

<b>Document</b>	<b>Communications Plan</b>
<b>Service/Committee</b>	<b>Democratic, Legal and Policy Task and Finish Group</b>
<b>Workstream</b>	<b>Saunderton evidence examination</b>
Portfolio holder – TFG Chairman	Cllr John Savage
Vice Chairman	Cllr Alex Collingwood
Key dates	Sept – Dec 2015
Communications officer	Sue Robinson
Delivery service area	Democratic services



## **Background**

Wycombe District Council is launching an independent inquiry to be led by the Council's Task and Finish Group who are to examine the case for the expansion of Saunderton. The Group will work completely independently of the Council's Planning and Sustainability service and will use the evidence it gathers to make its recommendations directly to the Improvement and Review Committee and to Wycombe District Council's Cabinet in November.

## **Location**

Saunderton is a small village which lies on the A4010 approximately half way between High Wycombe and Princes Risborough. It lies in the Chilterns AONB and Green Belt land.

## **Population**

Saunderton has a relatively small population of approximately 300 households. There are many commuters who use the railway station and the local population has young professionals with young families many of whom have moved to the village for the schools and countryside.

## **Access**

It has a railway station which is served by Chiltern Railways. Trains to and from London Marylebone and Princes Risborough stop on average once per hour. Capacity at the station car park is currently limited to 47 spaces and there is 'overspill' car parking on nearby streets.

The village is accessed primarily from two roads (Slough Lane and Haw Lane) which have junctions with the A4010 Wycombe to Princes Risborough road. There is further road access connecting Saunderton to Bledlow Ridge and Bledlow village. Access on both these roads is currently physically restricted due the railway which crosses these roads and the A4010 into West Wycombe has queuing traffic at rush hour.

## **Other notable issues**

Planning permission has been granted for 42 homes on the former West's Yard site. The former Molins brownfield site to the north of the village has been empty for several years. Plans for data warehousing (E-Shelter) were granted in 2008 but the development did not proceed.

There is an active planning application for a housing development from St Congar for 212 homes. This has now gone to the Planning Inspector on appeal for non-determination. Any housing development of this site would be higher density than the surrounding area and for some people less preferable than continuing use as employment site or an alternative use. The landowner has also bought other neighbouring land and could possibly apply in the future for a further housing development.

Historically the village has suffered from flooding. In 2014 substantial remedial work was needed around the Golden Cross pub to ensure water did not worsen the floods to the main A4010 road. Roads under the railway bridges often flood.

There is a strong sense of community in the village and in neighbouring Bledlow Ridge. A campaign group, the Molins Action Group (MAG) which was formed earlier this year is highly vocal and mobilised with literature being distributed widely. A website, Save our Saunderton and Twitter feed are in place.

There is an opportunity to expand the village, creating a so-called 'Greater Saunderton' which could deliver infrastructure improvements and long term be a more sustainable option rather than piecemeal developments. However, this option would need detailed investigation and research to be undertaken for which there is no mandate.

Bledlow-cum-Saunderton Parish Council has applied for a Neighbourhood Plan to cover the whole parish (including Bledlow). The first stage of this process i.e. agreeing the Neighbourhood Area will overlap with the consultation work and is due to be formally agreed by mid-October. Once this first stage is agreed, the Parish Council would be in a position to start work on a Neighbourhood Plan which would set out a vision and parameters for development within the parish boundaries. The plan has to be compatible with district wide policies and plans. This would go before a planning inspector and ultimately lead to a referendum of the parish residents.

The Task and Finish Group will investigate the options open at this point by listening to the views of local residents and key stakeholders. The communications team will work with the Group to recommend and implement both the planning and delivery of a community outreach and awareness programme designed to ensure that relevant parties are aware of the background, the decisions to be taken and how they can express their views to the Task and Finish Group.

