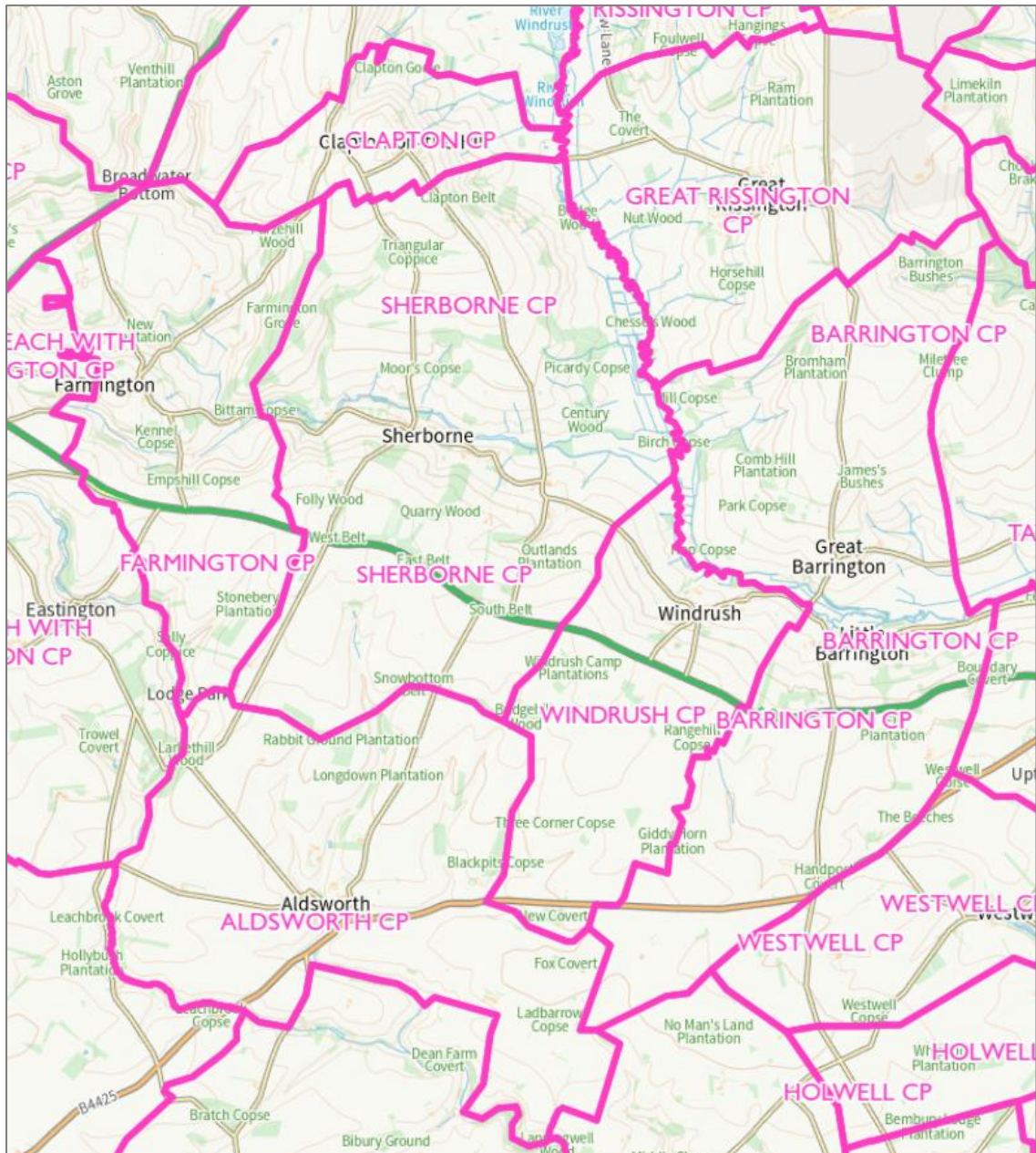


Cotswold District Council Local Plan: Proposed Policy EN18 & National Trust Masterplan

Feedback from:

- Sherborne, Aldsworth, Barrington, Clapton, Farmington and Windrush Parish Councils.
- Sherborne Tenants' Association of the National Trust.
- Individual Parishioners.



Version 0.1, 7 April 2024

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Summary

Cotswold District Council (CDC) are in the process of updating the District's Local Plan. As part of the update, CDC and the National Trust (NT) are sponsoring the inclusion of a new Policy (EN18 Sherborne Park Estate Masterplan). The proposed new Policy, and the Local Plan as a whole, are subject to public consultation.

Sherborne Parish Council (SPC) really welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback as part of the formal consultation process. At this early stage in the process, the focus is on ensuring the Criteria to be included within Policy EN18, are inclusive and robust. At the same time, it is perfectly reasonable that residents of Sherborne and neighbouring Parishes are showing their keen interest in what is being proposed by the NT.

Having reviewed the various documents published by the NT, there are many positive aspects which should be encouraged to fruition. At the same time, there are many which are unclear and as written, would potentially threaten the character and the social well-being of Sherborne's Community, as well as our neighbours.

We have endeavoured to maximise awareness of the proposed Policy throughout Sherborne and surrounding Parishes (including Aldsworth, Barrington, Clapton, Farmington and Windrush), to ensure the respective Communities are informed and understand how they can engage with the process. We are grateful to each of the Parish Councils for their consultative work within their own Parishes, and their subsequent feedback incorporated within this document.

We would like to thank James Brain (CDC) for his coaching, his positive approach to community consultation, and his commitment to ongoing community inclusion.

We would also like to thank the many individual Parishioners for taking their spare time to attend meetings and to share their written feedback directly to CDC, and to SPC for inclusion in this document.

This summary highlights several recurring themes: **Consultation, People & Community, Traffic, Infrastructure & Housing.**

Consultation:

The commitment for EN18 criterion, "describe how the local community and relevant stakeholders have influenced the masterplan and how they can continue to be involved in shaping the Estate", is hugely important.

Sherborne and surrounding communities are keen to work with the NT, under the supervision of the CDC planning process, to ensure residents' interests are given proper consideration in the development of a future NT Masterplan. Apparent reluctance from the NT to engage openly on important community issues in recent years is a concern. We fully embrace the 'working group' approach proposed and agreed by CDC and the NT, and we look forward to our active participation.

As the potential impact of a future NT Masterplan extends way beyond the houses and land owned and managed by the NT, we propose that an independent Chair is nominated. Someone with no 'axe to grind' either way. A person able to balance the views and priorities of multiple stakeholders.

People & Community:

There is significant apprehension from Sherborne's Community as to the impact of increased footfall in the village and surrounding area, particularly with CDC's reference to its potential to help mitigate Bourton-on-the-Water "Honey pot status".

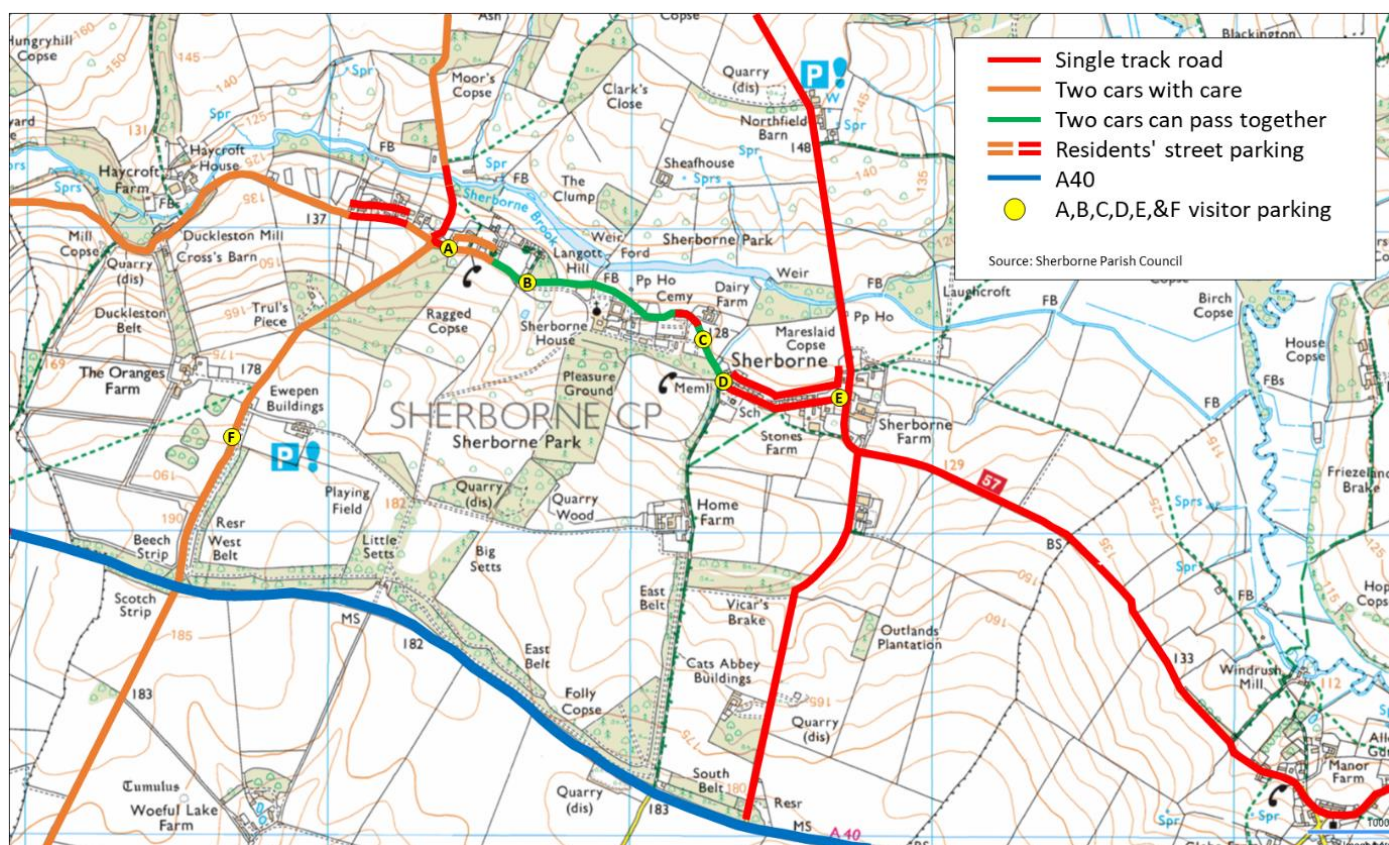
No detail as to potential number of visitors has been shared with us. Initial concerns include but are not limited to; impact to wildlife/existing habitat, residents' privacy, overcrowding, anti-social behavior, car parking and pedestrian safety. All issues will need to be carefully assessed and metrics agreed to ensure the commitment (EN18 criterion) to ensure **"increased recreational access can be achieved without compromising the environmental characteristics of the Estate and adversely impacting the local Community"** can be achieved and sustained. The Community should be actively involved in this ongoing assessment throughout the design, implementation, and maintenance of EN18 and the associated NT Masterplan.

This is a small and strong local community. It is naturally worried its identity and character could be threatened by plans for Sherborne Estate as a “Country Park” and the prospect of becoming a more significant tourist destination. The Masterplan must carefully consider how continuity of this unspoiled and long surviving rural community can be protected, whilst achieving its access ambitions. Amongst risks to existing habitat and wildlife, Sherborne’s historic, social, and business interests of the area must be recognised, respected, and maintained.

Traffic:

Alongside pedestrian footfall, increased road traffic is highlighted in community feedback as a major concern.

Nearly all respondents cite suitability of the narrow single track access roads for increased traffic to and through Sherborne (see below Sherborne traffic map), and adjoining villages, as a concern.



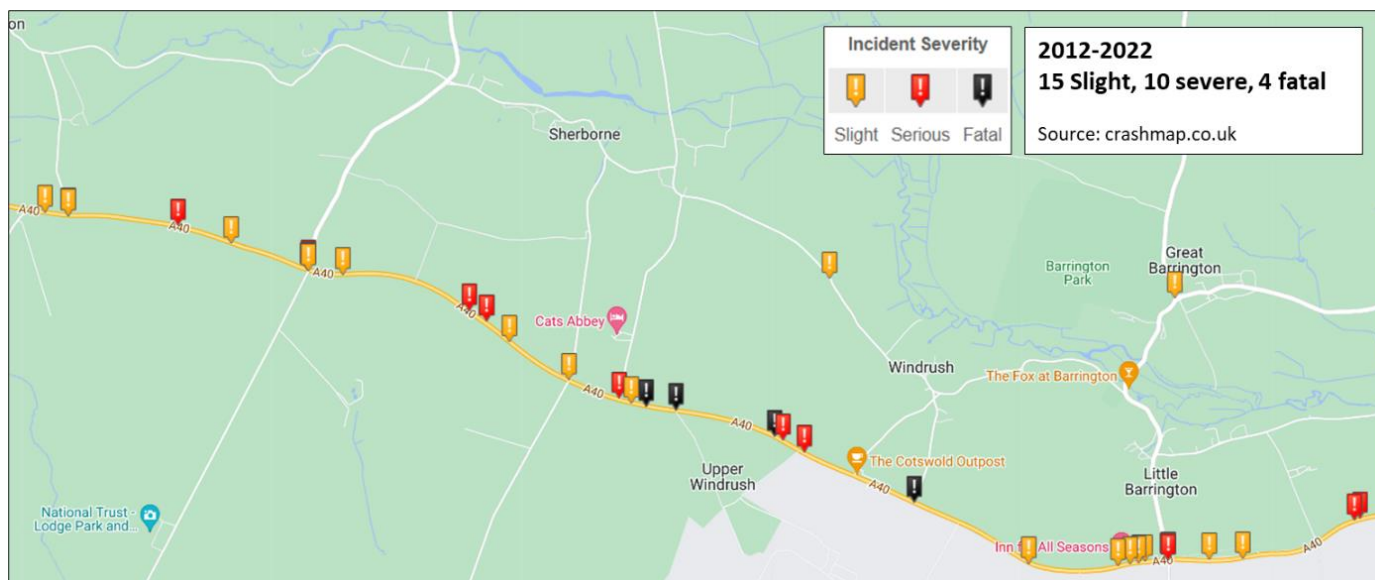
Already at weekends and public holidays, there is a significant increase in visitor traffic and, regardless of signs and information available to visitors prior to their arrival, visitors disrupt residents’ parking, park on grass verges (point F) and park in field gateways to avoid NT car parks. Points A-B, C-D & D-E (see above map) are already unwelcome visitor parking hotspots.

Access between villages with today’s road usage is already challenging. Disruption to the local community, as well as general road safety, are important considerations.

Additionally, the Windrush to Northleach stretch of the A40 is already recognised as a serious accident blackspot (see below A40 safety map) with 29 recorded accidents between 2012 and 2022 – 15 slight, 10 severe, and 4 fatal. Anything which increases slowing and turning traffic on this stretch of road should be regarded as dangerous.

