

**PLANNING FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT  
PUBLIC MEETING, NOVEMBER 16<sup>TH</sup> 2010 FEEDBACK FORM**

**RESPONSE OF THE ODIHAM SOCIETY**

**Introduction**

The object of this submission by The Odiham Society (“OdSoc”) is to provide the consensus views of our Executive Committee and Planning Sub-Committee on the answers to the questions posed by The Odiham Parish Council at its public meeting on November 16. It is for use by The Parish Council for the purposes of their current consultation with the people of Odiham about planning & development strategy. If The Parish Councillors were to wish to pass copies to Hart Councillors or to HDC planning officials we would have no objection.

The first part of the document provides summary answers to each of the questions posed in the feedback form, with only very limited reasons. The second part of the document is an Appendix which contains brief comments on, and explanations of, much of the background and the thinking behind the individual conclusions. By their nature, most of these comments and explanations apply to more than one of the four individual questions and, for this reason, we have not attempted to cross reference the Appendix to the conclusions.

The views expressed in this document come from discussion within the two committees, a number of members of which have also spoken to others in Odiham Parish, both members and non-members of OdSoc, but such discussions could not properly be said to be part of any formal OdSoc consultation process. The consultation in this instance is being carried out by The Parish Council, not by OdSoc. Also, as is only to be expected in such circumstances, not all persons involved in these discussions agree on all the points and individuals will also be submitting their own responses on the Feedback Forms.

**1. What development, if any, do you believe is appropriate for Odiham parish (including North Warnborough) to take over the next 20 Years? Please try and be as specific as you can, and please give reasons for your response.**

1(a) OdSoc believes that growth is required but that, at least for the current planning cycle, this growth should be restricted to that which can properly be contained substantially within the existing settlement boundaries and within the constraints imposed by respecting, protecting and enhancing the conservation areas.

1(b) Our judgement, based on the information set out in the Appendix, is that this level of development is of the order of 5 – 10 new houses per annum or, over a 20 year period, 100 – 200 houses, with perhaps 125 as the right sort of number.

1(c) However, if there were to be real and demonstrable local demand for greater development then OdSoc would be pleased to support a longer term detailed study of where outside but adjacent to existing settlement boundaries such development might best be located and what form the development might take; we do not believe that such a study could be done properly in the timeframes currently envisaged for this present review. It might be appropriate to carry out such a

study in the form of some kind of Parish Plan document to help clarify Odiham's position in the context of the Government's "localism" agenda, when more is known of what that actually means.

**2. What, if any, facilities do you believe Odiham needs which might be (wholly or partly) paid for from developer contributions. Please give reasons for your response.**

2 To a large extent the answer to this question depends on the size, nature and location of the development. That said, the sorts of things that Odiham might need from developer contributions are:

- Recreational and leisure facilities, particularly recreational space for children.
- Car parking additional to that driven entirely by the needs of individual dwellings (assuming that those dwellings are themselves provided with proper parking facilities).
- Various highway improvements, particularly for dealing with the difficult bottlenecks around Robert Mays School at key times.
- Affordable housing (beyond any mandated by the planning process).

**3. If you believe some development is necessary, please say where you would be prepared to see it go and why.**

3(a) Given our views expressed in Para 1(a) above we have to consider two very different scenarios:

- Development limited substantially to within current settlement boundaries and protecting current conservation areas ("Organic Development"), and
- Development adjacent to current settlement boundaries ("External Development") given, as we have said, sufficient and demonstrable local demand for such development.

Organic Development

3(b) The scope for organic development in Odiham and North Warnborough settlements ("O&NW") is, we believe, really quite limited, hence our judgement of only about 125 houses over 20 years.

External Development

3(c) In short, we have already said in Para 1(c) above that the location of any potential external development needs to be the subject of a separate study which cannot reasonably be completed in the short time frame available for the present planning cycle.

