

Future Development and Land Use in the Tarvin Parish Council area

1. Introduction

Significant changes to the local planning system are proposed in the Government's new **National Planning Policy Framework**. Until this becomes law, and there is opposition from many quarters, the planning situation is in a state of flux. However, there are certain policies guiding the proposals that will have significant impact on local planning issues. These are;

- Housing and other development, industrial, retail and commercial, will be a cornerstone of economic regeneration.
- Many more new homes MUST be built to meet growing demand from all sectors
- Approval for development will be assumed unless there are clear and overwhelming reasons why such development cannot take place.
- Under the new Localism Bill, Neighbourhood Plans, setting out policies for development and land use in a neighbourhood, may be devised by any local group, including Parish Councils, to reflect local wishes. However the *raison d'être* of the new Localism Bill is to create and encourage development, not to thwart it. The Parish Council will work with Cheshire West and Chester (CWaC) Spatial Planning to begin the formulation of a Tarvin Neighbourhood Plan and that this document be used as a starting point for that Plan;
- Green belt and other specially designated areas will still receive protection.
- Financial incentives over and above Section 106 money will be available to planning authorities where development takes place. However, the distribution of this money to affected communities is neither clear nor certain. The Parish Council will make it clear to CWaC that, even at this early stage of development of the new planning system, the Parish Council, should it attract more development, would expect a reasonable share of any new homes bonus, including Council Tax over and above Parish Precept so that some of the necessary investment in the local infrastructure and amenities could be funded by the Parish Council.

2. The CWaC situation.

The previous reorganisation of the planning process sought to create Local Plans that fitted within a Government generated Regional Strategy. These plans were to be "evidence based", but producing the evidence has proved a time consuming job. Very few Local Plans have therefore been completed. So far CWaC have not yet got to the stage of providing options to be considered. In addition much of the evidence which has been collected is now seriously out of date and will need to be revised.

Studies undertaken by CWaC indicate that the area is chronically short of housing to meet the needs of future predicted growth, with a particular shortfall in houses deemed 'affordable'. The CWaC Rural

Housing Strategy sought to increase the population of the rural area by 12-15% equating to 8000 new homes needed in the period up to 2030. The draft Preferred Option for CWaC's Core Strategy has reduced this figure to between about 5,000 and 5,700 new homes. It is intended to concentrate these in nine 'rural hubs' that have been identified as suitable to absorb such development. Tarvin is one of these hubs, Tarporley, Tattenhall and Malpas being others. At the present time the total housing increase in each one these hubs has not yet been precisely defined. However, some development in these communities is almost inevitable.

The Strategic Housing and Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) undertaken by CWaC has identified sites in Tarvin, as in other areas, that would be considered for development. Though some of these are CWaC owned, most are in private hands and the developments proposed will be undertaken by private companies. Not all sites identified will necessarily be developed, nor are these sites the only ones that might receive planning permission, but, under the new planning system, there will be a presumption that approval will be forthcoming. SHLAA is an ongoing process and the next report due in April 2012 will undoubtedly include other sites in the Parish which the Parish Council will have to consider.

3. The Situation in Tarvin.

The Parish Council wants to be prepared for the new planning system because it wants to ensure that what happens over the next 20 years is sustainable and in the best long-term interests of the village and its residents.

To do this the Parish Council has received information from a planning professional on the likely impact of the new system and will seek direct guidance from the officers of the planning authority. As part of a discussion with CWaC the Parish Council wishes to identify and agree a target number of new homes, should the new policy develop as currently envisaged. The Parish Council has also tried to take a strategic long term view of the situation by taking account of both development possibilities identified in the SHLAA (June 2011 version), and by considering other options based on local knowledge.

By influencing the location, impact and design of suitable developments the Parish Council hopes that the benefits accruing to the village will significantly outweigh any drawbacks and that the village will still maintain its character, vibrancy and appeal.

There are a number of fundamental principles that will underpin the Parish Council's approach to development of sites in the parish area:

- The major roads, A54 and A51 should be the boundaries of the settlement on the north and west of Tarvin.
- Whatever developments might occur on the east of Tarporley Road, there should **always** be open countryside between Tarvin and Oscroft consistent with the viability of existing

farming units. A new Settlement Boundary should be established to officially define the limits to the village, particularly on the eastern side.

- The provision of an off-street parking area is absolutely essential to ensure the continuing commercial viability of the village centre and to reduce congestion.
- Oscroft should not be subject to any significant development as the provision of infrastructure and community facilities is limited.
- No development should be allowed **under any circumstances** on the land currently managed by the Community Woodland Trust.
- Developments in the historic core of the village must take account of the attractiveness of the church and surrounding buildings in the Conservation Area. The visual amenity of this part of the village is of lasting importance to the character of Tarvin.
- Larger residential developments should, wherever possible, be mixed i.e. provide a range of properties both to rent or buy and be suitable for young single people, families and older people.
- Where possible, development should be from the village centre towards the periphery, enabling the young and elderly good access to village amenities by foot.
- Development should be of sufficient architectural merit to complement the historic character of the village and be at least comparable with the last major development on Broomheath Lane/Tarporley Road. The Village Design Statement is still a relevant document.
- Any housing units approved and/or built after January 2012 must be offset against any medium growth housing target agreed/imposed on Tarvin.
- To accommodate a growing population, the provision of recreational spaces and multi-sports facilities should be substantially funded by the developers and as part of the approval process the Parish Council would want to see an appropriate level of recreational land available as recommended by Fields in Trust in their latest national guidelines for sport and play provision .
- Provision of employment, commercial, retail and industrial/technical sites, should be encouraged subject to appropriate location and building design.

