

Woodstock Community & Infrastructure Plan Feedback From Sustainable Woodstock

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We are a local voluntary community group and we aim is to raise awareness and champion environmental issues in our community and local businesses. Working together, we believe we can support projects and campaigns to tackle issues with a greater likelihood of success. We are interested in raising awareness on issues such as climate change, energy conservation, waste reduction, recycling, bio-diversity, sustainable economics and respect for our planet and believe that local action is influencing change on national and international issues.

The following list is not prioritised and are our ideas. No detail is given.

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1) Woodstock's Carbon Footprint.

Combating climate change, pollution reduction health & wellbeing.

Sustainable Woodstock would like to propose that we reduce the carbon footprint of our town. This can be done with relatively simple actions such as:

- a) Increasing the number of:
 - (i) solar panels (both heat and electricity generating)
 - (ii) air source heat pumps,
 - (iii) other sustainable, renewable heat sources
- b) Tree planting
- c) Introducing an electric-car pool and installation of charging points in the town. And further to this, designs and facilities to reduce the need for residents to use their cars, e.g. shared ownership, local electric bus service (maybe subsidised), local delivery service
- d) Creation of a "smart" local energy automation system (local "smart" grid). A creative larger project that links local renewables, electric cars and battery storage to optimise community energy use as well as cutting costs for residents. These projects can attract long-term support from various sources. This could

make a big difference here in Woodstock and set up a “smart” grid? A larger-scale renewable generation system, such as a solar park, should be explored with a view to installing nearby to serve the town.

- e) Plug-In installations in the town for electric vehicles.
- f) Developing a scheme for helping residents and local businesses to upgrade the efficiency of their homes, offices and processes. This could include promotional material, funding to assist with implementation (e.g. consultants to identify possibilities and help to implement them, alongside potentially Capital such as favourable loans that could be repaid from savings in energy bills)

The recent 2018 Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report states that we have just 12 years to act on climate change if global temperatures are to be kept within the recommended 1.5 degrees Celsius. Oxford City Council has joined other councils across the world in declaring a climate emergency.

Sustainable Woodstock is happy to help by working with local councils, the Low Carbon Hub and like-minded groups to help make this happen.

2) **Affordable Homes**

Sustainable Community.

Not just a token. Affordable homes are difficult to define and the term affordable depends on many factors. Essentially people should be able to live where they work and this means having the right mix of homes more of everything. That way everyone will be able to find a home that is affordable to them. It's explained more fully in the link to the Shelter report below:

<https://blog.shelter.org.uk/2015/08/what-is-affordable-housing/>

3) **Housing Specifications**

Combating climate change, biodiversity, health & wellbeing, contact with nature.

- a) Energy specifications. Should be to the highest energy specifications with “smart” regulation of solar panels, air-source heat pumps and batteries.
- b) Plug in charging points. Each house should have a charging point installed for future electric vehicles.
- c) Swift, Swallow, Bat Accommodation & Hedgehog Highways. Woodstock is a known site for the return and nesting of swifts, swallows and house martins and has a good bat population. Research has shown that homes that welcome the natural world are good not just for wildlife, but also for human health and wellbeing. New housing developments should include places for birds to nest and other wildlife to be accommodated. “There is an urgent need to ensure developments do not become sterile places with little wildlife”.

RSPB engages with development companies to increase the likelihood that wildlife is considered at the start of the design process.”

Read more at <https://www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/conservation/projects/kingsbrook-housing/#xtR7vA2xCTRI632o.99>

4) **Wildlife Corridors, Verges & Urban Green Space**

Combating climate change and biodiversity.

- a) Wildlife corridors link wildlife habitats. Generally it consists of native vegetation that join two or more larger areas of similar wildlife habitat. Wildlife corridors should be part of the new housing developments and they should NOT be simple set aside strips of land. They should be properly planned with input from institutions such as Wildlife Trust's (BBOWT), RSPB etc.

Much of England's wildlife is now restricted to wildlife sites, which consist largely of semi-natural habitats. However, surviving in small, isolated sites is difficult for many species, especially in the longer term and given climate change. Corridors are critical for the maintenance of ecological processes including allowing for the movement of animals and their continuation.

b) Verges and Urban Green Space

Wildlife corridors could be extended to include changes of management to verges and urban green space to promote flowering plants and insects (in other words, a more relaxed green space as an integral part of bringing wildlife and development closer together at the planning stage. Advice should be sought on what an urban space maximised for wildlife could look like.