Policy EN18 criteria to “Maximise opportunities for sustainable travel” must therefore very carefully consider suitability of the local road network for more traffic through Sherborne and surrounding villages.

An independent specialist road/traffic study should be commissioned.



Infrastructure and Housing:

The capacity of existing local infrastructure to accommodate increased demand from visitor footfall is complex and must be adequately assessed. For example, there are no public toilets north of the A40 leading to visitors ‘doing what they need to do’ wherever and whenever. When visitors return home, our community is left to manage the consequences of inadequate infrastructure provision.

Disruption to residents resulting from potential overwhelming of already fragile (or non-existent) infrastructure and local services must be mitigated.

The prospect of new affordable housing, providing it is provided sensitively, has received positive feedback.

We believe criterion ‘Explore opportunities for small scale rural affordable housing or low-cost housing to support those employed by the Estate to support the management of the Estate’ should not be limited to NT employees.

We propose:

‘Explore opportunities for small scale rural affordable housing or low-cost housing to support those employed locally in and around Sherborne Estate.’

There are legitimate ongoing concerns as to the standards of existing NT property and landscape management. Many NT Tenants are living in sub-standard housing conditions and circa 10% of NT houses stand empty, many long-term. Many other buildings are in a very poor state of repair.

The consensus view is that these issues should be rectified before plans for new housing stock are considered. See SPC housing survey: [National Trust Housing Survey – Sherborne Parish Council](#)

‘Look after the things you already have’, is a very common theme amongst residents.

To this end, and in addition to CDC’s proposed Criteria, we propose the addition of a new/additional Criterion to the Policy:

“Demonstrate how the existing landscape, housing stock and ancillary buildings are being adequately maintained to support the interests of the local community and businesses”.

Background & context

Sherborne Parish Council (SPC) was alerted (14 February) to the existence of proposed Policy 'EN18 Sherborne Estate' by a Sherborne resident who happened to be searching the District Council's website for work related content.

Since then, we have received a copy of the NT's 'Sherborne Big Nature Big Access Concept Paper' document, via a resident of Windrush (20 February), with further NT documents kindly forwarded to us by CDC (4 March).

Additionally, CDC has held two public information sessions (21 February & 6 March), and a general Local Plan consultation briefing meeting for Town & Parish Councils (22 February).

More recently (18 March), we hosted a CDC Local Plan/NT Masterplan briefing held at Sherborne Social Club. CDC & NT kindly gave presentations and took questions from the floor.

Representatives from Windrush, Clapton, Barrington, Farmington, and Aldsworth Parish Councils attended. Additionally, Sherborne Tenants' Association of the National Trust, Sherborne Brook Support Group, and Sherborne House/Stables were also present.

The documents, slide presentations, and meeting notes mentioned above are available at sherborneparish.org (click on the CDC/NT consultation menu tab).

High-level timescales for the Local Plan (provided by CDC):

- Local Plan update consultation – deadline for feedback Sunday 7 April
- Pre-submission draft of the updated Local Plan - early 2025.
- Examination in Public - June 2025 to May 2026.
- Adoption of the updated Local Plan - Summer 2026.

This document captures feedback related to CDC's Policy EN18, and the NT's published thoughts relating to a future Masterplan for Sherborne Estate.

Although the 'centre of gravity' of the proposals is obviously Sherborne, neighbouring Parishes are keen to ensure the Policy & Masterplan take accurate account of their legitimate concerns, whilst amplifying the potentially positive aspects. Their feedback is provided as received.

Feedback from individual Parishioners (many of whom are experts in environmental, landscape management, and property management in their own right) listed in Appendix 1 should be incorporated into the overall CDC register of Local Plan Consultation feedback.

Policy EN18 & NT Masterplan

Policy EN18 Sherborne Estate is a new policy proposed in the updated CDC Local Plan.

The purpose of the Policy is to define the things that a future NT Masterplan for Sherborne Park Estate should take account of and include. There is no NT Masterplan yet, but the policy seeks to set the framework against which a future Masterplan should be developed.

The Policy defines what an acceptable Masterplan must include/evidence. The Masterplan will define what the NT would like to see happen at Sherborne Park Estate.

The community is encouraged by CDC to comment on the criteria and identify any additional needs, or enhancements to those currently identified.

CDC propose a working group to enable the local community to actively follow, and contribute to, the development of the Policy. Similarly, the NT propose a separate working group with varied stakeholders to help guide the development of a Masterplan.

Formal and meaningful community engagement and consultation (not simply informing the community during late stages of development) **is welcomed by all Parish Councils.**

Policy EN18 draft criteria

CDC has published a number of criterion for public comment as part of the Local Plan consultation and is seeking feedback on the criteria, as well as whether there are any additional needs. The criteria (as written by CDC) are:

- Describe and assess the landscape, ecological, historic environment, and other significant assets of the Estate;
- Maximise opportunities for sustainable travel to and through the Estate, ensuring maximum inclusive access to nature and the countryside and to the historic environment;
- Demonstrate how increased recreational access can be achieved without compromising the environmental characteristics of the Estate and adversely affecting the local community;
- Set out an interpretation and education framework for the Estate, including potential outreach proposals;
- Ensure that the character of the parkland setting and the wider AONB are enhanced;
- Set out proposals for the retention of existing and the creation of new habitats that will deliver strategic scale nature recovery;
- Explore opportunities for the generation of renewable energy within the Estate;
- Describe how farming enterprises will benefit from the Masterplan and continue to operate within the Estate;
- Include a phasing programme for the construction, reuse or demolition of existing redundant buildings, new buildings, and infrastructure within the site;
- Explore opportunities for small scale rural affordable housing or low-cost housing to support those employed by the Estate to support the management of the Estate; and
- Describe how the local community and relevant stakeholders have influenced the masterplan and how they can continue to be involved in shaping the Estate.

Sherborne Parish Council feedback

LPU Q49/50: Do you support the Sherborne Estate policy (Policy EN18)? Yes, No, DK. Please give reasons.

Response:

Don't know

Reasons (potentially positive):

Public formalisation of NT intentions and associated ongoing commitment to open and transparent consultation.

Reasons (potentially negative):

Lack of NT information to date

No available forecasts for visitor numbers and associated traffic.

Concerns about associated infrastructure being able to support increased numbers of visitors.

Forced change to the historically important nature of the community and the significance of its heritage—see [Statement of Community Heritage Significance – Sherborne Parish Council](#)

LPU Q51/Q52: Do you agree with a policy that seeks to reinforce local management of green spaces?

Management of Accessible Open Green Spaces is a new policy which reinforces the custodial role that Town and Parish Councils can play in the local management of accessible open spaces. Yes, No, DK. Tell us more about why you agree or disagree.

Response:

Don't know

Reasons (potentially positive):

If 'custodial role' and 'local management' means proactive community engagement and inclusion, then potentially yes.

Reasons (potentially negative):

If 'as is' state prevails (Community 'informed' of decisions), then potentially no.

LPU Q53/54: We have undertaken various updates to policies EN1 to EC15 and have introduced policies EN16 to EN18. Do you agree these updates and new policies should be included in the Local Plan. Yes, No, DK. Tell us more about why you agree or disagree.

Response:

Don't know

Reasons:

Subject to items listed above (LPU Q49/50:)

Potential contradictory nature of Policies – e.g. could items contained within Policy EN17 be used to override items contained within Policy EN18?

Response to CDC Policy EN18 criteria:

In addition to CDC's proposed Criteria (listed below along with the Parish Council's responses), we propose the addition of a new/additional criterion to the Policy:

'Demonstrate how the existing landscape and housing stock are being adequately maintained to support the interests of the local community and businesses'.

We believe this ensures much needed focus on important factors affecting the community's social well-being and the surrounding landscape. Sherborne Estate's built fabric as a whole must be considered, not just visitor centric elements to be proposed as part of a future NT Masterplan.

Many aspects of Sherborne Estate's NT tenanted housing and NT managed landscape require urgent investment, and sustained maintenance. These should not be forgotten in favour of more 'attractive and exciting' new projects.

Describe and assess the landscape, ecological, historic environment, and other significant assets of the Estate;

PC Response: We support this in principle, subject to the NT's specific proposals being provided, though we would like the community significance statement ([Statement of Community Heritage Significance – Sherborne Parish Council](#)) to be fully taken into account.

Maximise opportunities for sustainable travel to and through the Estate, ensuring maximum inclusive access to nature and the countryside and to the historic environment;

PC Response: We support this in principle, subject to the National Trust's specific proposals being provided.

Demonstrate how increased recreational access can be achieved without compromising the environmental characteristics of the Estate and adversely affecting the local community;

PC Response: We support this in principle, subject to the National Trust's specific proposals being provided.

Set out an interpretation and education framework for the Estate, including potential outreach proposals;

PC Response: We support this in principle, subject to the National Trust's specific proposals being provided.

Ensure the character of the parkland setting and the wider AONB are enhanced;

PC Response: We support this in principle, subject to the National Trust's specific proposals being provided, though we would appreciate clarity on the definition of 'enhanced' when the proposals are set out. We also propose revising the statement to: "Ensure the character of the parkland setting and the wider AONB are protected and enhanced."

Set out proposals for the retention of existing and the creation of new habitats that will deliver strategic scale nature recovery;

PC Response: We support this in principle, subject to the National Trust's specific proposals being provided.

Explore opportunities for the generation of renewable energy within the Estate;

PC Response: We support this in principle, subject to the National Trust providing their specific proposals. We would like to see proposals that benefit the local community, particularly residents living in National Trust housing stock on the Estate.

Describe how farming enterprises will benefit from the Masterplan and continue to operate within the Estate;

PC Response: We support this in principle, subject to the National Trust's specific proposals being provided, though we propose the following revised wording: "In partnership with local estate-based farmers, describe how the Masterplan will benefit farming enterprises and allow them to continue operating within the Estate."

Include a phasing programme for the construction, reuse or demolition of existing redundant buildings, new buildings, and infrastructure within the site;

We support this in principle, subject to the National Trust providing their specific proposals. However, we propose revising the wording as follows: "Include a phasing programme with rationale for decision on the construction, reuse, non-use or demolition of existing redundant buildings, new buildings, and infrastructure within the site;"

Explore opportunities for small scale rural affordable housing or low-cost housing to support those employed by the Estate to support the management of the Estate; and

PC Response: We propose that the criterion is not limited to 'those employed by the Estate to support the management of the Estate' and changed to read - 'Explore opportunities for small scale rural affordable housing or low-cost housing to support those employed locally, on and around Sherborne Estate.'

We support this in principle and propose that as a baseline, the historical housing needs survey ([2012 Windrush and Sherborne Housing Needs Survey – Sherborne Parish Council](#)) is consulted when addressing housing needs in the policy.

Additionally, we feel that before considering new housing options, existing vacant NT housing stock (circa 10% of NT houses at the time of this feedback) should be evaluated for leasing to local residents.

Describe how the local community and relevant stakeholders have influenced the masterplan and how they can continue to be involved in shaping the Estate:

PC Response: We support this in principle, subject to the National Trust's specific proposals being provided.

Sherborne House residents' feedback

Sherborne Park Residents Company, Ltd (SPRC) Feedback (SPRC) is the largest private landowner in Sherborne, as we represent 30 homeowners, with property and buildings valued at more than £40 million. We sit within the overall National Trust footprint in Sherborne, just West of the main village, overlooking the Sherborne Brook Broadwaters.

We believe that the proposals of the National Trust and the endorsement of this by the CDC, as evidenced in EN18, are premature and have the potential to negatively impact environmentally sensitive surroundings, our peaceful enjoyment of this historically significant village, as well as our property values.

We recognise, however, that there may also be some benefits. But to realise benefits without detrimental impact to nature, the village and homeowners, there must be a recognition of the issues in the past between the National Trust and the people of Sherborne. This is necessary because it has impact on 1) what is contained in EN18, 2) how the CDC should approach the National Trust's (NT) proposal, and 3) the way that the CDC, NT, and Sherborne Parish Council, along with other key stakeholders, should work together over the coming years.

1: The issues in the past which are relevant to EN18, and the way forward include:

- When Lord Sherborne bequeathed the bulk of his estate to the National Trust in 1982 so that 'safeguard the continuity of the Sherborne Estate which over the years has been fostered by my family'. The family acquired the estate in 1551. While the properties were not in perfect condition when granted, their condition has deteriorated drastically under NT ownership.
- The historic and culturally significant Grade II listed Sheafhouse as well as the Northfield buildings have a large number of holes in the roofs that have been left unrepaired for many years. This has caused rotten wood, a partial collapse in one area, and an unsustainable situation. (separate document entitled 'Sherborne Park Estate – New photos documenting mismanagement' provided separately)
- The Broadwaters, the pride of the village and a historic man-made feature of the Sherborne Brook is turning into a swamp of invasive species, and which is now largely overgrown in summer. Traditionally this was used as a sheep-wash in medieval and subsequent times, and even was able to sustain small boating. It was regularly weeded and dredged to keep it open. Instead of a sight to behold, it is an eye-sore. It has been dredged periodically for more than 400 years, but the last time the NT did this was many years ago (separate document entitled 'Evolution of the Broadwaters' provided)
- The quality of the rental housing owned by the NT has consistently deteriorated. As of the writing of this note there are 9 vacant properties. A number of properties have issues with mould, and poor heating. This has been a constant issue which is well documented by the Sherborne Parish council. While some work is periodically done the NT has not commissioned an appropriate holistic engineering report to ensure that all issues are identified and remediated once and for all
- In the lead up to EN18 there was no community engagement by the NT on what it might contain. In fact, even after EN18 was issued there was no proactive engagement by the NT to the village, and the village had to get a copy of the proposal through other means, and only obtained it after a few weeks. Consultations and communication have also been very poor in the past, and has left the village sceptical that this will change
- Essentially, the NT is a poor landlord, and has provided inadequate investment in the needs of the property. Lord Sherborne's dying wish that the 'continuity of the estate' be assured is significantly at risk as the current situation is not sustainable. If the NT cannot manage what they have adequately, and provide appropriate investment to maintain the estate, how can we be sure they have the capabilities to manage the new developments they propose, and that they will change their approach and behaviour?

2: Given these issues, there are obvious implications regarding the details of what is contained within EN18, and the CDC's endorsement of this proposal:

- At a minimum, any Master Plan must incorporate proposals to improve the housing in the village, the condition of the Grade II listed Sheafhouse, Northfield Barn, and the Broadwaters before other new development starts. Given past broken promises this must feature prominently in the plan and be done up front given the historic lack of follow-through by NT
- There is still no information on the volumes of people, parking, need for toilet facilities, etc. This could potentially have a very negative impact if the volumes are high. It is clear that the NT wants more people ('a significant increase in accessible nature') which will result in more traffic and have an impact on nature and the people of Sherborne.
- EN18 discusses how the NT property 'could help mitigate [Bourton-on-the-Water's] honey pot status.' This indicates a desire to bring a significant number of people to Sherborne from Bourton.

