

Carterton Fast Forward Review

Emerging themes from Seminar held April 8th 2009



This report contains a record of the discussions which took place at the seminar on April 8th with no attempt, at this stage, to evaluate or edit them.

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Session 1 – Forward Planning

Introduction Lesley Downing

- Draft South East Plan proposes 7,300 new homes 2006 to 2026 in West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) area.
- WODC is consulting on Local Development Framework (LDF) which is to replace the Local Plan – Final submission for adoption is expected in 2010
- WODC proposes to steer additional housing to its main towns and larger villages
- It suggests additional 280-330 houses above existing commitments for Carterton
- Carterton Town Council (CTC) wishes to see a further 1,000 homes
- Carterton has similar facilities/services to Witney but lacks a Fire Station and primary access to A40
- UK house prices in West Oxon have dropped -10.3% over last quarter
- Developer contributions are being re-negotiated to make development viable

Points from Group Discussions

Strategic Issues (Groups 1 & 2)

Benefits of significant development in and around Carterton

- 20,000 population triggers more retail development, currently there are no national retailers
- It helps to 'sell ' the town
- It could help bring forward phase 2 of the Leisure Centre and other sports and recreational provision
- It may encourage dual access to A40 which would help with changes at RAF Brize Norton
- It accords with the clear vision of the Town Council
- It is important to sustain the viability of schools and local services
- It would encourage visitors from the hinterland, offering easy, sustainable access to services

Constraints

- A lack of access to the A40 to the west
- Resistance of hinterland villages due to fears of coalescence/landscape issues
- External perceptions of Carterton
- Low level of office space provision
- The current financial climate – less section 106 funding
- The size of existing town centre
- Blockages in the system
- A dormitory town
- Potential sites constrained
- Perceptions from inside and outside the community

Other considerations

- Carterton has above average younger population
- Carterton Community College is working towards post 16+ provision
- There has been a drop in breadth of provision of family and community services
- Carterton is ' too big to be small - have to be big'
- Now is the time to plan for the future
- Does the political power lie in Witney?
- Single occupancy/empty properties produce less Council Tax

Specific projects (Groups 3 & 4)

Better use of recreational land and the need for new land

- The football club suffers by being on two sites and needs to be on one
- There is a need for allotment land (waiting list of 50) possibly on the country park phase 3?
- Land for phase 2 Leisure Centre could be used temporarily for small allotment plots
- The skate park is only used by a core group, other young people hang around the town centre and need facilities
- Develop the playing field near the Social Centre to a garden style park/children's play area
- Make better use of the country park
- Additional football pitches are needed with 25yr lease to attract funding

Need for new community facilities

- Expand the Leisure Centre
- The Community Centre not always available
- RAF leisure facilities are not readily available to the whole community
- An IT /resource centre
- U3A is only in temporary accommodation
- A 6th form college could provide facilities for the whole community
- A Community cinema
- Sell Allandale Youth Centre land to pay for phase 2 Leisure Centre
- More facilities for young people, especially girls

Improving the environment

- Remove some of the barbed wire around the base (it wasn't always there)
- 101-squadron want to plant 101 trees – where would community like them?
- Organise a market on the square outside Carterton Community Centre

Other Projects

- Re-consult the community and produce new revised action plan
- Develop partnership with rural villages on other subjects such as leisure facilities and involve Christchurch as landowners
- Use existing facilities such as churches and community college for youth provision
- Examine the football programme to assess the need for pitches

Session 2 – Transport/Highways

Introduction – Janet Eustace/David Clough/Alix Michaelis

- New roads associated with development: extension of link road to Curbridge, link to the east from NE development towards Shilton
- There is a strong community aspiration for A40 access to the west
- Major development to the north might fund link to A40 further west
- There is a need for improved links from NE development to town centre
- Parking on the NE development is causing problems
- Developer funding for highway improvements is available but also constrained
- There is potential to revive volunteer driver scheme
- Carterton could reassess the need for a community bus
- There is a need to improve pedestrian and cycle routes

Points from Group Discussions

Strategic Issues (Groups 3 & 4)