3(d) We would add that obvious potential sites for external development include the SHLAA candidate sites. However, each of these has very real (but perhaps not fatal) drawbacks. For example, the 4 sites that together form the land to the west of Dunley's Hill between Odiham and North Warnborough currently comprise the designated local gap between the two settlements which is important to both conservation areas; some kind of significant gap would almost certainly need to be retained. Also, a number of the sites by the Canal in North Warnborough could potentially damage the North Warnborough Conservation Area and/or the Canal Conservation Area. The Close

Meadow, Hatchwood Farm and Archery Fields sites are all, in their own different ways, very important to the Odiham Conservation Area including, in particular, views of it from the by-pass and the gateways to the village.

3(e) There may be other potential sites of which perhaps the most obvious and frequently mentioned is The Deer Park. Whilst OdSoc would not instantly dismiss this as some kind of long term possibility, house building in The Deer Park would obviously be a hugely controversial move for Odiham and would generate a great deal of local opposition as well as, presumably, support.

**4. Please indicate any particular places you would NOT want to see any development and why.**

4(a) This question really relates, in the context of this OdSoc response, only to any potential External Development because, as far as we know, there is no scope for further significant development within the settlement boundaries in places not already protected by the conservation areas or, like the BMW site, long acknowledged by OdSoc as suitable for development.

4(b) The External Development aspects are already covered in Para 3(c) to 3(e) above.

**Please give your name and post code: .R Andrew Burnett, The Odiham Society, RG29 1LG**

**May we contact you for clarification of any of your answers? Yes/ ~~No~~**

**With further information about this subject only? Yes/ ~~No~~**

**If yes, please give your email address or telephone number: 01256 703105  
ribonnet@btinternet.com**

**This information will only be used by Odiham Parish Council for these purposes. No personal information will be shared with any third party.**

**R Andrew Burnett**

**3 December 2010**

In arriving at the above view we have considered, among other things:

**Odiham Parish Comprises Four Very Different Settlements**

I Odiham parish contains four distinct settlements (being towns or villages with settlement boundaries), all of which have different characteristics and potentially different housing needs:

- Odiham, including The Odiham Conservation Area (“Odiham CA”) and to a limited extent The Basingstoke Canal Conservation Area (“Canal CA”). Odiham was classified in the Preferred Options (2006) document, which in the event was not taken forward but which is none-the-less an interesting and thoughtful analysis, as a Rural Service Centre, and not as a Main Settlement. But it is Odiham High Street that has virtually all the shops in the Parish and so it is Odiham that is under the greatest pressure for housing if that housing is to be located near the shops. There are currently about 1,000 houses within the Odiham Settlement boundary (out of perhaps 2,050 in the whole Parish).

- North Warnborough (which includes Bartley Heath), includes The North Warnborough Conservation Area (“NW CA”) and the Canal CA. It has about 550 houses in its settlement boundary and is classified in the Preferred Options (2006) document as a Smaller Settlement.

- RAF Odiham, with about 400 houses, classified in the Preferred Options (2006) document, as a Smaller Settlement.

- Broad Oak, with about 30 houses, which includes part of the Canal CA, is classified in the Preferred Options (2006) document as an existing small settlement with limited or no services or public transport that does not constitute a sustainable location for new housing and should have its settlement boundary removed.

**RAF Odiham Is A Special Case**

II OdSoc believes that for the purposes of Hart District Council’s (“HDC”) strategic planning RAF Odiham, important though it clearly is to the success of Odiham’s shops and to the services required, such as schools, should not be included in any consideration of numbers for future housing development. We say this because RAF housing demands are entirely within the control of Government rather than of HDC. The best course of action for HDC, and indeed for Hampshire County Council, in considering infrastructure requirements for Hart is to obtain future projections of RAF Odiham housing demand from the appropriate military sources.

**Broad Oak Is Too Small To Take Any Development**

III OdSoc agrees that the Broad Oak settlement boundary should be removed and that there should be no presumption of future building in Broad Oak.