- Because the NT says details on volumes are not yet available, we believe that it is inappropriate for the CDC to endorse the Masterplan as-is. Instead, the CDC should recognise that the NT is a private landowner with a spotted past. Instead, the CDC should include the NT proposal, but say it is not in a position to opine on the appropriateness of the proposal until more work and community cooperation on the Masterplan is achieved. The CDC certainly should not 'endorse' the plan at the current moment. It can instead cite the opportunities and risks and note that there must be a balance between providing better access with the potential negative impacts on nature and the people of Sherborne.
- In addition to removing the 'endorsement' of the NT plan, we recommend that the CDC introduce a requirement or recommendation that some measures of success be agreed between them, the NT and the Sherborne Parish Council as one of the first steps in creating a Master Plan. This would not only include numbers of visitors attracted, but impact on certain species, evidence of anti-social behaviour, trash, traffic through the village, etc. It is noteworthy that the presentation by the NT to the Sherborne Parish Council several weeks ago focussed almost entirely on nature, and not on the impact of the village. This seems to be a chronic blind spot. A holistic set of measures agreed by all Stakeholders would help the process up-front, as specific proposal could be considered by their potential impacts. Subsequently, the results then could also be monitored, and corrections made if they are at odds with the initial measures of success.

3: These issues also have implications for how the creation of the Masterplan should be managed in the future:

- Given the NT history of poor communication, mismanagement of properties, and broken promises, it is quite critical for the CDC to play a prominent role in the creation of the Master Plan. There is an opportunity for the CDC, as an independent government body, representing the interests of all residents and stakeholders in the Cotswolds, to ensure that there is representation from key stakeholders throughout the creation of the Masterplan. The CDC, for example, could Sponsor or co-Sponsor the Steering Group. It could require or recommend key stakeholders sitting on the Steering Group. We recommend that one of the key stakeholders should be someone representing Sherborne Park Residents Company, as the largest landowner in Sherborne. It could also require bi-monthly working sessions with the key stakeholders/Sherborne Parish (quarterly being too infrequent).

Thank-you very much for your consideration.

Sherborne Tenants' Association of the National Trust

The NT housing stock of Sherborne has been neglected for many years.

As a qualified Environmental Health Officer who had specialised in housing for many years, I (Sarah) offered to undertake a housing survey at no cost for the NT, in order that they could identify the issues and prioritise the repairs needed, but this offer was declined. I continued to hear on a daily basis about tenants struggling to get repairs carried out. I finally agreed to take on the role of TANT chair almost 15 months ago. Just over 12 months ago, there were a couple of changes to the NT team involved with housing and thankfully these people seem determined to help improve the living conditions of their tenants. However, they are continually having to petition for more funding, not to improve properties but to bring them up to the minimum standards required by the Housing Act 2004.

One of the proposed Policy criteria involves exploration of opportunities for more housing. Surely the very first priority should be to ensure that all of the current properties owned by the NT are safe and meet the legal standards under the Housing Act.

However, when this was raised at a local meeting to advise of the steps involved, the NT manager advised that the Estate was bigger than the village of Sherborne and that housing was not part of this plan (unfortunately, the CDC representative had left the meeting at this point, so I was unable to get his opinion on the matter). I am unsure of the helpfulness of this dismissive response as community should absolutely be part of the Masterplan and I would really see this as an opportunity to force investment to bring the housing stock up to the minimum standards.

The team working here just needs more funding to do this and it'll inevitably lead to an improvement in the health and mental well-being of the tenants. CDC mentioned in their presentation to the meeting, the need for small scale rural affordable housing. This was one of CDC's 11 criteria, I therefore feel it is perfectly legitimate to discuss the existing housing within Sherborne. Especially as the NT said that every property within the estate had been allotted a historic significance rating. It obligates the NT to increase the quality of these properties, especially if there is going to be a provision for new accommodation in the village, otherwise the existing tenants will be left behind.

Councillor Tony Dale has been involved and is aware of the poor condition of some of the NT housing in the village. Considering most of the NT properties are grade 2 listed, surely their preservation should be a priority to ensure they are here for communities of the future to enjoy.

There was a Housing Needs Assessment carried out by Sherborne Parish Council a few years ago after the NT requested proof that additional housing was required. This survey identified a definite need for affordable housing for young people within the village. No progress has been made since the survey results were presented to the NT, but I feel that the new Masterplan provides a real opportunity to improve the housing provision for young people who want to continue to live and work in the area but are currently being forced out of the area due to high demand and inflated rents.

One final point I'd like to make is the inclusion of the farmhouse at Sherborne Farm in one of the NT Concept papers. This indicates that the NT would like to see this house taken out of the let estate and provided as a holiday let. This was quite a surprise, considering I had discussed the property with the NT housing team during a TANT meeting. They assured me that the property would be undergoing the required renovations before being re-let as part of the Sherborne housing offering.

This matter has been reported to the Chair of the national TANT committee who is likely to take the matter up with higher management at the NT. With approximately ten percent of the let estate currently empty, we desperately need investment from the NT to help bring these much-needed properties back into use as soon as possible.

I am very concerned that if Policy EN18 includes scope for increasing holiday accommodation, the NT will have the authority to convert properties from their rental portfolio into short term holiday accommodation. This will not only remove much needed housing from the area but will go against the direct wishes of the Duttons who bequeathed the village to the NT for safe keeping.

I believe that the Sherborne Park Estate really could be an excellent example of a rural environment with communities living in good quality safe housing and visitors enjoying the easily accessible quiet, calmness of an estate designed with both its historical significance and the wildlife at front and centre.

Windrush Parish Council feedback

WINDRUSH PARISH MEETING: 12 MARCH 2024

RESPONSES TO SURVEY QUESTIONS FOR SHERBORNE PARK ESTATE MASTERPLAN (EN18) IN COTSWOLD DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN 2024

Questions:

LPU Q49/50: Do you support the Sherborne Estate policy (Policy EN18)? Yes, No, DK. Please give reasons.....

Response: NO.

Reasons:

While the aspirations of the Cotswold District Council (CDC) and the National Trust (NT) are generally supported in principle, there are a number of aspects of the proposal of grave concern to the residents of Windrush. These include the following:

CARS AND TRAFFIC

- Without any numerical estimates of the projected increases in footfall, through traffic and car parking associated with attracting “more people” mentioned in section 10.20.2 of the Local Plan, it is impossible to assess the impact on residents in Windrush, Sherborne, and other nearby villages;
- The roads in these villages are narrow and winding, with very limited existing on-street car parking. Without (and even with) specific signage directing cars directly to the proposed paid NT car parks within the Sherborne Estate, it is highly likely that cars will drive off the A40 heading to Cheltenham down into Windrush, and through Windrush towards Sherborne at a significantly increased volume
- Existing car parking along this road reduces it to a single lane, so significantly increased through traffic will clog an already congested road system to the detriment of local residents
- Additionally, many local residents and visitors to the Sherborne Estate use the existing paths for dog walking and general enjoyment. With the advent of paid car parking perhaps to as much as £8 per visit, it is highly likely that for a 20-minute dog walk, people will opt to park for free along the adjacent roads, causing very real traffic congestion along the road near Ewe Barn, and up by the Water Meadows car park. To some extent, this is already happening.

DIVERSION OF VISITORS FROM BOURTON ON THE WATER

- We presume that the NT has conducted, at the very least, preliminary modelling of the projected visitor number increases within their “Sherborne Big Nature Better Access” project in order to assess its logistical, operational and financial feasibility, and probable Return on Investment;
- While there may be a significant untapped population which would readily use the Sherborne Estate if it were better promoted, it seems less probable that people visiting Bourton on the Water to enjoy its amenity, shops and cafes are a convincing target for rural walking and nature enjoyment. We would therefore question the premise that the Masterplan will successfully develop Sherborne (with one small shop) as a “hub” venue acting as a safety valve for, and alternative to, other heavily utilised centres such as Bourton and Burford.

ENGAGEMENT OF AND CONSULTATION WITH LOCAL RESIDENTS AND STAKEHOLDERS

- To date, the NT has had only very limited engagement with local residents potentially affected by the Sherborne Masterplan
- Until several weeks ago, residents of Windrush, Sherborne and other local councils had not seen the “Sherborne Big Nature Better Access” concept paper – it came a significant shock to local residents of Windrush who had had a single meeting with the NT on this in 2023;
- If Policy EN18 is to have any chance of successful implementation, the NT must undertake the following:
 1. Before commencement of the project proper, to produce an engagement and consultation strategy that sets out how local communities and stakeholders will be involved significantly in the development, design and implementation of the Masterplan, when and how often this should take place, the mechanisms for this (preferably through membership of the Project Steering Committee), and the success criteria;
 2. To develop and agree with local communities the impact criteria for all major aspects of the Masterplan to be contained within a properly designed impact analysis and assessment, so that affected communities are able to judge the extent to which they are likely to be positively or adversely affected by the implementation of this plan.

Questions:

LPU Q51/Q52: Do you agree with a policy that seeks to reinforce local management of green spaces? Management of Accessible Open Green Spaces is a new policy which reinforces the custodial role that Town and Parish Councils can play in the local management of accessible open spaces. Yes, No, DK. Tell us more about why you agree or disagree.....

Response: YES

Reasons:

- In principle, it makes sense for local town and parish councils to manage public open spaces in or adjacent to new residential developments to ensure they are fit for purpose, and are managed effectively, efficiently and in perpetuity;
- One significant reservation is that developers who are handing over these open spaces to the management of councils only have to provide funding for 20 years of maintenance, leaving the costs of the subsequent maintenance to other rate payers.

Questions:

LPU Q53/54: We have undertaken various updates to policies EN1 to EC15 and have introduced policies EN16 to EN18. Do you agree these updates and new policies should be included in the Local Plan. Yes, No, DK. Tell us more about why you agree or disagree.....

Response: YES

Reasons:

- These wide-ranging policies appear to fall logically within the remit of the planning and environmental responsibilities of a District Council.

Aldsworth Parish Council feedback

Whilst we have no issue with what the National Trust or CDC are trying to achieve, the main concerns from Aldsworth Parish Council's point of view are the lack of information regarding perceived visitor numbers. (I am sceptical of Andrew's [NT project manager] comment about present visitor numbers to The Lodge being 15,000 per year. I would suggest 10% of this in reality). We are also concerned as to how the potential increased traffic that this will bring will be managed.

This is particularly pertinent to Aldsworth village as it appears that the National Trust are looking to capitalise on the existing facilities at Lodge Park and further increase visitor access to the park behind the Hunting Lodge as well as increasing the number of days that the café will be open.

Can the National Trust and CDC reassure us that traffic will continue to be directed into this facility off the A40 to avoid traffic causing chaos in Aldsworth village.

And also, to maintain the current signs from Burford and Cirencester.

Will the two parties also look at improving access off the A40, be that by increasing the number of passing places along the Lodge Park road which is exceptionally narrow in order to facilitate the perceived increase in traffic movements along this stretch of road. Ideally widening the road would be the ideal solution, but we realise that this is highly unlikely and impractical.

In summary:

- Improving access off of the A40 – both North and South
- Direct traffic without going through Aldsworth
- Traffic management plan for increased traffic volume – the Lodge Park road only just copes now at current levels

Kind regards

Barrington Parish Council feedback

Good afternoon, Sherborne Parish

Please find attached the observation and comments from Barrington Parish Council.

Planning Department

Cotswold District Council

NATIONAL TRUST SHERBORNE MASTER PLAN

Reference: Consultation and briefing Wed 6 Mar 24

Barrington Parish Council welcomes the opportunity, albeit at very short notice, to comment on the National Trust and CDC Plan for the Sherborne Estate.

Cotswold District Council will be aware, following our publication of numerous Parish Council meetings attended by Cllr Tony Dale, of the concerns about increased traffic flow on our 1.5 car width country lane expressed by the residents of Great and Little Barrington.

Gloucester Constabulary is aware of recorded data of peak time traffic volumes rising to over 150 cars/hr with record speeds of up to 57mph. The combination of these increasingly dangerous and damaging local factors, being essentially the development of a 'rat-run' (Lechlade to Stow) or Burford 'by-pass' for commercial and private use have led to the justification for an installation of community and Parish precept funded ASW (Automated Speed Watch) cameras. Despite such an active measure, early evidence suggests a continuous increase in the volume of transiting traffic.

In parallel, following our successful representation and appeal as a founding committee member of WiVTAG (Windrush Valley Traffic Action Group) against the Burford Bridge ETRO (Emergency Traffic Regulation Order) we continue to monitor actively the breaching of the established 7.5t limit over our two single lane bridges. Local farm tractor, trailer or grain and livestock delivery traffic deny us the option for more stringent, physical measures (eg chicanes or bollards). The inevitable 'confrontation' between essential agricultural and commuter traffic is leading to an increase in often lengthy congestion.

The early summary of the National Trust plan makes mention of 3 centres, enabling access to the countryside for walking and bicycling visitors. We understand and sympathise with the local and indeed increased national interest in the countryside, but we do urge the study of the impact that this development will have on the already overloaded, increasingly damaged minor country lanes and local road infrastructure in this specific area, and the proactive mitigation of any such impact. As part of this, we suggest that it is vital, and would welcome confirmation that this Sherborne plan is coordinated with and factored into the current consultation being conducted by OCC's (Oxfordshire County Council) Local Traffic and Regional Weight Restriction policy and trial.



Jan H de Haldevang
Chairman Barrington Parish Council
OX18 4TE

Clapton Parish Council feedback

Thank you for extending an invitation to the Clapton community to review and discuss the proposed CDC/NT local plans for the Sherborne estate. We appreciate being asked to participate in the early-stage proposals and to have some input into their development.

To enable feedback, I have shared the various NT/CDC documents with the Clapton villagers to garner their views. As a result, I've documented a consolidated view from the village. It should be noted that the impact on the village is not as pronounced as that of Sherborne, however there are some overlapping areas of interest. To ensure that we are not too parochial, we've tried to look at this from the impact on the wider landscape.

The proposed 11-point policy criteria requests are worthy and are difficult to disagree with, but it is notable that due to the project being at an early stage, a number of the points are vague. We have therefore concentrated on producing a consolidated view of the key points that need to be considered during the next phase of the project. These points are based on what we currently understand to be the end deliverable. We've made no comment on cost or cost justification as this is an NT issue, so we'll leave that to its patrons. In addition, we've not focused on the environment, but on the wider implications of the proposals.

Based on the points above, the feedback has been categorised into the main areas of potential contention. Hopefully this will help and will not detract from what is a very positive development for the area.