4. Specific Sites (the reference numbers are those used in the SHLAA)

4.1 Land between the by-pass and Tarporley Road to the south of Brereton Close. (GWY 0010)

An expression of interest has already been lodged by the owner of most of this land for the building of housing by a leading national company. The remaining small area of land independently owned is now up for sale. The Parish Council has no objection to the development of all this area subject to the following constraints

1. A major infrastructure investment in Tarvin should be provided to balance the effect on the community of the increased people/cars created by the new housing.

2. There should be significant banking and other noise reduction measures on the by-pass side and this should incorporate a footpath similar to that in the existing Woodland area and, if possible, managed to the same high standard. Any proposed bridle way should be on a separate line and fenced from the houses.
3. Walkways and green areas should be incorporated within the development to allow access to Tarporley Road to help integrate the area with the rest of the village.

4.2 Land to the south of the old rectory, Garden Field or Glebe Field (GWY0012)

This land is owned by the Diocese and discussions have been taking place with the Parish Council with a view to obtaining some of the area as a 45 space village car park. This is the ONLY area considered viable as a car park for the reduction of congestion in the High Street. The Parish Council considers that any other development on the rest of the site, commercial, retail, residential, or recreational would be acceptable as long as the visual prominence of the church was maintained and design standards were high and sympathetic to existing buildings. It is recognised that this would be a significant step.

4.3 Land to the east of Tarporley Road (GWY 0011)

An irregular site of 5.18 hectares of farmland is currently owned by CWaC and given the pressures to meet housing targets it seems reasonable to assume that they would wish to develop this site. The Parish Council feels other fields, close to the road towards the Church, should be incorporated to give a more regular area, subject to the following constraints:

1. A clear, defined Settlement Boundary be established on the east of the site to ensure that the widest possible area of separation between Tarvin and Oscroft be maintained in the long term.
2. Any agricultural holdings remaining if the land is developed should be economically viable to reduce the pressure of 'development creep'.
3. This land should not just be considered for housing development but for recreational use, particularly for playing fields and a multi-purpose sports area as Tarvin falls well short of the national guidelines for sport and play provision.

4.4 Land bounded by the A54/A51 near Tarvin Roundabout

The pressure for new housing development in Tarvin has arrived sooner than the Parish Council anticipated and before the Cheshire West and Chester Council Local Plan has been formally adopted. Whilst the arrival of the Saxon Heath estate was known about when the above land was previously considered, it was not anticipated that the landowners along the east side of Tarporley Road would start discussions about housing developments so soon. The Parish Council is working to achieve development in that area that would incorporate a Car Park and a new recreational area that would include new playing fields, an all-weather pitch and changing facilities. Obtaining these will not be easy given the multiple ownership of the land and cannot be guaranteed.

The Parish Council is aware of the presumption of development that is part of local and central government policy. It is also aware that the 250 new homes suggested in the draft Local Plan might now be deemed a minimum number and not a maximum number. The Parish Council also notes that outline planning permission for two houses has been granted to the owners of the land between Bank Cottage and Hillcrest, land that falls into the same Green Belt definition as the larger area of land above. The Parish Council did not recommend approval of this planning application. The Council objected stating that it was Green Belt land and that there were no special circumstances to support the application

The Green Belt designation on this land is still an anomaly in terms of acting as a deterrent to communities growing together. However it is the only piece of land within the Parish settlement area that is specifically protected (during the lifetime of the soon to be adopted Local Plan) from development at the present time. It carries the designation of recreational land and the Parish is greatly in need of more recreational space. With vehicular access for any potential housing development to this area being very difficult to achieve, the possibility remains for it to be used more intensively for recreational uses.

Given the above uncertainties Council agreed that the land remain designated as Green Belt in the foreseeable future.

4.5 Copper Kettle/Garage site

Though lying north of the A54, the Parish Council considers that there will be pressure to develop this brown field site given it lies in the centre of some pre-war ribbon housing development. Ideally the Parish Council would prefer to see this site retained for industrial or commercial use, say small offices or workshops, in a well-designed layout. However, an application for housing is expected to be submitted and this is unacceptable to the Parish Council due to it historically being an employment site (and there is a shortage of commercial premises) as well as being ideally situated to the A54 road. The Parish Council would object to any further housing development on the north side of this road.

4.6 Land accessed from Church Street behind the High Street

A small but significant area might become available in the village centre. The Parish Council would support housing development on the site with an age restriction of 55+. This area could also be considered for an alternative car park if no other land was available, but the access would be difficult unless an agreement could be reached with Manor Court.