### **The Importance Of Settlement Boundaries**

IV The existing settlement boundaries of both Odiham and North Warnborough are drawn quite tightly around the existing built up areas. The Conservation Areas are more widely drawn so, for example, The Deer Park is in Odiham CA but not within the settlement boundary and North Warnborough Green is in the NW CA but not within the settlement boundary. OdSoc takes the settlement boundaries seriously, given the presumption for building within them and against building outside them, and is concerned that settlement boundaries should not be too easily allowed to creep outwards into the adjacent fields, which is not to suggest that they are completely unchangeable.

### **For Consideration Of Development Potential Combine Odiham & North Warnborough**

V As to Odiham and North Warnborough (“O&NW”) themselves, we believe that it is right to combine these two settlements for the purposes of consideration of their development potential. But in explaining our judgement of future housing development numbers we would make the following background comments:

#### **Protection Of Shopping Facilities**

V.i The shopping facilities in Odiham are vital to the sustainability of Odiham as we know it but they, like the shops in many such villages everywhere, are under constant pressure and threat, generated largely by concentrations of larger shops elsewhere and by easy access by car to these nearby commercial centres. For Odiham to remain substantially as it is there must be change. But how many houses are needed to achieve any real suspension of potential decline? Or, perhaps the question should be how many hundreds of houses? In the absence of hundreds of new houses what else can be done about the shops? Do even hundreds of new houses necessarily halt decline? Is the continued decline of local shops in villages the size of Odiham an irreversible fact of modern life? Does one get greater advantage from building more houses within the community or from attracting more people to come in from outside with excellent niche shops or more offices? Or does the answer lie in some clever combination of all of the above? We don’t claim to know the answers, nor would most of us believe anyone who did.

However, continued controlled and responsible growth in the form of new houses, particularly in O&NW, where the majority of the potential customers live, surely is to be welcomed provided that it is contained to the extent where it does not damage the existing environment of the villages and make them less desirable places to live and/or work. But what does controlled and responsible growth really mean in terms of housing numbers?

#### **Enhancement Of Conservation Area**

V.ii O&NW both have very different but very important conservation areas, which must be protected and enhanced with regard not only to their appearance and feeling from within the conservation areas themselves but also to the views from inside them to outside and from the outside over and into them. Considerable detail of these conservation areas and their protection is

given in the relatively recent reviews of all three areas and in the excellent Village Design Statement adopted in 2009. So, what is the effect of new housing on these conservation areas and their views?

### **Recognition As Rural Not Urban**

V.iii O&NW are both essentially rural settlements. They are not Main Urban Areas of Hart nor can they properly be described as Primary Local Service Centres (in the language of the LDF Background Paper titled A Settlement Hierarchy for Hart District); they are between them called a Secondary Local Service Centre, even though they are in truth two separate settlements as explained above. Given this rural nature and their strong conservation areas they surely cannot sensibly be earmarked for any kind of simple prorated allocation of any housing demand that might apply generally to HDC. So, how many houses?

### **The Five Year Supply Of Building Land**

V.iv There is much concentration in planning circles at present on the need for Local Planning Authorities (“LPAs”) to have identified a five year supply of building land. We heard from Councillor Ken Crookes at the public meeting on 16 November that HDC believes that, regardless of Odiham, Hart does indeed have the required 5 year supply, given HDC’s view of the five year demand (which could, of course, be challenged). This five year demand issue cannot possibly be applied at a level as low as O&NW whose real demand cannot be assessed with enough accuracy; that said, if by “demand” one were to mean people who would like to live in O&NW, regardless of house prices, then it would be huge as O&NW are, at least for now, very nice places to live. So, how many houses?