The feedback here is driven by three key deliverables:

1. how to manage changes to facilities to welcome the increased number of visitors into the park and village;
2. consideration on the impact on local amenities;
3. how to improve facilities for the existing community.

The increase in footfall.

The next phase of the project needs to define the projected increase in visitors and should aim to define which areas of the park will be affected by the visitors. In addition, the project needs to assess how the visitors will arrive, e.g. cars, bicycles and, potentially, coaches.

The latter mode of transport is the most concerning, especially if they enter Sherborne village or the use Sherborne village to access the A40. The road infrastructure around Sherborne would not cope with coach traffic or parking.

In terms of increase in footfall there are two key considerations, these are north of the A40 and south of the A40.

South of A40 (Lodge Park)

A40 Traffic

It was suggested that the open days for Lodge Park will increase from 6 p.a. to 260 p.a. Given its location, the assumption will be that most visitors will enter via the A40. The projection for the visitor numbers will need to be defined to aid traffic planners to determine the impact of the additional traffic along the A40, including potential impact on road surfaces and road furniture.

Consideration should be given to visitors crossing the A40 to/from Sherborne. As the core demographic of the NT is the older generation, an increase in traffic travelling across the A40 needs to be assessed to prevent potential accidents.

Infrastructure

The projected increase in visitors will need to be defined to ensure visitor facilities can cope with the increase in visitors, e.g. toilet facilities, car parking. NT will need to impact assess whether the existing infrastructure, e.g. toilet facilities, can cope with increase in demand.

Whether or not the next phase of the development highlights a need for additional parking facilities, then the project should consider the provision of EV parking points.

North of A40 (Sherborne)

Sherborne itself can be broken down into three key areas: The village, the Park and the Watermeadows.

Village and Park

The park has a number of points of entry, the two key entry points being Ewe Pens and the War memorial. To prevent causing undue congestion in the village and to reduce any additional village traffic, signage will be needed to direct visitors away from the village and towards Ewe Pens car park.

Whatever solution exists to direct traffic away from the village, there will be some increase in village traffic. This is inevitable as the only local refreshment facilities are at the village shop. If additional refreshment facilities are planned elsewhere, then this will need to be assessed to ensure that the village shop is not negatively impacted.

An increase in village traffic will have an impact on an existing, badly maintained, road infrastructure. It is vital, in the next phase, to define projected numbers and share this information with the village and the highways agencies, to determine what impact these numbers may have on an already deteriorating infrastructure.

It has been proposed that facilities for cyclist will be provided at the Ewe Pen car park. If such facilities are to be provided, then consideration should be given as to the provision of a secure means of 'parking' bicycles to prevent the area being targeted by thieves

If it is planned that the park itself is open to cyclists then consideration needs to be given to the safety of pedestrians, of all ages. This could be achieved by having separate cycle paths. The next phase of the development needs to consider this aspect.

Regardless of whether the next phase of the development highlights a need for additional parking facilities at Ewe Pen, the project should consider the provision of EV parking points.

At present there are no toilet facilities within the Park. If the NT wish to expand the number of visitors, then toilet facilities will need to be provided, preferably at Ewe Pen car park. This will take some pressure off the village shop. If this is to progress then an impact assessment is needed to determine how the new facilities will be implemented and what the impact will be on the existing infrastructure.

If such a proposal is progressed, then it needs to be clearly stated how the facilities will be maintained and cleaned.

Watermeadows

The Watermeadows car park sits on a single-track road between Sherborne and Clapton-on-the-Hill. There is an existing car park, an existing steel barn and a derelict stone barn/farm.

The proposals for increasing visitor numbers to the Watermeadows and the walks to/from the Watermeadows car park, may require additional parking space or even the repurposing/rebuilding of the farm building. If a decision is made to build beyond the existing parking facilities, e.g. build on the North Barn footprint, then its location may have a material impact on how traffic will be directed to the site. This needs to be defined early in the next phase and its impact understood.

Regardless of additional parking facilities the project should consider the provision of EV parking points.

The current outline proposals suggest expanding facilities for cyclists. As with Ewe Pens, if cycle paths are to be provided, consideration needs to be given to the safety of all pedestrians, regardless of age. If the facilities also extend to bicycle parking, then consideration should be given to the provision of a secure means of 'parking' bicycles to prevent the area being targeted by thieves.

In recent years there has been an increase in Motorhomes usage. The NT project needs to make a decision on whether to allow these vehicles onto the car park. At present the car park bans overnight parking. If a decision is made to maintain this ban, then consideration should be made as to how this is enforced.

The visitor predictions will need to consider the impact of the potential increase in traffic between Sherborne and Clapton. The single-track road between the villages is badly maintained and an increase of traffic on this road will only add to its further deterioration.

If more traffic uses the Watermeadows car park then it will result in pushing more traffic towards Clapton, causing further infrastructure deterioration beyond Sherborne.

Given that this is a single-track road and as there are no existing passing places along to road, any plans to increase traffic should be aware that the road is used by a variety of commercial, farming and casual road users, as well as horses, runners and walkers. There would be a detrimental impact on these users.

The impact on roads, in, around and beyond Sherborne needs to be considered in the next phase.

Facilities

As with Ewe Pens, there are no facilities this side of the village. If toilet facilities are to be included in the delivery phase, then consideration needs to be given to how the current infrastructure will cope with waste disposal. If such a proposal is progressed, then it needs to be clearly stated how the facilities will be maintained and cleaned.

Existing and future residents of Sherborne

The aim of the NT/CDC proposals concentrate on how to attract visitors to the area. The aim, if implemented correctly, will benefit the local population and environment, however we should not forget that it is still a working village, with a number of family groups who have lived in Sherborne for generations. They use the village shop, the village school, the social club and work on the estate. The Sherborne plan needs to put more emphasis on this aspect of the village and not just on attracting visitors. Without a vibrant, local, village community, the village school, shop and social club will close and the village will become just another dark, bucolic, Cotswolds village.

At present there are up to 12 NT properties in Sherborne that are not fit for habitation. Before additional housing is considered the NT need to improve the existing stock. This should form part of the overall delivery.

Creating new, affordable, homes for working people and families, who will live in Sherborne on a full-time basis, is essential for the long-term viability of the village. When developing the housing plans consideration should be given to ensure that these houses are never allowed to be available for short term rental or second home use. The provision of short-term rentals and second home use already exists in the Sherborne estate, so additional facilities should not be needed.

The development of new properties will be governed by central Government and local planning regulations, so we will make no further comment here. It is up to The Sherborne Parish Council and Local Council to ensure the appropriate regulations are followed.

With any additional new houses or the restoration of existing properties, consideration needs to be given to how the current infrastructure will cope with the additional capacity.

The power, waste management, council facilities and school placements will need to be considered. These functions are spread across a number of council, transport, environmental and Government departments. Communication needs to be coordinated so that houses aren't built without the appropriate supporting mechanisms.

Change in Land Use

The plans to extend visitor numbers has the risk of reducing land that is available for agriculture. Care should be taken to ensure that the plans for Big Access, don't result in the a detrimental impact on the land used for agriculture and by extension a reduction in food production and farming income.

Deliverables

The NT documents make no reference as to how the objectives will be delivered or how those deliverables will be measured. The next phases need to resolve this point. The estimated increase in visitor numbers, the increase in traffic, by type, and the environmental impact of the additional visitors needs to be clarified.

The feedback in this document above does not include any views on the changes to the natural environment, the additional fauna and flora or the projected increase in wildlife. We support any positive elements that aid in increasing the natural diversity of the area, providing we don't inadvertently introduce, invasive, non-native species into the landscape.

The Clapton community would be happy to assist in the delivery of the project and to act as a stakeholder. Discussions surrounding how visitors can make use of the Park, the educational aspects of the Park and helping define opportunities to attract new visitors, will benefit us all.

Farmington Parish Council feedback

Sherborne Estate Plans - Response from Farmington

In general, we support the proposed plan for the Sherborne Estate. In the past the maintenance of the Sherborne Estate seems to have been a rather low priority for the NT. The proposed master plan seems to be a step up. It is surely better to work from such a plan rather than to continue with the previous more ad hoc management.

Comments on Policy Criteria

a) fine

b) necessary precondition

c) maximum inclusive access is unexceptionable, but not sure what is meant by 'maximise opportunities for sustainable travel' – and in any case 'to' and 'through' the Estate are rather different issues. Clarification needed.

d) agreed in principle; but need to proceed slowly and in consultation with the local community, as in l) below. We should be concerned if there were significant increase in traffic through Farmington.

e) - g) all fine

h) fine in principle, but the detail of what/where would be critical

i) fine

j) there is rather a lot here linked together. In terms of the community's interests and concerns, the refurbishment or re-purposing of an existing building is different from demolition of a building, which again is very different from new buildings and new infrastructure. There was some concern expressed at our Village Meeting about the possibility of any new building e.g. a visitor centre. Agreed, however, that the built environment of the Estate needs to be envisioned as a whole.

k) the same reservations as in j) above would apply to any housing development. NT already owns a lot of property in Sherborne so perhaps a first priority should be the maintenance/upgrading of those properties where accommodation is required for Estate workers.

l) very supportive of this – on-going consultation with local communities is essential

In general, the plan seems to offer much that is positive, but any future specific proposals will still need careful scrutiny, discussion, and consultation to ensure that interests of the communities around are maintained.

On the other matters, the Dark Skies policy EN16 seems a step forward, and fits in with the existing CNL (AONB) policy. It is certainly relevant to any developments on the Estate.

Management of Accessible Open Green Spaces EN17 seems to refer mainly to new and relatively large-scale housing developments, mostly in urban or suburban areas, not to rural villages with little or no development. There is certainly already plenty of open green space in Sherborne.

We don't have a scheduled village meeting in Farmington, and I haven't had time to consult many others in the village before responding, so the points made here need to be seen in that context.

John Marshall, Farmington Parish

Appendix 1 - Feedback received from Parishioners

The following feedback has been received by Sherborne Parish Council **and should be accepted by CDC and NT as formal community consultation feedback**. Many Parishioners report difficulty using CDC's online feedback tool.

With respect to the privacy of individuals, full names and email addresses have been omitted. If CDC would like to contact any of the respondents on a 1:1 basis, please email cdclocalplan@sherborneparish.org for introductions.

Responses are listed in order of receipt.

Yvonne, 7 April 2024

I feel let down by the CDC as to lack of information regarding the NT masterplan over the time period that the CDC and the NT have been meeting. We as a village and a wider network of villages, only found out by chance. As our elected council, that surely cannot be acceptable, and lessons surely need to be learned. That said, the meeting held by James Brain (CDC) in Sherborne recently was informative, and I think there were a lot of positives in relation to his proposed '11 commandments'. The chance to have the voices of the village and the wider Windrush Valley community heard is one which we all look forward to with frank, honest, positive engagement.

I was concerned however once James Brain left the briefing meeting (18 March), and the NT presentation was delivered. At no time, did the NT in the presentation talk about the community. Not once. When this was pointed out, a NT manager, seated at the back of the room, and as far as I was aware was there as an observer, stood, stating Sherborne Park Estate is bigger than Sherborne, alongside further comments regarding this as being the wrong place for questions regarding housing. He also singled my wife out as being a member of the Tenants Association of the National Trust. Something he had not done to any other person asking questions or making comments. He was rude, visibly angry, and dismissive.

I found this alarming, but unfortunately not surprising. Some members of the NT's local management team have been at odds with the people here in Sherborne for years. It is a bad tempered, frustrating nonproductive relationship, which if anything positive needs to happen needs to be changed, I would think that can only happen with an independent chair of the proposed steering committee.

The question regarding housing, considering James Brain's 11 commandments included new affordable housing, and indeed had also been included in the NT presentation alongside the comment, that all structures in the village had been given a score regarding historic status. The comment I made was that I would be very happy to see new affordable eco homes, however I would expect that the existing housing would be brought up to Government minimum standards. Tony Dale is well versed on the NT tenants housing woes relating to poor state of repair, cold, damp and mouldy homes.

Within the last year the housing stock has been taken from the local management team and a new senior manager has come in to try and rectify the situation. The NT manager is trying, however being hamstrung by lack of funds. Which considering the vast sums being spent by the NT on other things, is galling to say the least. The relationship between the tenants and the NT has begun to change in a more positive way. Is it perfect, certainly not, but decades of underfunding and disrepair will take time to fix.

I was also very concerned that the plan as per the NT phased works would leave the farmhouse at Sherborne Farm empty for approx. 3 - 10 yrs. That surely is unacceptable to the CDC with its policy relating to the Cotswold housing crisis. It also specifies that this property is to be taken from the NT housing stock and converted to a holiday let. Again, firmly against your current policy. I am fully aware that Joe Harris, Leader of CDC has made it his mission to improve the housing stock in relation to safe affordable houses within the Cotswolds, allowing removal of homes to holiday lets surely goes against the councils advertised principles as per Cotswold News March '24 edition.

At present we have approx. 10 NT homes empty, which should be looked at as part of the CDC empty home strategy as a matter of urgency.

Here in Sherborne, we have a mix of NT tenants, private homeowners, businesses, farms and housing association properties. I have spoken with several homeowners, who expressed concern that not only would the NT proposals devalue their homes, but that their quiet enjoyment of their property could be at risk. In fact, the quiet enjoyment of all residents. This village values its peace, that does not mean that I am opposed to visitors, not at all. We live in a beautiful place, and I have no problem with a managed uplift of visitors and people of the local area who come to enjoy the peace and serenity of Sherborne.

I certainly support the drive to increase habitats for the flora and fauna which thrive around us here in Sherborne. There is a reason Spring and Autumn Watch came here. They were amazed by the variety of wildlife. I also support the planting of the proposed 45,000 trees.

My concerns are that in the drive for the increase in tourism by “tapping into the honey pot of Bourton on the water” it will do entirely the opposite for the flora and fauna which in truth is at the heart of the NT proposals. The more people, the less nature. I fear that we would lose our precious wildlife due to human encroachment. We as a village have been begging the NT to restore Sherborne Brook which was an incredible sight with both nesting and migrating birds just ten years ago. The intransigence of the NT to have meaningful discussion regarding this has been truly mind boggling. At one point totally refusing to engage. It has been so frustrating.

The NT spoke about bringing people from Gloucester, Stroud etc which surely goes against sustainable tourism guidelines as these people would have to travel past green spaces to get here, The NT are at present campaigning for these green spaces to be available 15-minute walk away and asking the Government to enshrine that in law.

We have single track roads, which are a struggle to get through especially when visitors park here instead of going into the NT car parks which are chargeable.

Another concern is the amount of people the NT will need to ensure this whole project is a success. They talk about three visitor experience hubs, food, and drink offer throughout the estate. I cannot believe the NT have gone this far along the process without knowing how many people they need to ensure they will not be operating at a loss. I feel not sharing this information up front is disingenuous.