### **Objectives**

- Increase awareness of the issues facing Saunderton
- To explain in clear and simple terms the choices, facing the village and explore the threat and the opportunities for the expansion of village
- Manage expectations and communicate what is 'in scope' and what cannot be changed (e.g. comment on St Congar application)
- Explain the process and timescales of Task and Finish Group work
- Communicate directly with local residents to ensure that all those who wish to participate in the consultation can do so
- Facilitate a direct conversation and dialogue between local residents and the Task and Finish Group
- Manage the process in an open and transparent fashion so that it stands up against future scrutiny

### **Strategy**

- Proactive and targeted work to directly inform and listen to people living locally
- Build direct, meaningful dialogue 'round the table' with key stakeholders, including MAG, Parish Council.
- Ensure local people are given direct channels to give their views to the Task and Finish Group and adequate ability to express their views
- Demonstrate an independent, open and transparent process
- Use direct and indirect communications channels to reach people

## **Messaging**

- The Council recognises the location within AONB and Green Belt is going to 'sanity check' the idea of expanding Saunderton before making any other decisions
- The village faces piecemeal development which could increase the population but as neither of the active sites would be big enough, would not trigger any significant infrastructure benefits such as a new school. There are choices and trade-offs which have to be carefully weighed up.
- There are various options open– Area Action Plan, Neighbourhood Plan and Local Plan .What do you think is the best?
- We will keep local residents fully informed during the process
- We are talking to key stakeholders
- We are listening to what local residents have to tell us - your comments matter and will be captured in a transparent way
- We will feed back on what you have told us and what we are going to do as a result

## **Communications Actions and recommendations**

- Work with local media (Bucks Herald, Bucks Free Press, Mix 96) to gain coverage.
- Issue news releases at start, ahead of meetings and at decision point and offer down the line radio interviews.
- Use direct mail to invite local residents to come to face to face meetings.
- Use a flier and a covering letter rather than try to explain everything in a text heavy letter which may not get read.
- Ensure that face to face event is held at a convenient, accessible local venue and at a start time which will not exclude commuters living in the village.
- If there is strong demand, avoid reputational damage of a 'backlash' reaction and have a back-up reserve date for a second, identical meeting.
- Show locations on a map to be clear both in the flier and in presentation materials.
- Clearly describe the Task and Finish examination process and set out the key dates.
- Ensure the local Member is up to date.
- Post Information and updates on WDC website in timely fashion.
- Use Twitter @wycombedc
- Public meeting – demonstrate transparency with 'livescribe' technique - live capture of comments which are projected onto screens for all attendees to see what is being noted. Use the livescribe content as an instant deliverable which can be published on the WDC website and made available to anyone not able to attend the meeting.
- Set up a dedicated email address for feedback and queries about the consultation – [saundertonmeeting@wycombe.gov.uk](mailto:saundertonmeeting@wycombe.gov.uk)
- Ensure that public are aware they can attend and hear the Task and Finish Group examine planning officers and Cabinet Member.
- Communicate recommendations and next steps.

## Timeline planning and critical dates

<b>August</b>	<b>September</b>	<b>October</b>	<b>November</b>	<b>December</b>
Preparation planning; agree engagement channels; drafting communications deliverables. Liaison with Democratic Services	Liaison with Democratic Services	Liaison with Democratic Services	Liaison with Democratic Services	Liaison with Democratic Services
Promote decision to go to T&FG to media – ‘sanity check’ news release	Promote meeting dates to local media  Media interviews	Invite local media to local event(s) and T&FG meeting and follow up as necessary		
Research local venues  Check venues and book dates	Draft and clear direct mail deliverable for residents – covering letter and flier to be signed off by TFG Chair Promote to local residents Monitor take-up and ‘Plan B’ booking for second meeting if needed.	Run meetings and events		
		Feedback and sharing livescribe inputs to process with local residents	I&R meeting and recommendations Feedback and sharing with local residents	
			Cabinet Meeting Feedback and sharing T&FG recommendations with local residents	

			(email, local media)	
Neighbourhood Area consultation starts		Neighbourhood area consultation completes		