Factors affecting infrastructure needs

- The situation with RAF Brize Norton in terms of staff and other traffic movements and the need for meaningful discussions between key players
- Parking – many garages are too small which leads to on street parking (50% at NE development?)
- Speeding

Priorities for new roads

- A40 access to the west and dualling to Cheltenham
- Shilton Road link
- Speed humps to extend along Shilton Road and past skate park
- Upavon Way/Burford Road timing problems on traffic lights, install roundabout

Routes in need of improvement

- There is uncertainty about the benefits of upgrading B477
- Improvements to A361 towards Lyneham are needed
- Cycle lanes are inadequate – especially to Black Bourton and past RAF gates. There is also a need to look at technical issues and who travels where
- Bus gate at NE development should be implemented as planned
- A one-way system Bluebell way/Teasel Way may help traffic flows, but residents should be consulted
- Install plane spotting area on the road to Bampton at the end of the runway

Appropriate strategy for the town

- Traffic management issues on the base
- Schools walking crocodile and school travel plans

Specific Projects (Groups 1 & 2)

For pedestrians and cyclists

- Improve access to country park
- Pedestrian link to Kilkenny Lane
- An audit of cycle ways if not already undertaken
- Green travel plans/walkways for school children
- Dual footpath use – decision needed as to their acceptability
- Links to destinations including neighbourhood shops and employment sites

- Better cycle links to villages other than Alvescot and Brize Norton
- Parking fines to raise funds
- Report needed on OCC section106 funding and costs of A40 access to west

To improve links with NE development

- Walk and cycle paths
- Need for space for buggies (at CCC?)
- Better promotion of links to town centre
- More information on the need to build the Shilton link road
- Need to extend bus service to town centre (last bus 5.30pm)

Community and public transport

- Better publicity for bus timetables
- Use community college minibuses
- Take part in public transport consultation in 2010
- Scope to develop this further with future development

Session 3 – Town Centre Vitality/Development

Introduction – Scott Harkness

- Progress has been hampered by changes of ownership of the key town centre site and the current financial climate
- Meetings are currently taking place with potential developers who thought retailers could still be attracted to a development
- Progress is also limited until the outcome of the requirement of the Co-op to dispose of Somerfield to another food retailer
- Aldi had purchased and secured planning permission on the Dowley site
- Any food retail development outside the town centre would prejudice any town centre development

Points from Group Discussions

Policy Issues (Groups 1 & 3)

Priorities and policies for the town centre

- Will out of town food store compromise town centre development?
- More information is needed on how to market the centre to retailers given the economic climate
- What is the correct mix of shops (taking into account on-line shopping)?
- A retail study should be considered
- There may be a need to phase development
- Is pedestrianisation an option?
- Include Burford Road precinct in town centre re-development
- There is a need for a Town Plan and to consider if the centre might move following further significant development to the north or east
- Development could pay for significant infrastructure
- Should we look elsewhere for town centre if in 3-4 years the current plans are not delivered
- Priorities should be a mix including clothing, a café, restaurant and hotel

Specific Projects (Groups 2 & 4)

Relocation and improvement of the market

- It has been very successful after initial opposition
- Additional stalls would help
- Steps are needed to make market more visible, but still kept low key
- The fruit & veg stall should be relocated
- Universal awnings would smarten up the market
- Try to arrange for vehicles to be parked off site (as in Witney)

Improving the town centre's appearance

- Planting outside the health centre
- The Parade of shops looking tired – planning permission for 6 shops (?)
- Improve street lighting
- Results of landscape architect's survey awaited – funding earmarked
- Promote W.I.hall as part of cultural heritage, possibly as a museum
- Improve Aviator Public House, particularly its outside smoking area

Initiatives to attract shoppers

- Sustainable shopping, meeting most needs locally – food miles
- Founder's day at the end of May

Session 4- Local Economy & Social Enterprise

Introduction – Iain Nicholson

- Carterton has many positive features, wide tree lined streets, easy parking etc
- Carterton has a predominantly independent retailers, something other towns seek
- The current economic down turn may provide positive opportunities
- Links with the base provide new business and employment opportunities
- There is a need and opportunity to enhance training provision
- There is scope to develop facilities at the community college, post 16 provision is being considered.
- Beacon Status is an asset
- The Town Council is partnership orientated

Points from Group Discussions

Policy Issues (Groups 2 & 4)

The role of the RAF

- Major impact, young retired ex-RAF who are highly skilled
- There is high provision of leisure and sports facilities
- There is a young, mobile population
- There is a large workforce
- There is a lack of information on contribution to the economy
- There may be a policy shift to commuting as opposed to moving house

Carterton a commuter town?