My business is Sherborne Village Shop, as I said I would welcome a managed uplift in people. That could be of great benefit to my business however It is a double-edged sword. As my wife and I have worked very very hard to make the business a success. If one of these hubs are opened near us it has the potential to damage the business. We have not been contacted by the NT to discuss this at all. In fact, when questioned by the parish Council last year, the NT representative denied all knowledge of any such plans.

The National Trust Service Promise is:

“We look after special places forever, for everyone. We value the positive impact they have on people's lives and, through their conservation, ensure future generations can enjoy them too. We celebrate the distinctiveness of places keeping them honest and authentic, not uniform, or fake.”

That is something I would willingly support. “Re-imagining” seems to be the antithesis of that. Turning Sherborne Park Estate into something it was not, I feel is the very definition of fake.

The CDC proposals offer a glimmer of positivity and a chance for the people of Sherborne to have their voice heard There are lots of positives to go alongside the challenges, but you will not find the people of Sherborne unwilling to participate in the journey to make Sherborne an even better place to be.

Susie, 7 April 2024

Following the publication of the Cotswold District Council's Draft Local Plan I am writing to give my views on policy EN18 Sherborne Park Estate. Firstly, I wish to point out that while the document is asking for comments from local people it omits the kind of details required for anybody to make a fair assessment of the scheme. While some extra visitors to the Estate would be welcomed, a massive influx would simply overwhelm the village, the roads, and frighten away the currently diverse wildlife population which already seems to be on the decline.

Looking at the EN18 draft criteria I would nevertheless like to comment on some of the individual statements included in the document.

The National Trust references "Enhancing a historic parkland landscape and strengthening the wider Cotswold Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty".

In abstract this sounds very positive, but I have absolutely no faith in the Trust's ability or intention to "enhance a historic parkland landscape". The reality is that the organisation, far from enhancing the assets that it was bequeathed by Lord Sherborne, has in fact been grossly negligent in maintaining the beauty of the landscape and the condition of the buildings in its care.

The jewel in the NT's crown at Sherborne has to be Lodge Park, the last remaining example in England of a 17th Century grandstand which has a classical frontage, the architecture of which is thought to have been influenced by Inigo Jones's Banqueting Hall in Whitehall. The interior has elements designed by William Kent who was at the very centre of the creation of an English Palladian style in the first half of the 18th Century. However, in 2024 this remarkable building looks neglected and abandoned and to my knowledge was only opened to the public on less than a handful of occasions in 2023. I know that the Trust is increasing this number for 2024 and this is to be welcomed. However, the building is hardly mentioned in the Trust's outline plans although. Much work has been done and money has spent at the back of the property in re-instituting Bridgeman's landscaping plan which must be commended. But there are as yet no landscaping schemes for the land at the front of the house where the stone fountain is currently being damaged by the elements and the land itself is simply an eyesore.

Lodge Park should be at the centre of any future Masterplan attracting increased visitor numbers annually. It has a large space for car parking, lavatories and indeed a restaurant and café which would not be in competition with the Sherborne Village Shop which is such an important community asset and must be protected. Access to the site along a single-track road needs careful consideration as does access from the A40 which is already an accident black spot, with a number of deaths and many serious injuries in recent years. As yet the Trust does not seem to have considered any of these elements.

Looking at the parkland around the village of Sherborne, the Trust has for many years failed to fulfil its obligation to care for the land which it took on after Lord Sherborne's death in 1982.

Sherborne is extremely unusual in the Cotswolds as it has remained a working village with a population many of whose forbears have lived here for generations. It has not been taken over by second homeowners and holiday lets and has a vibrant community. This should be safeguarded and nurtured by the Trust. Its current plans speak of demolishing some buildings, restoring others, and building more homes but this is while it has singularly failed to maintain its own housing stock to a standard in line with modern housing regulations and there are a significant number of empty properties. Resources should not be spent on any future building projects before this situation is satisfactorily remedied.

In addition to this the Trust has failed to maintain the dry-stone walls around the Estate so that many are in a very poor state particularly on the very extreme southern edge of its land on the road from Aldsworth to Northleach. To the north of the Sherborne Brook and Broadwaters a fine example of a Victorian stone wall with dressed capping that used to surround the entire area of the former deer park has been allowed to fall into a state that in some places looks beyond repair. Some work has taken place on the Clapton Road, and this is to be welcomed.

This lack of upkeep also applies to some old stone barns on the estate which are also deteriorating. Whilst of course the village would welcome these being restored, more information is required about what this would mean in practice if they were to be converted into 'visitor hubs'. The provision of toilets is mentioned by the Trust which have been needed for many years and the lack of which have led to existing walkers either using the one lavatory at the village shop or utilising the Estate as an outside facility.

But perhaps the Trust's most conspicuous failing is its neglect of the two Broadwaters which for hundreds of years had provided the focus of the village and were one of the most beautiful views in the whole of the Cotswolds. Until recently photographs of them featured prominently in the Trust's own literature showcasing what Sherborne had to offer. Not surprisingly images of the current swamp are not to be found on its website and printed literature. The Broadwaters are two, or rather were two, serpentine lakes but since the Trust stopped managing the build-up of silt, they hardly exist at all in the summer months while in winter, when the plants die back, give the illusion of open water although this consists of just a few inches covering the underlying mud.

So, whilst the EN18 draft criteria refer to the need to "Ensure that the character of the parkland setting and the wider AONB are enhanced" in practice this has been very far from the case and offers from the local community to help carry out or fund the work needed to return the Broadwaters to their original state have been rejected out of hand. In recent times the Trust has come up with a string of reasons/excuses why this is untenable. While the NT promised some years ago to produce a plan which would ensure a strip of open water being maintained, running from one end of the Broadwaters to the other, this has never materialised and does not seem to be going to feature large in a future Masterplan.

The EN18 draft criteria refer to the need to "Set out proposals for the retention of existing and the creation of new habitats that will deliver strategic scale nature recovery." While a laudable aim it is hard to see how this can be achieved for the local bird population unless the Trust is willing to reinstate the Broadwaters. Similar wetlands already exist where the Sherborne Brook joins the Windrush river but there is nowhere locally where open water provides perfect conditions for wildfowl of all kinds. The introduction of large numbers of extra visitors with dogs visiting the Broadwaters will further diminish its attraction to nesting birds and the population will continue to dwindle. Large numbers of people are simply not compatible with "the retention of existing and the creation of new habitats" as set out in criteria six of the EN18 draft plan.

The second draft criterion talks of "Maximising opportunities for sustainable travel to and through the Estate". This is a tricky one to pull off given the narrow width of the road through Sherborne and those around the village. Many of them are single track with or without passing places and any increase in traffic is going to cause congestion and damage to grass verges. Unless the NT car parks are free there will also be a huge number of cars parked throughout the village. The bridge over the brook at the western end of the village heading towards Bourton-on-the-Water is already subject to bottlenecks and an increase in traffic will exacerbate this problem and endanger pedestrians who have no verge or pavement to walk on.

The section of the draft criteria that references "Exploring opportunities for the generation of renewable energy with the Estate" should be welcomed.

Finally, the EN18 planning document also refers to The Trust's future Masterplan being "produced in consultation with the local community". If the Trust is indeed willing to genuinely engage in a working committee with local people, as has been proposed, this would be an extremely welcome development with the essential proviso that any committee is chaired by an independent person unattached to the Trust or the village community.

John, 7 April 2024

Sherborne Big Nature Big Access: comments from John, Sherborne resident over 45 years

Big nature. Big Access- you really can't have both.

There is a flaw in this fundamental concept that therefore runs through the whole proposal.

First, there is the Place. Sherborne, the 1672 ha of place that is described in the proposal: the land, its geology and topography, its flora and fauna, all its Nature past and present. Plus, its anthropology, its community, and the history of a special estate with its interaction of Nature and Culture. It makes a very special place.

If all this can be properly recognised, it can be nurtured, managed, and developed. This in itself is a glorious vision and an incredibly exciting project. We strongly support the values and aims (2-5 in 1.0 Vision); enhancing natural habitats, climate response, respecting landscape history and relevant needs of the future, working with the local community. And we commend the plans for tree planting, restoration of flower-rich grasslands and other positive landscape proposals.

All this is tantamount to well-articulated, enlightened, Nature-led, community- connected Estate management, and it seems to me that this should be the aim and purpose of any Estate Plan for Sherborne. This is a great prospect and a huge task in itself and should be led by the needs of the place itself and its management.

Our disagreement is with the idea of Big Access as a main driver of the project. We would not propose hiding it all from public view, of course, but feel that the Estate needs to be properly developed first. Any consideration of increasing public access should be secondary and be led by the needs of the estate, community and particularly by the needs of Nature. There are enough examples of increased public access severely compromising natural habitats. Public access is a different impetus. Sherborne Estate needs to be focused on optimum Estate management and not a hospitality venture.

We commend good development of land and Nature in the most exciting way possible for Sherborne Estate. When well established there will be good reason for opening up for educational purposes, but in specific and limited ways.

Knepp Castle is a model here. After many years of dedicated work and development, following the aim of Nature, it is now open, inviting people to come 'for the quiet observation of Nature.' Access definitely being secondary to the main purpose of Nature. Or more appropriately, estates which follow good eco principles, tightly managed and very attractive because of that, but do not need to follow the model of a Country Park or theme park. We don't believe that was the intention when Sherborne Estate was left to the N.T.

We would like to know what model is intended for Sherborne. And is the 'big access' really just for economic purposes? If this is the primary driver, it would be feared that the whole project would be compromised by mixed motives, and never reach its aim.

Big Nature, Big Access. Chose. You can't do both!

We would welcome proper ongoing consultation to look together at plans that could lead to a very exciting future for the Estate, or by opening it up too much and too quickly kill the very quality which makes it attractive in the first place.

Andrew, 5 April 2024

CDC's Draft Updated Local Plan – Policy EN18 Response

Although I agree that the promotion of biodiversity and the provision of accessible greenspace is should form important objectives within the Local Plan, I do have some major concerns regarding Draft Policy EN18.

This is a very unusual if not unprecedented policy which appears to give bias to the aspirations of one particular landowner (i.e. the National Trust). The policy is not in the best interests of the residents of Sherborne and other local stakeholders.

Moreover, Local Plan policies should be founded on a very strong evidence base, but there appears to no significant evidence supporting this policy within the published consultation documents. The policy is ill conceived and poorly thought through, appearing to be hastily drafted on the back of the National Trust's 'Big Nature, Big Access' project and Cotswold District Council's obligations to the 'green agenda' and its response to climate change.

But why does the National Trust's Masterplan need to be incorporated into planning policy? The extant Local Plan already contains robust policies in respect of biodiversity, heritage, and the Cotswolds National Landscape (AONB) which provide a strategic framework for development, development control and environmental protection. Surely a more appropriate vehicle for the advancement of specific policies would be the development of a Neighbourhood Plan which would serve the aspirations of the wider Sherborne community and not just the National Trust (albeit the National Trust would be a major player in the creation of such a plan).

We should remember that the Sherborne Estate is not just the preserve of the National Trust, but it encompasses a living community which is passionate about its environment and its heritage.

With regard to some of the specifics of Draft Policy EN18:

1. There is significant local concern regarding increased visitor numbers having an adverse impact upon Sherborne village and the local environment. Specific concerns include increased traffic and car parking within the village and on local rural roads (many of which are single track lanes); negative impact upon local wildlife (particularly nesting and over-wintering birds on the Broadwaters and water meadows); littering and antisocial behaviour; and the general impact upon the quiet ambience and tranquillity of the village and well-being of village residents.

2. The provision of sustainable travel is not realistic. The Estate and local villages are not served by a viable public transport system. The Estate is remote from centres of population, and it is inevitable that most visitors will travel to Sherborne by car. This is not environmentally sustainable and flies in the face of the primary objectives of the Local Plan Update to minimize CO² emissions and mitigate climate change.
3. On a positive note, I believe the Masterplan would gain significant local support if its principle aims are the retention and creation of existing and new habitats; the delivery of strategic scale nature recovery; the conservation and enhancement of the parkland and the wealth of heritage assets within Estate (including the restoration of the iconic 18th century Broadwaters); the generation of renewable energy by way of the restoration and recommissioning the old turbine house; the renovation and maintenance of the tenanted housing stock (making it fit for purpose), the provision of new affordable housing to serve young people in the community; and the promotion of an economically viable and sustainable agricultural industry.
4. I welcome the proposal for 'consultation with the local communities and relevant stakeholders'. It is imperative that the Masterplan involves community representation, allowing the local community and other relevant stakeholders the opportunity to actively influence the development of the Masterplan. To this end, Policy EN18 (if adopted) must define a mechanism for community consultation and participation, ideally by way of a steering group to be chaired by an independent authority (and not the Nation Trust). There is very little confidence within the community that the Trust will act in the best interests of the local people when they have implemented a number of projects on the Estate over the past few years without consultation.

Sarah, 4 April 2024

I am a resident of Sherborne and run the village shop and coffee shop alongside my wife. We have been here for 14 years.

I agree with aspects of policy EN18. I absolutely agree with a policy that helps to protect the flora, fauna, and historical landscape of the Sherborne Park Estate. However, the policy criteria then seem to counter this by proposing to maximise the opportunities for travel to the estate. There are areas of the estate that have been allowed to deteriorate over the 14 years that I've lived here. When I first arrived in the village of Sherborne, thousands of migrating birds could be seen resting alongside the brook, close to the weir in the centre of the village. 14 years later and even the swans have left, unable to take off or land anymore due to lack of essential maintenance of this historic landscape left for the National Trust (NT) to take care of.

I am concerned that new footpath routes identified on maps within EN18 pass very close to nesting sites for birds that the NT wardens have been keeping visitors away from for years in order to protect the wildlife. The existing pathways through the estate have recently been upgraded to enable visitors to access the park all year round, which are also now pushchair and wheelchair accessible. This has led to a greater use of the estate throughout the year. If new footpaths are necessary (which at present I don't believe they are), these need to be designed extremely carefully so as not to interfere with the precious wildlife - this being one of the "The Ten Biodiversity Net Gain Good Practice Principles" - Principle 6 - Achieve the best outcomes for biodiversity.

The plans by the NT to develop new ponds that will not be accessible to the public but there to improve habitats for flora and fauna is something I'm very much in favour of. Likewise, the planting of new trees is something I'm sure everyone will support – providing they are carefully planted to protect the historic design features of the landscape.

Work on the boathouse and turbine that has been undertaken over the last year or so is also supported as these were once very important aspects of the estate and should be protected as such.

I am not against more people being able to enjoy this beautiful area. As I run the local village shop and coffee shop in Sherborne an increase in visitors would probably benefit me. However, I am also a part of the community and would not want the area spoiling in the same way as has happened in other Cotswold towns and villages, that have basically become "no go zones" for locals from Easter until Autumn due to the influx of tourists.