4.7 Land between Bank Cottage and Hillcrest on the A54

This area has been subject to a proposed plan by a Housing Association for 12/14 affordable homes. Although no formal plan has been submitted to CWaC it is likely that one will be forthcoming soon. The Parish Council supported this development following informal consultation and modification of the original proposal and is likely to continue to do so.

4.8 Areas for employment.

The new planning system will cover more than just housing development. The Parish Council actively supports the creation of suitable industrial and commercial properties to provide employment opportunities for residents and to reduce the reliance on commuting. Pool Bank is the village's prime employment site and an expansion here would be welcomed although it is accepted that there may be some constraints e.g. because the proximity of the Gowy flood plain.

If the Copper Kettle/garage site is not developed for commercial purposes the Parish Council would consider limited expansion at the Tarvin Mill site, even though this would impinge on the Green Belt. However, no further residential or commercial development should be allowed in the Tarvin Sands area given its distance from village amenities.

Other areas in Tarvin, close to or with access to main junctions, could be considered for employment development. Any such facilities should be subject to stringent design controls to ensure a seamless fit into the village built environment.

5. Infrastructure Investment

The expansion of any community can create pressures on existing services with investment to replace or enlarge such services lagging behind the provision of new development. The provision of **sewage treatment, superfast broadband, road capacity, school places, health services and recreational opportunities** needs to be considered in parallel with such development and space reserved accordingly. The fact that these services are the responsibility of a variety of public and private organisations can make their provision in a timely manner more difficult.

The Parish Council has been advised that developers, eager to satisfy the demand for new housing, will have the financial capacity and the willingness to provide funding for infrastructure investment where the case for such investment can be clearly demonstrated. The Parish Council will therefore seek to establish current capacity, identify potential future bottlenecks in the existing services so as to be able to demand appropriate and timely investment.

6. Community Investment

To ensure that Tarvin and its residents gain the maximum benefit from any development, especially residential development, the Parish Council proposes that the following be considered as essential to the future wellbeing of the village.

- **A significant area of off-street parking is vital, preferably at Garden Field.**
- **An independent traffic survey must be conducted to define measures to ensure that existing residents do not suffer a significantly worse situation than exists at present. These should include;**

Junction improvements at all main road access points

Improvements to traffic flow on Tarvin Roundabout

Weight restrictions and priority flow traffic systems on the lower High Street

Improvements to Tarporley Road, prior to any development, including reduced speed limit, low noise resurfacing, better street lighting and better pavement/cycle ways

Improved pedestrian/cycle and equestrian crossings on all main roads but particularly the A51 and to access the countryside

Landscaping improvements on A54 and A51 access points to improve the visual welcome to the village

Brown tourist signs at the three village entrances

- **Improved recreational facilities to include;**

Improvements to the King George V Playing Fields to include pitch drainage and the resurfacing and improvement of the parking area plus a review of existing facilities against the national guidelines for sport and play provision.

Repairs and improvements to the existing Community Centre

Open space multi-sports facility

Sports/Community centre with adequate changing facilities

BMX/Skatepark facility for teenagers within the sound bund beside the by-pass

Footpath/Bridleway to be extended from Austins Hill to the Tarvin Roundabout with proper separation between footpath and residential areas

Restoration of Tarvin Mill Pond (subject to the owner's consent) and extensive landscaping around the remaining pond adjacent to Tarporley Road be undertaken.

- **Tarvin Primary School to be improved to be able to offer schooling to all in the village who require it**
- **Superfast broadband to be brought to the village in accordance with CWaC strategy, 'Connecting Cheshire'**
- **Improved cycle ways in the direction of Chester alongside the A51 and cycle route 71**

7. Parish Council Actions

7.1 That discussions with CWaC Spatial Planning start immediately with a view to them

* advising the Parish Council on the approach to producing a Tarvin Neighbourhood Plan

- * agreeing with the Parish Council the settlement boundary to the east of Tarporley Road
- * agreeing a maximum number of new homes should the new planning system start
- * improving pedestrian access to the High Street from Hockenhull Lane

7.2 Make it clear to CWaC that the Parish Council would expect to be allocated a fair share of any new homes bonus generated by new development in the Parish area. This would be addition to any Section 106 money.

7.3 That the principles outlined in this report be adopted immediately by the Parish Council

7.4 That the Parish Council takes up with CWaC relaxation of the Green Belt status between the A51 and A54 as this land is within the village envelope and bounded by main roads.

7.5 That the Parish Council writes to United Utilities, CWaC /children's/recreation, BT and the PCT, and meets with CWaC Highways to establish the position on capacity and at what level of development in Tarvin and the surrounding area will necessitate fundamental investment in the infrastructure.

7.6 That the Parish Council uses the community investment list of opportunities in any discussions with developers and seek to maximise the benefit to the community.

7.7 That the Parish Council makes contact with Tattenhall Parish Council to learn for their experience to date in respect of Neighbourhood Planning

7.8 That regular contact is maintained with our Borough Councillors to further the aims of the Parish Council.

The original document was approved by Tarvin Parish Council in November 2011. Point 4.4 was updated and what is shown now was approved by Council in September 2014.