- Always has been with limited employment opportunities
- Residents of NE development go out of Carterton to work

Mix of employment opportunities for local residents and sites for new and existing business

- There are gaps in the market - promotional events, business advice and Partnership events should be part of a strategy to improve local economy/employment for local residents
- OCVA funding advice is available
- There appears to be a lack of business start-ups. Live/work units?
- There are local TBAC centres; could one be established in Carterton?
- Hotels and pubs are missing

Opportunities from significant development

- Re-open discussions with unused industrial site owner to address his concerns/reasons for the empty units
- Gather information from Sainsburys
- Address concerns about the running down of the South Industrial Park with WODC and limited leases (now 30 years)
- Improvements to post 16 education
- Town's Google rating and raise town's profile
- Work towards 2011 Census
- Providing more executive housing
- Linking with RAF to help new business start up opportunities

Projects (Groups 1 & 3)

Steps to support existing businesses

- Form consortia to reduce PR/marketing costs
- Provide more affordable visitor accommodation
- Research potential for start up businesses associated with aerospace industry
- Rent and rate relief

Existing and new provision to meet training needs

- Up skill the local workforce
- Post 16 provision at Carterton Community College would assist
- IT centre/resource centre is needed

Social Enterprise

- Research Hot Office Space (as in Aylesbury)
- Develop an Agency for those leaving RAF and to encourage engagement with the community
- Develop a plane spotting facility with café/restaurant, possible elevated.

CFF Review 2009 - Potential Projects

Planning/Social/Environment

- Unified Football Club Site with pitches with min 25 yr lease
- Allotment Provision (possibly at County Park)
- Redesign Recreation Field next to Social Centre to provide garden style park and play area
- More youth facilities – especially for girls (possibly funded by the sale of Allendale House for redevelopment, also look at using existing venues such as churches)
- Leisure centre Phase 2
- Arrange greater access to RAF leisure facilities
- Re launch Community Cinema (possibly at CCC)
- IT /Resource Centre (possibly on land adjacent to CCC)
- Remove some of the barbed wire around the base
- Work with Squadron 101 to plant 101 trees in the community
- Hold markets on the square outside CCC
- Re-consult community and produce a new Action Plan

Transport/Highways

- Feasibility Study for slip roads to the west on the A40
- Revive volunteer drivers' scheme, possibly using Community College minibuses
- Research the need for a community bus
- Come to a decision about the merits of upgrading the B477
- Pedestrian/cycle way plan for the town (possibly working with RAF Brize Norton on their plans within the base)
- Green travel plans/walkways for school children
- Improve access and use of the Country Park
- Improve links between NE Development and Town Centre
- Publicise bus timetables and service around the estate
- Gather information to contribute to 2010 Transport Review

Town Centre Vitality/ Development

- Improvements to the market – more stalls, uniform awnings and greater promotion
- Planting scheme outside Surgery
- Improve street lighting
- Promote use of W.I. Hall as part of heritage (possibly becoming a museum)
- Improve Aviator Pub site
- Institute Founder's Day at the end of May
- Promote Carterton as a sustainable shopping destination (possibly including a scheme to become plastic bag free)

Local Economy/Social Enterprise

- Research employment/travel movements of NE Carterton residents
- With WODC, improve the South Industrial Park

- Explore with RAF the potential of attracting aeronautical enterprise to the area (possibly linking to employment for highly skilled ex RAF personnel)
- Support the development of post 16 education at the Community College
- Develop a plane spotting facility, possibly linked to a café/restaurant