The NT referred to potentially taking advantage of the overflow from the "honeypot" of Bourton-on-the-Water. This has sent shivers down the spines of everyone I have spoken to who not only lives in Sherborne and the surrounding villages, but the regular visitors who come to Sherborne. During the summer months we have residents of these "honeypots" and indeed some tourists who have felt the need to "escape" from Bourton and therefore really appreciate the calm natural beauty of Sherborne. Any attempt to open up the estate to "maximise access" for the public is likely to see a decline in habitats as the increase in visitors will deter wildlife from the area, pushing them into ever decreasing corridors of habitats, rather than gaining and enhancing their environment. There is such diversity of fauna here in Sherborne, with otters, kingfishers, fish, and birds of prey, that the BBC's Springwatch came back for a second season as it was so impressive. Surely the number one priority must be to protect this. The estate was handed to the NT for safeguarding and restoration, not reimagining.

I am concerned also with regards to infrastructure and general access to the area. The roads are mainly single-track roads, often in poor condition. Although the village itself has a wider road, the houses do not have driveways and so residents need to park on the road, leaving only enough space for a single vehicle to pass. On occasions, larger vehicles have had to be helped pass through the village with parked cars being moved in order that the vehicle can pass. In addition, as a recent consequence of the NT decision to install pay and display meters in the Ewe Pen Car Park, many more visitors are parking on the road through the village. This often makes it difficult for people to park near their homes or collect children from school. Our customers are also very often having to park some distance away due to the number of people parking on the road rather than paying the car park fee. As our pavements are quite narrow, the paths can also be quite hazardous for people with pushchairs or wheelchairs, especially on rubbish collection days.

The access from the A40 onto routes to the village are already considered dangerous and sadly rarely does a year go by without someone being seriously injured or losing their life whilst turning onto or off the A40 along this stretch of the road. An increase in visitors would undoubtedly mean an increase in cars. The safety of these junctions really needs to be addressed as a priority to ensure the safety of everyone. This does lead me on to another point about travel to and from the area: The increase in traffic to this area seems to be at a juxtaposition with the objectives aimed at reducing transport carbon emissions and with SD1 - Sustainable Development: improve access to nature and green spaces... as locally as possible. I noticed in one of the working documents that reference was made to the fact that the Sherborne Park Estate was central to Oxford, Cheltenham and Gloucester and that visitors from these urban areas could be encouraged. But there are open access countryside parks etc. closer to all three of these areas which would be more sustainable and affordable. This seemed to indicate that it wasn't a gentle increase in visitors that the Masterplan was looking for, but more a massive influx that would have a big impact on both the environment and the communities.

I would really like to see the park improved and more habitats established to increase biodiversity. I would also like more people to be able to appreciate the estate without this being a huge burden on the communities, the roads, and the wildlife. I understand this is a difficult balance, but I'm hopeful that with the right people guiding the preparation of the Masterplan, it will be possible.

There are empty and underutilised farm buildings in Sherborne that could be converted to small affordable housing units for young people. This would also tie in with several of the main objectives: Access to affordable housing; ensuring development supports positive health outcomes; reducing transport carbon emissions; local housing needs, and policies DS3; SD3; SD4. There is also the opportunity to link to H10; Community-led housing development for genuinely affordable housing. I really would like to see this offered more openly to young people, rather than the proposed criterion that restricts this to NT employees.

One last concern I'd like to raise is in relation to the idea of having three "welcome hubs" including food and beverage outlets across the estate. We have been running Sherborne Village Shop for over 14 years. The shop also offers food and drink which is a crucial part of the business. The shop wouldn't survive without the food/drink offering and likewise the food/drinks would not be viable without the shop. We have created a sustainable business by hard work, working with the community and being able to diversify and adapt when necessary. This has never been easy, but then we have the blessing of being part of a thriving community in a beautiful area of the country. Anything that threatens our business will inevitably also threaten our way of life. As business leaseholders with the NT, I'm hopeful that they must also realise that careful consideration must be given to the location of any new "hubs" in order to protect longstanding, existing, well supported businesses.

I believe that the Sherborne Park Estate really could be an excellent example of a rural environment with communities living in good quality safe housing and visitors enjoying the easily accessible quiet, calmness of an estate designed with both its historical significance and the wildlife at front and centre.

John – 4 April 2024

1. It is essential that the masterplan is indeed created in consultation with the local communities. In my experience it is well nigh impossible to engage the National Trust in any consultation about Sherborne Park estate and the way it is currently managed. This must change if the plan is to work
2. Sub clause f speaks of the enhancement of the parkland setting. Currently, the state of the grade 2 listed landscape is a disgrace - compare its state now with how it looked - plenty of photographs- when the Trust became owners.

XXXXX – 3 April 2024

Dear Parish Council

I write to you with my comments on the CDC local plan.

I found the process of commenting on the CDC website challenging in the extreme. The system is entirely unfit for purpose. I suspect the majority of villagers will not have responded as a result.

Here are my comments:

This is an exceptionally difficult document to review and comment on. I have had to scroll through literally hundreds of pages to the section affecting my village. I have spoken to neighbours who have strong views but have found the whole process too demanding and without exception they gave up. This system for requesting comment is not fit for purpose.

As for the detail of EN18. This is an ambitious project assigned to the NT to create a master plan. But beyond the NT responsibility there are huge infrastructure challenges, in particular a very limited road infrastructure, next to no public transport and a sewage system that is unlikely to be able to cope with the build of public conveniences.

There are also quite a few Schedule 1 bird species that will be impacted. I welcome recent moves to establish a working group with the local community, but I'm concerned that if this working group is "chaired" by the NT, the local residents, businesses, and landowners will not have strong enough voice. I urge the CDC to find and appoint an independent chair, to ensure rigour and process to the working group. Such a person should be able to build a strong coalition, and ensure the community "buy in" to the challenges where they can, and act as a constraint on the NT rubber stamping their own homework.

Alix, 27 March 2024

Dear Parish Council,

I am writing with my concerns over the National Trust's vision for greater access to nature and "visitor experience", by way of education and leisure facilities such as refreshments, toilets, car parks, bike hire and many more miles of foot and wheel friendly tracks and paths.

All the above are very laudable, but has anybody thought about the access roads to all these places? Sherborne is a very small village, so far unspoilt and unexploited, probably because of its single track and passing place only lanes which, on a sunny weekend become very congested as it is. Local people know the limitations of these roads and therefore are usually very patient when it is obvious that the car or truck hurtling towards them is a 'foreign' vehicle that does not know how to drive on country lanes. Inevitably, somebody has to reverse, but that isn't always possible when there is already a queue of cars behind you which may well include the school bus or a sheep lorry. And what happens at school going in or coming out time twice a day? That is an accident waiting to happen anyway.

The A40 unfortunately runs between Lodge Park and the rest of the Estate. How will plans safely allow vehicles to cross from one side to the other? And that includes pedestrians with prams, bikes, children, and dogs. Not a good mix. There were several fatal accidents on our stretch of the A40 in the last few years.

We already have a lot of cyclists through the village. Like everywhere, the potholes in Sherborne are horrendous as are sides of the roads where the tarmac has crumbled away leaving the surfaces very dangerous, and especially for bicycles sharing small roads with cars

And parking? It is all very well making bigger car parks for all these visitors but human nature being what it is (lazy and not wanting to pay unless it is absolutely necessary) means that our little village street will become one large car park. At the moment parking on the road, the only place to park for most of the cottages, already becomes difficult on a sunny Sunday when dog walkers, rambling groups etc decide to boycott the two existing car parks and park on the road outside our houses for the day.

On a separate note, I see that the NT wants to build some affordable housing in Sherborne. No details given. But as they have approximately nine empty properties (some of these have been sitting empty for many years) on the Estate I would feel happier if they let these first before building more. Three cottages in very close proximity are currently empty. Why, when thousands of new homes are being built in Gloucestershire alone?

Many thanks for your support.

Roger, 27 March 2024

Dear Sherborne Parish Council

I have briefly managed to submit a summary of my comments through the official CDC consultation website. It is not easy to access or use.

To that end, I submit below some more detailed comments below that I hope are seen as a positive contribution to the ongoing discussion. I was grateful to attend last week's meeting between the various PCs, the NT and the CDC. The following comments are entirely my view and do not purport to be representative of the Sherborne Brook Support Group.

My comments seek a positive engagement between the CDC, NT and community.

Putting aside the inveterately poor communications of the NT and the surprise with which the community received the draft planning document, and the dysfunctional presentation of EN18 by the CDC at first, on detailed analysis there are key points to be welcomed and be positive about.

Unfortunately, the manner in which it came out has caused knee jerk reaction and rejection from quite a few in the community. But careful analysis shows a way forward. I am concerned now that the clamour of rejection might overwhelm a real opportunity for the village community to have "a seat at the table" and influence matters positively. If the CDC response to some of the immediate responses is to pull EN18 completely, that will leave us in no better position than we are currently, the NT will proceed with their project (and they are doing already where no planning consent is required), relieved of the requirement to consult and the planning permission proposals where necessary will be submitted and dealt with as per the current status quo. That would be unsatisfactory.

However, EN18, on careful analysis, provides new democratic input that I think the community should welcome and I would ask that you support and, if possible, seek to strengthen.

The analysis is as follows:

There is currently a two-tier system. The CDC local plan provides a policy framework, and below that, at a tactical level, planning applications are submitted and scrutinised in the normal manner. EN18, although it contains a number of somewhat concerning aspirations, also includes a strategic level of process that sits between the CDC local plan and the normal planning permission applications. Crucially, this strategic level process (the "Sherborne Estate Masterplan") specifically involves local community input and (almost) a possibility of veto. I extract the following key statements:

The Masterplan (a dreadful and potentially antagonistic term!) needs to:

- Demonstrate how increased recreational access can be achieved **without compromising the environmental characteristics of the Estate and adversely affecting the local community**
- **Describe how the local community and relevant stakeholders have influenced the masterplan and how they can continue to be involved in shaping the Estate.**

The Masterplan also mentions consultation in these terms:

- **Consultation with stakeholders and the local community will be carried out in accordance with the Council's extant Scheduled of Community Involvement, specifically guidance relating to Supplementary Planning Documents.**

As part of recent engagement, and supported by the CDC planning officers and you, the Parish Council, there is to be a working group addressing the development by the NT of the masterplan that includes local community representatives - the Parish Councils and others. I believe if this aspect proceeds effectively this would allay the concerns of the local community. It also allows a broader view of the local landscape not just within the bounds of the estate - the NT own a large part of Sherborne, but not all of it. A broader view makes more sense than restricting consideration to just NT owned land. It strengthens the theory of local democracy and the community having a voice and encourages that. The challenge is making it work. If all the working group is there for is to rubber stamp a NT plan, pushed forcefully through, then that's a waste of everyone's time. The issue is that the NT have for many years recognised in words the need for better community engagement but in practice done little to action it - as one example they produce a quarterly newsletter to inform the village of their activities. That quarterly newsletter has only been produced ONCE in the last year. So this is not an organisation with a directed managerial appetite to engage.

EN18 gives the potential for a bridge to be built and for real engagement with local community. I have urged the CDC to manufacture this opportunity into something stronger, with teeth and a bit more power to limit the NT simply pushing through their strategy with a check-box response. Perhaps explicitly allowing the community an opportunity to veto, while encouraging positive engagement from all sides. This would be helped if rather than an "NT-run" working party, there was an independent chair appointed, some other independent local figure to formally chair regular meetings and issue minutes, perhaps the local District Councillor if he can be persuaded. An independent chair is then able to engage with the broader community, landowners, and others to ensure integration with any Estate Masterplan, and frankly will prevent the NT from pushing through matters too forcefully. In that regard then the extracts above can be implemented, with power. As I understand it there is no standard pattern or precedent for the organisation of such a working party in the planning process, so no reason at all not to have independent chair. Chaired and run by the NT with meetings (when the NT feel like it) sends exactly the wrong message when trying to build community confidence. Perhaps the EN18 might also say that if the masterplan is presented without a mechanism for the community to consider and agree to developments as they emerge in the future then the CDC would not consider the masterplan favourably - a little more explicit teeth to encourage the NT to engage as any normal organisation should wish to.

In 1777 Lord Sherborne posted the Enclosure Act, that he had lobbied through Parliament, as required by law, on the church door, with no need for any other community engagement. That changed the landscape around Sherborne considerably. In 2024 our democracy needs to function more effectively than that when the current landowner potentially changes the landscape on an even bigger scale.

So, I support the principle of a masterplan, which done in the right way would ameliorate community concerns. But without teeth provided by some tweaking of the wording and an "independent" chair, the good intentions built into EN18 might potentially founder, or worse become a focus for anger and wasted time. Bottom line let's not throw the baby out with the bathwater when implementing the Local Plan for Sherborne. Let's implement a version of EN18 that actually works. I recognise that additional layers of bureaucracy are in normal circumstances to be avoided, but a layer of democracy that gives the community voice should be welcomed and resourced. There is great potential for this to become a new paradigm for CDC/NT/Community engagement, a win-win for all with every stakeholder considered and respected. Sherborne deserves it. A continuation of the current unsatisfactory status quo is simply a battlefield we need to avoid actively and positively. EN18, for all its flaws and perhaps unfounded aspirations, gives us that route forward.

Thank you for your efforts as the Parish Council to represent the community.

Rahim, 27 March 2024

Good morning,

Thank you very much for you notice about the Sherborne Masterplan.

I live in Little Barrington, and I have some very mixed feelings about this: some very positive, some very concerning:

Positives

The idea of visitor centres, cycle tracks and associated facilities and amenities is very exciting. We all have chosen to live here for the obvious reasons and giving others the opportunity to experience the wonderful countryside is great. It will also provide lots for us to do!

Negatives

In recent years there has been little consideration to the effect that new developments have on the existing infrastructure. The residential builds in Upper Rissington has created a huge influx of traffic through the villages, especially Little Barrington, leading to huge numbers of motorists, meaningful damage to roads and grass banks, as well as a meaningful number of these that speed excessively, making the area quite dangerous for walkers, horse-riders and cyclists. Visitors to the Estate will likely take the "scenic route" making the traffic issues even worse. You only need to see what effect Giffords Circus has on the village to understand what it might be like in the summer months. Unless this issue is addressed properly in the plans, I will find it impossible to support.

Thank you for your time and efforts,

Robert, 21 March 2024

Dear Parish Councillors,

after attending the CDC presentation in Moreton in Marsh and discussing the National Trust Big Nature Big Access Concept Plan with the planner, James Brain, we have submitted the attached comments to the Council today. He asked us to do this and would certainly encourage as many of us as possible to respond.

I am copying you in and hope you may be collating responses so that the residents of Sherborne's views can be taken into account as a collective and presented to CDC. I am not aware of any consultation with Sherborne residents from The National Trust despite the project commencing - including the appointment a project manager - since 2022.

