Group has decided to invite tenders from town planning professionals to establish what professional support is available to us and whether we can obtain sufficient grant funding to continue with developing the Hermitage NDP.

We will keep you informed.