More reading

(i) defra publication : *Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services*

<https://www.cbd.int/doc/world/gb/gb-nbsap-v3-p1-en.pdf>

(ii) *Making space for nature': a review of England's wildlife sites*

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/making-space-for-nature-a-review-of-englands-wildlife-sites-published-today>

5) Road Crossings A44 from Hill Rise to Woodstock East

Safer community, community development

- a) Upgrade the zebra crossing at the Causeway (with very poor markings at the moment) to a pelican crossing.
- b) Create a new pelican crossing in Hill Rise to enable families safer access to bus stops and green spaces including the community woodland and community orchard.
- c) Create crossing points near Woodstock East

6) Speed Limit Reduction on A44

Safer community, noise pollution and quality of life.

- a) Advance warning-signs/signals of speed limits approaching, especially where a downhill stretch reduces the opportunity for natural speed decay.
- b) Increase zone for 30 mph limit:
 - i. North of Woodstock to Stratford Lane
 - ii. South of Woodstock to Bladon roundabout.
- c) Existing 30 mph change to 20 mph zone on A44 through the town, as in areas of Oxford such as Summertown and Headington, and in school zones.

7) Weight Restriction on A44

Safer community, noise pollution and quality of life.

Consider restricting weight of lorries through the town along with other towns such as Chipping Norton and Bladon.

8) Accessibility for Disabled & Able-bodied

Accessibility, health and wellbeing, community development, contact with nature, local produce

- a) Ensure all community buildings are accessible but noting the particular difficulties at the pharmacy
- b) Community Woodland & Community Orchard. Invested in pathways to allow access to groups and not just able-bodied residents and visitors. Maximise community investment and facility by maintaining existing pathways through the facility by infrequent but regular grass cutting and invasive weed control (minimal)

9) Encouraging Cycling and Walking and Security for Bikes

Combating climate change, a safer community, health & wellbeing.

Cycling and walking should be encouraged. In some areas the footpaths need to be improved greatly as they are dangerous when walking with children or those who need assistance.

- a) Cycle tracks should be established and should be designed from the outset for new housing areas.
- b) More secure sites for bikes should be available in the town as there are frequently no sites available.

10) Public Transport

Combating climate change.

- a) Park & Ride. Woodstock is fairly well served by public transport at present. However, a Park and Ride service near Oxford Airport would be effective at cutting traffic travelling into Oxford and with a shuttle-type service could be an effective means for bringing visitors to Blenheim and all parts of Woodstock.
- b) Additional bus stops to service Woodstock East, Bladon Chains caravan site and Cow Yards, Blenheim. Buses should be electric.

11) Everyday Shopping in Woodstock

Combating climate change, community development.

- a) There are many lifestyle shops in Woodstock but we should be encouraging the establishment of stores that support local producers of meat, vegetables, fruit and other foodstuffs.
- b) Shops should also be encouraged to offer refill stations and deposit-return stations / machines.

12) Waste and Recycling

Combating climate change, sustainable community.

Doorstep collections of waste and recycling in Oxfordshire has a good record.

- a) Quality of waste bins throughout the town should be improved and maintained.
- b) Most street waste bins have cans, bottles, etc. and do not allow segregation for recycling. Waste bins should be replaced with segregated recycling bins.

13) Allotments

Community development, health & wellbeing, mental wellbeing, contact with nature, fresh local produce

There is enormous pressure on the land for building but most new houses or flats offer virtually no land for growing their own. Around the country there are approximately 350,000 allotments but approximately 800,000 are on a waiting list for an allotment.

- a) Given the positive reasons for having an allotment, rather than have a waiting list the town should consider providing what's needed.
- b) Given the very poor quality of soil in our area, take up and maintenance should be encouraged by preparing new and existing allotments with decent top soil

Benefits of allotment gardening - see National Allotment Society for more detail.
<https://www.nsalg.org.uk/allotment-info/benefits-of-allotment-gardening/>

14) Facilities for Young People

Health & wellbeing, community development

Woodstock is provided with play areas for young children.

- a) New housing means that play areas need to be maintained, upgraded and expanded.
- b) Additional Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA) for older children/young people will be needed. This could be either at Old Woodstock or Woodstock South/South East.

15) Indoor Recreational/Leisure Amenity

Health & wellbeing, mental wellbeing and community development

Sport and other leisure activities bring benefits to people and to society. Activities can improve physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing, individual development, social and community development and economic development. Purpose built community facility for all ages should be available for sports and leisure-type activities.

- a) Typical flexible sporting activities could be basketball, netball, badminton, martial arts, ping pong, etc.
- b) Resources could be for a community library and rooms available for crafts, small meeting rooms, etc.

16) Healthcare Provision

Health & wellbeing, mental health and community support.

Reports suggest that the building housing Woodstock Surgery is close to being unfit for purpose. This is a community practice for approx. 9000 residents, of which 6000 live outside of the Woodstock. In order to retain the practice for the whole community and surrounds it is important to ensure that NHS England supports the retention and development of a new building. The town seems an appropriate site with good road and bus links and parking possibilities.

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