I would be grateful if you could include our comments in any response to the Council. We feel these proposals will adversely effect the village and our way of life and also the wildlife and flora due to the proposed large increase in road vehicles and people.

Many thanks

To: James Brain, Cotswold District Council

From: Robert

Date: 19th March 2024

SHERBORNE PARK ESTATE MASTERPLAN

COMMENTS IN RELATION TO EMERGING LOCAL PLAN POLICY (POLICY EN18) AND FROM THE NATIONAL TRUST BIG NATURE BIG ACCESS CONCEPT PAPER

- In their Concept Paper, The National Trust say they want to “deliver landscape change” and “grow visitor numbers” to the Sherborne Park Estate. Their ‘target market’ is the surrounding areas comprising 998,000 people, people visiting the ‘Tourist Towns’ of Bibury and Bourton-on-the-Water and also from new holiday lets in Sherborne village.
- It is noted that this project was set up by the National Trust in January 2022 with no consultation with the residents of Sherborne.
- Also, the Concept Paper states that Cotswold District Council’s Local Plan has “Ambition to include Sherborne Estate as a Country Park”.

However, it is clear that the proposals will have an adverse ecological impact, a severe effect on the village, its’ residents and surrounding area, unsuitable and even hazardous transport links, all in a conservation area.

Ecological Impact

- Adverse impact on local wildlife which will almost certainly decline with uncontrolled and increased visitor numbers following the construction of 50% more paths.
- Noise and intrusive behaviour from increased visitor numbers will have an adverse impact on the lives of birds, owls, small mammals, bats, farmland birds and insects that form part of the food chain by the large increase in human activity into their established habitat areas and most likely frighten some away from the area.
- Increased visitor numbers will lead to the disturbance of the wonderful deer population who have the right to live at Sherborne Park Estate without harassment from visitors’ dogs etc.
- Adverse impact on wildflowers, rare and ancient trees, fungi and grasses with the construction of more paths, people going off paths, having picnics, and even barbeque’ s creating fire hazards.
- Litter and food waste creation.
- No adequate toilet facilities leading to fouling of areas either side of paths and in woods.
- Limit of space for grazing cattle and sheep which is a material change to the appearance of the area away from the traditional Cotswold landscape.
- Public access to farm buildings will adversely affect bat and owl habitats.
- The construction of a path along the Brook will have an adverse effect on water mammals, reptiles and flora and in wet times become a mud bath limiting the chance of re-growth.

Accessibility

- Significant increase in pollution from cars, coaches and minibuses.
- Noise from vehicles will have an adverse effect on wildlife habitat and peace for sustainable living.
- Likely increase in collisions with the local deer population who often cross local roads.
- Approach roads to Sherborne are all totally unsuitable for the potential visitor numbers.
- Danger of collisions from increased numbers of pedestrians, cyclists, cars and busses crossing the A40.
- Routes to proposed extended parking areas through the village are inadequate and mean that visitors will park on roads in and all around the village blocking accesses and causing road blocking, (aka Bibury),.
- Residents parking will be affected and any proposed parking controls through double yellow lines will be unsightly in a conservation area.
- Conflicting parking for those local people who need to drop off and pick up children from the local primary school.
- No details of how people will travel to and from Sherborne sustainably and thus maintain the ecological status quo.

Adverse affect on Sherborne Village as a Place to Live

The proposed visitor numbers will cause – in the village itself – an increase in:

- Litter, food waste, dog mess, noise, picnics.
- Increased traffic and fly parking.
- Coaches and minibuses using unsuitable village roads all through the year.
- Invasion of residents' privacy from an influx of visitors walking around residential areas.
- Loss of farmland for grazing.
- Loss to those who live here of the amenity of living in a quiet Cotswold village.
- Loss of existing vistas through an unwanted change to the landscape such as the proposed path along the Brook.
- Adverse effect on the area around a Grade 1 listed building at Lodge Park, again with unsuitable access.
- Likely similar effect on the village of Windrush.

Sustainability

The survival and natural development of Sherborne Park Estate's natural resources – both flora and fauna – will most likely be depleted with the vast increase in visitor numbers proposed by The National Trust. These have been built up by over a hundred years of development. I have covered these adverse aspects in the points above.

Defined as 'The avoidance of the depletion of natural resources in order to maintain an ecological balance', this Concept Paper, seemingly developed without the consultation of local residents appears to me, to deplete the existing natural resources of Sherborne's existing wildlife, flora and character by proposing a plan that will put all that in danger.

Georgia, 20 March 2024

People

In the planning document it frequently refers to 'working with the residents' and yet we were actively excluded from seeing the plan at all.

Increased visitors

Whilst I realise that numbers of visitors is likely to increase regardless, I feel its important to highlight the fact that the village is already being impacted by the numbers we're seeing now. Several dog owners, myself included, no longer use the walking paths behind Sherborne House and up to Ewe Pen barn as there are so many off lead dogs there on a daily basis that it makes the walks stressful. I already drive out of the village or at least up to Northfield Barn most mornings to take my dog on a quieter route, and I am not the only resident to do this. If visitor numbers are actively encouraged to increase, I feel an on-leash policy should be put in place on the busier routes to avoid potential issues. It must also be considered that there are far too few dog poo bins at the moment and recently, when we asked for one at Northfield barn, they simply took one from another part of the village. We would need several more of these bins to avoid serious negative environmental impacts with increased visitors.

Dark Skies

I agree that dark skies should be a priority - we don't need street lighting.

New Paths

I agree that some paths need refurbishment along the already established trails, however I think new paths should be kept to a minimum. 45km of trails is a huge amount and the construction alone will be hugely damaging to the local wildlife, not to mention the numbers of people who will be using them. People tend to think that habitat shrinkage comes from physical destruction alone, but increased noise levels and human presence can be just as damaging. Visitors rarely talk of seeing deer etc because its already too busy and noisy on the main paths, whereas residents who choose the quieter routes see things daily. Increasing the human presence in this area will force wildlife to move on or fit in smaller areas.

Ewe Pen Barn

Toilet facilities at Ewe Pen Barn is a good idea, however, any additional offerings, particularly food and drink should be minimal in order to avoid conflict with established local businesses. Sherborne Village Shop serves current visitors daily and has supported the village for almost 15 years and should be protected.

Northfield Barn

The plan to extend the car park at Northfield Barn is concerning. I believe the plan is to level the metal barns and create a car park there. However directly next to this is a stone barn housing a Barn Owl and Little Owls which will be disturbed by the increased activity there and will probably be forced to leave. Additionally, the visibility on that corner is very poor and could only be improved by removing important, established hedges which are vital habitat and wildlife corridors.

Housing

The National Trust have spent a lot of money recently updating the exteriors of the houses in Sherborne and tidying up the village (clearly preparing for more visitors). However, many of the cottages are poorly maintained inside, full of damp and poorly insulated - in fact none of the houses currently meet government energy efficiency standards. It is difficult to believe that residents are being truly considered when rents are going up 'to market value' when the properties themselves aren't up to market standard. If the National Trust intends on spending all this time and money on improving the parkland, I think it's essential that they put similar effort into improving the living standards of the villagers as well. I believe there is also planning for new housing in the village - which so long as it's not a big development, and the housing is actually AFFORDABLE could be a good thing.

Jonathan, 19 March 2024

Please find below a copy of my comments sent to CDC at local.plan@cotswold.gov.uk

I cannot deliver these to the CDC at the online access point as I have already submitted an earlier comment (that the appropriate policy was missing) and am now prevented from double commenting. Accordingly, I am keen to ensure that these comments are received and recorded as appropriate and hope that sending them to you will assist in that process.

Many thanks.

Dear sirs,

Comments on the Sherborne Big Nature Big Access Concept Paper

I live at Lindens, Sherborne, in Gloucestershire and am sending my comments in respect of the Council's consideration of the National Trust Big Nature Big Access project. I am one of the few non-tenants in the village. I am a freeholder and will be potentially significantly affected by the plans being proposed by the National Trust (as far as I can tell from the paucity of information that has been made available).

This is a project that the National Trust have been pursuing for a number of years. They have repeatedly failed to engage with the local community to set out their thinking regarding this project and at no stage have they invited our involvement or commentary on their plans. They have also started to implement parts of it under the cloak of doing something else: I specifically refer to the paths they introduced into the woodland leading across the border of the estate towards Lodge Park. These were described as being for forestry purposes in the planning application but are not used for forestry and are marked as part of the new foot/cycle paths in the Concept Paper. This kind of disingenuous and misleading action by the National Trust causes one to have reservations about their good faith and whether their stated intentions are to be trusted.

The Trust wants to attract more people to Sherborne but does not say how many more. A few more might be welcome; a lot more, less so. This kind of general and detail deficient statement is difficult to object to – and one has a sense that this is the very point of it being so light on detail. Nonetheless, on the basis of its deficiency, I do object. The document refers to the 1.5 million tourist visits per annum to Bourton and Burford. How many of these do the Trust envisage being diverted to Sherborne? Have they given it any thought? How might this be managed?

What if we get more than planned for? Many more people will bring significantly more traffic and the attendant parking issues: if car parks are to be paid for, which I believe is the proposal, then people will park in the village near the excellent village shop. It will also bring good people and bad people; well mannered wanderers and litter dropping fools. A small village needs only a few of the latter to be changed beyond recognition.

The document refers to "flow modelling" that is underway on the Sherborne Brook. The Trust has singularly failed to manage the Brook over the last 15 years, and it is now largely silted up. They have promised solutions and that they are working on it for many years. It is laughable that this document – itself prepared in 2022 I believe – refers to this modelling and that in 2024 there is still no outcome proposed by the Trust. The Trust's abdication of its responsibilities regarding the Brook is a disgrace and sets a poor example of how they might manage any wider project to do with Sherborne.

The document refers to the possibility of redundant farm buildings that might offer a fantastic opportunity to drive new forms of income for the estate. What these “new forms” of income might be is not set out. The Trust currently has between 9 and 10 vacant properties in the Sherborne village area that could drive revenue if properly managed and let out, but they are driving no income currently because the Trust cannot manage them. The suggestion that “new forms” of income might be derived from a new project, when old forms of income are so conspicuously left unattended is ridiculous. It is beyond the wit of the Trust – as demonstrated in this part of the country – to manage its current estate and revenue streams. It needs no further distraction and should be encouraged to manage its current portfolio properly for the benefit of the local community before it is allowed to spread its already-too-thinly-spread abilities even wider.

The document refers to the Cotswold District Council Local Plan and its (the CDC’s) ambition “to include Sherborne Estate as a Country Park”. Is this really the CDC’s ambition? Or is it the National Trust’s? And what is a Country Park anyway? If the Sherborne Estate is to be turned into one, then we should know what it means, and the effect on Sherborne residents should be a priority in considering whether to allow one single landowner to change the entire environment in which all the other landowners live. If the Trust cares about the effect on residents – and other landowners, such as myself – it has failed to perform a single action that might indicate that care.

In its considerations section the document refers to a “need to bring local community on-board” and accepts that there is proposed “significant change to the landscape that they live in”. It records that the current relationship should be improved. These are words on a page, written over a year ago to satisfy the template for plans of this nature; they mean nothing. There has been no engagement; the Trust does not want to engage; it does not want to know our opinions and it has purposefully kept its plans from us. We have had to work very hard to find out what is going on – there is no transparency from the Trust - and still there is no offer from the Trust to engage.

This is a very bad idea. The Trust is not competent to manage its current obligations, let alone start to develop a wider remit. I object to the plan very strongly. I only hope someone is actually listening.

Kind regards

Randolph, 12 March 2024

Dear Sherborne Parish Council,

I am forwarding to you the email which I have sent to James Brain and to Tony Dale at Cotswolds District Council. Please be assured that you have the full support on this matter from Jacqui and me and we thank you for the time and effort you are putting into this.

With best wishes,

My wife and I live at No 1, Sherborne Stables and have lived here for more than ten years. We love this village and the surrounding area and very much enjoy living here.

I understand from the CDC Policy EN18 that if the National Trust (NT) prepare a masterplan for the Sherborne Park Estate, then it would need to be prepared in consultation with local communities and relevant stakeholders and the Local Planning Authority and demonstrate how this can be achieved without compromising the environment and local communities.

To date there has been practically no communication between the NT and the local community regarding their Masterplan. The Concept Paper, which we are being asked to comment on, was written in the summer of 2022 and is finally being shared with the local community almost two years later.

I had an interesting and constructive discussion at Moreton in Marsh last week with one of your colleagues, David Halkyard. He was amazed to hear that there had been no consultation with the local community and told me there needs to be a working group set up between the village and the NT.

I totally agree with Mr Halkyard. A Masterplan for Sherborne should be a joint effort with inputs from local residents and stakeholders. The NT write about “working with local communities, tenants, and partner organisations, so we need to see action, not words and create a “Joint Masterplan”

Quote from the NT documents “Ongoing local relationships with communities, tenants, and partners will make Sherborne a place with people at its heart”. Ongoing? Really?

I comment below on the NT Concept Paper.

Big Access/Better Access.

The village already attracts many visitors, who come here to walk and enjoy the woods, the wildlife, the birds and the river. Many come with their dogs. My wife and I walk through the woods and fields every day and often chat to visitors. They love the area, the landscape and the peace and tranquillity.

For the moment, there is sufficient car parking space, except at weekends, when there are often as many as 50 or 60 cars parked along the road.

There is a total lack of public toilets, which can lead to unpleasant results. There are also not enough “dog poo” bins.

I agree there is definitely a need to improve the Estate, areas of which have been allowed to deteriorate over the past ten years, specifically some of the homes in the village, the Broadwater getting full of silt and weeds and the many walls within and around the estate tumbling down. In comparison with the two private estates either side, Barrington and Haycroft, which are beautifully maintained and managed, the Sherborne Estate is shown in a very poor light.

The Masterplan had been drawn up with absolutely no research as to expected numbers of visitors. It talks about increasing the size of car parks. It talks about having toilets. It talks about visitor experience and food and beverage facilities.

My question is “how can any of this be planned for without having any idea on numbers?”

Is there a business plan? What is the investment and what is the payback?

Is there a strategy?

What is “the end in mind”?

The Masterplan talks about a new network of facilities and accessible routes for multiple audiences - what does this mean?

It wants more people to enjoy the “charismatic” wildlife. Do they not realise that having more people and more cars coming to the village they are going to frighten away the birds and the wildlife?

Do they realise that bringing more cars into Sherborne will badly affect neighbouring villages - Windrush, Barrington, Clapton, Farmington, Aldsworth, Taynton? The local road infrastructure is inadequate to handle any more traffic. What research have the NT done in estimating likely car and coach numbers?

Do they not realise that by bringing more cars, and possibly coaches, into the village this will increase the carbon footprint and goes completely against their aim to play their part in the climate response?