### **Even After Its Revocation The South East Plan May Not Be Completely Irrelevant**

V.v The now to be revoked South East Plan (“SEP”) gave a degree of protection to O&NW by including them in “The Rest of Hampshire” and setting a requirement of an average of just five new dwellings per annum from all of this South Western corner of Hart, including O&NW. Surely, even though that particular document is no longer in force, its basic rationale was sensible enough; it was considered to be a perfectly respectable view last year against a backdrop of very severe Government desire to impose housing on LPAs. So, should it now be totally forgotten, particularly if the “locals” in the context of a localism agenda, which one would logically expect to be less prescriptive than the previous regime, are of the view that it was what they thought to be right? OdSoc has always accepted that the SEP number was probably fair for our circumstances.

### **Car Parking!**

V.vi Car parking has always been a particularly difficult issue in Odiham. If footfall is to be increased in the High Street then something must be done about either the reality or the perception that “there’s no point in popping into Odiham for x, y, z because we won’t be able to park”.

## **So, How Many Houses?**

VI.i So, how many houses for O&NW? Clearly, there is no one simple answer. It is a judgement based on many factors, including those set out above. The OdSoc view of controlled and responsible growth in terms of housing numbers is summarised in our answer to Question 1 above. In 3(a) above we characterise the potential development in two parts, “Organic Development” which is development substantially within the constraints of the existing settlement boundaries and conservation areas, and “External Development” which means expanding the settlement boundaries. Looking now in more detail at each of these areas in turn:

### **Organic Development**

VI.ii There is one clearly developable site at BMW which the SHLAA counts as having the potential for 20 houses; we would agree with this assessment but would add that there should also be the facility for shopping along the site’s frontage to the High Street. Otherwise there is the site perhaps now known best as the Myrtle Cottage site, following the recent failed attempt to build 9 or 23 houses on it; the real difficulty is access to the site but it still has the potential for, say, 20 houses, albeit by no means certain.

VI.iii There are also two SHLAA candidate sites within North Warnborough’s settlement boundary (land adjacent to Swan Inn Bridge and land rear of Albion) but both are small and between them we do not think that they are significant to the overall picture.

VI.iv According to a recent OdSoc study of approved planning applications originally submitted after 1 January 2006 there were 33 new houses approved over the period of nearly 5 years to the present day; this includes the 23 High Street application for 14 houses. Perhaps as an indication of some kind of running rate of potential development one might discount the 33 to, say, about 20 over 5 years or 4 per annum. These would technically be called windfalls and so under current rules could not be counted into a 5 year land supply but we have already addressed the land supply issue at Para V.iv above.

VI.v Pulling the above numbers together gives, over 20 years, 2 sites at 20 each plus 4 pa for 20 years. Giving a total of 120 houses, which we have subjectively taken up to 125. Obviously one could go somewhat higher but not very much so if credibility is to remain. The types of houses involved might be interesting, for example the number of affordable houses included, but to a large extent that would be driven by planning rules anyway and such detail now would not be supportable.

### **External Development**

VI.vi The need for external development would be driven mainly by one or more of the following:

- The belief that more houses are needed to support the shops. (But just how many houses, or perhaps hundreds of houses, would it take, and of what type, to make a real difference. Actually, as stated earlier, it is far from clear whether more housing would indeed attract additional shops (or

improve the viability of existing shops) given the proximity to Odiham High Street of other convenient shopping centres, including Hook and Newlyn Farm.)

- The belief that if we don't voluntarily enlarge our housing capacity ourselves then development will be forced on us by higher authorities (some aspects of this issue are discussed in preceding paragraphs – in short, most (but certainly not all) of the members of our committees are not yet totally convinced of the merits of this view and are not yet ready to “give up”, to use a rather emotive expression, particularly before we have seen the reality, if any, behind the present Government's new “localism” agenda ).

- Following on from the previous point, if we do have development forced upon us then we face the very great risk of losing control of events and so of failing to achieve exactly the sort of development we really want including, for example, developer contributions. This really comes back to the timing issues.