Do they realise that bringing more cars in the hope that they will use NT car parks and if non-members they will pay for parking, it is very likely that the car parks will be avoided, and cars will park in the village causing unnecessary traffic congestion.

Will the NT have staff managing the car parks? Will they have extra security? Will they prevent overnight stays by caravans and camper vans? (This already happens at the Watermeadow car park by the North Field barns).

Do they realise that having more toilets, they are likely to overstretch the local sewage and drainage and increase the amount of raw sewage going into the Windrush river, with the resultant devastating effect on fish and other river life?

What safeguards are the NT proposing against crime and anti-social behaviour? We know from experience that with increased car numbers both in the village and in the NT car parks there have been a large number of car break-ins with items stolen. (I note that a warning sign had been posted in the Ewe-pen carpark plus cctv.) Luckily, at the moment there are very few house break-ins in the village. There is a fear that encouraging more people into the village could increase the risk of theft.

There have been several occasions when groups of visitors have picnicked and partied on the weir, playing loud music, shouting, and using Sherborne Brook as a wc (all in plain view and ignoring the NT sign to “keep out”), occasionally late into the evening.

In the Phases of Work section under 5.1 Potential 0-3 years (I assume as this Concept Paper was written in 2022, this covers the period 2022 to 2025).

Activity.

We support many of the activities listed, planting trees and hedgerows (I have helped with the community tree planting project), analysing baseline soil and carbon, monitoring baseline wildlife species. We are against re-wilding, as we believe that farmland should be used to produce food for human consumption, to help the UK be self-sufficient and prevent huge volumes of foods being imported, which damages our balance of payments, increases prices and creates huge volumes of CO2, whether the foodstuffs come here by plane, by sea or by lorry. This latter point is against what the NT believes in.

We are still waiting to see the delivery of the new management model for Sherborne Brook.

They state, “Planning approval and funding agreed for a new changing places facility”. What is a “Changing places facility”?

“Further development of stakeholder engagement and established community partnerships”. No evidence of this!

“Drone footage commissioned”. Has this happened and what has it shown?

“Audience insight complete and plans for first visitor experience facilities developed”. No evidence of this. What numbers of visitors and cars are expected?

“Food and beverage research completed”. Where are the results? What does it show?

What “plans for adaptive reuse or restoration of building assets” have been developed?

Where is the “spatial plan across the whole estate” and the Conservation management plan?

We are pleased to see the work that has been done to make the Turbine House safe and accessible.

5.2 Potential 3-10 years.

Without any research into potential numbers, we need more specific information on what is intended but “Expand outdoor visitor facilities, servicing waymarked trails across the estate serviced by multiple carparks and changing places facilities” is all much too vague. We need numbers. How can this be planned, budgeted, staffed, facilitated with services such as water, gas, electricity, drainage, sewerage etc without having any idea about potential numbers. Where is the business plan?

We are in favour of woodland cover, planting hundreds of thousands of trees, but as stated above we are very against the plan to change 100 ha of land from agricultural use to Priority Habitat.

6.0 Benefits/Strategic fit

Climate action, Land and Nature.

We support the concept of creating a natural landscape where species flourish. This is what we have at the moment. However, bringing in large numbers of visitors with their dogs, who will walk across the area, possibly picnicking (dropping litter), making a noise, will frighten away the livestock and the bird life, which is exactly what we don’t want to happen. How does the NT propose controlling numbers and behaviour?

We have been waiting over ten years for the NT to manage the river, Sherborne Brook, and so far they have failed to do so. Ten years ago a group of residents (me included) spent several weekends pulling weeds from the river both upstream and downstream from the weir. We did this annually for several years. The result was clear water, no weeds, plenty of bird life and plenty of fish. With no encouragement from the NT, we stopped doing this, as they also said they were going to take over the management. As the NT have done nothing, Sherborne Brook is no longer a haven for birds nor is it a beautiful vista for visitors.

How and where are the NT proposing to deliver Solar installation?

Everyone Welcome.

We need more information about “the creation of new outdoor visitor facilities, to enable all visitors to feel comfortable”. What are these?

What is meant by “the higher quality visitor experience”?

We support “Local community residents and tenants engaged with and supportive of change”. We need action not words!

7.0 Considerations.

Local community.

We wholeheartedly agree that “There is a need to bring local community on-board with significant change to the landscape that they lived in and improve the existing relationship”.

I go back to my original point. We need to make this a Joint Masterplan with the NT and the local community working together.

Kind regards,

Additional feedback received, 30 March 2024

I was pleased to be able to hear James Brain’s presentation at the Village Social club on 18th March at which he (as Moses) presented his 12 criteria for public comment as part of the CDC Local Plan consultation.

I welcome this opportunity to comment, and I see it as part of an ongoing consultation between the CDC, the National Trust, Sherborne Parish Council, and the local community.

A general observation.

We have been asked to comment on “criteria”. However, the dictionary definition of a criterion is “a standard by which something can be judged or decided”. Having been through these “criteria” again, I see them more as “objectives”, and as such, I find them vague and unspecific. In no way are they setting out a standard by which they can be judged or decided.

I am therefore commenting on these as “objectives”.

Note: apart from No 1, rather than write out each criterion in full, I will just note the number and then add a comment.)

1. Comprise Vision and objectives

“Big nature and better access”.

In Policy EN18, 10.20.2, the NT sets out their VISION as being...

1. More people experience and enjoy Sherborne.
2. Cotswold wildlife and habitat thrive.
3. Sherborne plays its part in climate response.
4. History and landscape are celebrated.
5. Collaboration and partnership support design and delivery.

So this apparently is the NT vision. It is completely vague and needs to be more specific, with much more detail. The NT needs to tell us what is their “end in mind” for the Sherborne Estate.

The objectives need to be clearly spelled out and there should be clear timelines.

What is the overall budget? and how will this all be funded? It could cost millions to set up.

Is it being run as a business? Is the aim to make a profit for the NT? Is there a business plan?

Are the NT prioritising their objectives?

“More people” what are their estimates of numbers of people, cars, possibly coaches, what are the demographics of visitors and their reasons to visit?

How will the NT manage this? What estimates for extra staff? How are they budgeting for this? Will they be relying on volunteers to help?

“Cotswold wildlife and habitat thrive” will be a big challenge for the NT if there are increased numbers of visitors.

2. Agree. My only comment would be to specifically mention Lodge Park.

3. Sustainable travel both to and through the Estate needs to be very clearly spelled out. What do they mean by travel? As things stand at the moment, the local infrastructure can hardly cope with current traffic numbers - narrow roads, lanes, potholes etc, Where will vehicles be parked? What plan does the NT have to keep visitor’s vehicles out of the village?

Increased traffic increases carbon emissions - not exactly “green”.

“Maximum inclusive access to nature” - they must specify what they mean by nature. As this is written here, this is exactly the opposite of what Andrew Danson replied to my question at our recent meeting on 18th March, where he said there would be no access to nature. He said nature would be kept separate from access. How will this be “policed”?

Trespassing will inevitably be a problem.

4. Again, the NT must be more specific about “increased recreational access”.

“Recreational” covers a multitude of activities. What do they envisage? I support the points about “without compromising...and adversely affecting.....”.

Does recreational cover picnicking? Litter!

5. This criterion as it is written does not make sense.

“Set out an interpretation for the Estate.” does not mean anything.

“Set out an education framework for the Estate...” this does mean something. However, who would run and manage this - the NT or a franchisee? Would this be aimed at schools, which would be a good idea?

Similarly, would visitor centres, catering facilities, toilets etc be run by the NT or would they be franchises?

6. I support enhancing the parkland setting. The NT should start by focusing on the Broadwater, the crumbling walls, crumbling buildings, the poor housing conditions in the village. The NT need to get back to basics and get the estate back into a good condition before embarking on these new ventures.

7. “Creation of new habitats that will deliver strategic scale nature recovery”. Again, this is far too vague. What does the NT mean? How, where, when? What is the budget?

8. Yes, but this must exclude fields of solar panels, which are extremely unsightly and an eyesore.

9. I support this. However, the NT must indicate what percentage of their farmland they intend to designate as “re-wilding” rather than growing crops and breeding cattle.

10 and 11. I recognise that the CDC are prioritising tackling the housing crisis and it is only right that the NT help in a some small way. However, such plans must be openly discussed with the Sherborne community. New buildings must be designed in keeping with local Cotswold architecture; we do not want the look and feel of Sherborne to be blighted. Any new housing requires additional infrastructure, especially drainage and sewerage.

12. Until very recently the local community (stakeholders) have had no influence on the masterplan; there has been no communication. However, going forward I very much welcome the opportunity to work together with the CDC and NT and others in the local community on developing the Masterplan for the Sherborne Estate.

Philip, 11 March 2024

Dear Sir

We have carefully examined the Proposals for the future of Sherborne as set out in the recent National Trust's Concept Paper, and we wish to make the following comments:

1. We welcome the concept of increasing bird and general wildlife on the Estate which has markedly decreased (particularly bird life) on the Sherborne Brook, due to the lack of control and therefore build up of the weed and silt in the water over the last ten years.

We live at Sherborne Stables, thus overlooking the water and have noticed an enormous change since we have been here.

2. We are also concerned at the suggested increase in paid parking capacity at the Trust's car parks. Encouraging more people to come and charging for parking will inevitably mean a substantial increase in visitors using the free parking on the village road, and probably the church car park.

Already at weekends many visitors park for free near the war memorial on the village road and on the road outside residents' houses. As things stand, the road through the village is hardly wide enough for passing cars, delivery vans and farm vehicles.

Many of the village houses do not have off street parking and this will make parking for them even more difficult.

3. One of the principal circular walks includes walking down part of the village road from the war memorial to the village green at the East end of the village, along a very narrow pavement which is unsuitable for increased numbers of visitors.

The above are some of our concerns.

Yours faithfully.

XXXXX, 5 March 2024

Dear Sherborne Parish Council,

While initiatives to enable greater members of the public to enjoy wildlife, walking and cycling in our area are commendable, I am concerned that details of the proposed 'tourism offering' which I have seen (Policy EN18) would cause grave problems on our roads.

For example, the road from Sherborne to Windrush (which I frequently use, as I live in the latter village) is not designed for two vehicles to pass comfortably, given the size of most motor vehicles today. Most of the roads between local villages and larger tourist locations such as Bourton in the Water are a similar width, and frequently full of bends.

Kind regards,

Colin, 5 March 2024

To CDC Members:

My wife and I are Farmington residents concerned about potential plans for developing a country-style theme park in Sherborne. The basis of our concern is an inevitable increase in traffic through Farmington village.

Despite repeated protests, the access road to the village from the A429 remains in very poor condition and the existing problems will be compounded by any increase in traffic volume. Whenever there is a road closure on the A429 (and A40 for that matter) we see huge numbers of vehicles passing through the village. Some of these vehicles travel at very high speeds and this presents a potential danger to both village residents and animals.

It is only a matter of time before there is a serious accident.

Yours sincerely,

Rosemary, 4 March 2024

I was deeply saddened and shocked to hear of the CDC and NT plans for Sherborne Park Estate.

Although we no longer live Sherborne, my family did live in Windrush then Sherborne for 60 years, so an area dear to our hearts.

However, I do live in Bourton on the Water and experience daily the issues of extensive visitor access and tourism, the 'honey pot'. I would not wish this impact on Sherborne.

My main concerns are access to the village:

- The roads are extremely narrow especially for today's large vehicles.
- The A40 accident black spot near the Sherborne turn. The access from Bourton to Sherborne via the Steeps heading south towards Clapton and Sherborne, the hill is very narrow and steep and any increased traffic will make it very dangerous.
- Parking: For non-members the NT charge £4 for parking and visitors will always try and park for free, so this will impact on the village and off-road parking on the lanes.
- Impact of litter with new food and beverage outlets.

As a great nature lover and avid walker, myself and my sisters often visit Sherborne for walks. I appreciate some of the plans for the estate, to encourage more wildlife and habitat, but I am concerned that if hundreds of people are walking through the park, this will disturb the wildlife and the impact of visitors with dogs not under control on wildlife and livestock.

I am also concerned that it will change the village dramatically and it will become a 'model village' as Bourton is with tourists wandering around with cameras and giving no privacy to locals.

As most of the village are tenants of the NT it is very difficult for them to speak out if they don't agree with this plan!

I feel it is important for Ex-villagers to express our views.

Regards

Susan, 3 March 2024

From what little information there seems to be this plan by the National Trust seems absolutely ludicrous. Sherborne village is quite special and unique and needs to stay that way.

The road through Sherborne is quite narrow in places and to have even more visitors would inevitably lead to congestion - car parking is already inadequate as in summer many cars are parked on verges.

We have a wonderful selection of wildlife around the village - too many visitors would have a serious impact on the environment. Please don't let these people turn Sherborne in to a tacky theme park.

Yurek, 1 March 2024

Upon receipt of the information although limited of the National Trusts theme park plan it really does confirm what I and many others feel that the trust has lost all respect and credibility.

I therefore strongly object to any such proposals for Sherborne it is obvious that they will destroy the natural and historic uniqueness of the village and the surrounding area.

Furthermore, the plan is totally against the founding principles of the national trust which is to preserve places of natural beauty and historic interest.

Dean, 29 February 2024

To the council:

I have walked and run Sherborne Park Estate for more than 20 years. My initial introduction to Sherborne Park Estate was when visiting my wife's family in Burford. We would often make the drive to then walk the estate and enjoy its natural environment. More recently, after becoming a homeowner in Little Barrington, I have the opportunity to enjoy the estate regularly, and remain impressed with what it has to offer to the visitor.

What often strikes me about the estate is how underutilized it is. Given its scale, natural diversity and beauty, it is clearly a public resource that needs to be more accessible to all. To accomplish that will require sensitive upgrades.

I have read the Policy EN18 Masterplan summary and rationale, and all make very good sense - all of which I fully support. My experience with other National Trust properties is that the Trust is very sensitive in their visitor development activities and there is no reason to think that their plans for Sherborne Park Estate will be otherwise.

Nowhere in the goals and objectives did I see any plans to create a "country-style theme park" as was stated in the notice that was received at our home. Upon reading Policy EN18, with its admirable goals and objectives, such language would seem to seek to inflame public opinion rather than seek it.

So, put me down as fully supporting The National Trust in their plans to improve accessibility and utilisation of Sherborne Park Estate.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

May, 27 February 2024

Hi there,

We just received a letter through our door saying something about a "Sherborne Masterplan" happening in Sherborne with no consultation from the National Trust or the Sherborne Parish Council. Looking at the so-called proposals we think that having 45km of tracks and paths and cycle trails sound great. We're not so sure about the "3 x visitor centres" though. It would be nice to be properly informed about these things as most residents are probably horrified at having their home turned into a theme park. We welcome change but want good change and to be informed at the very least.

Kind Regards

Jane, 27 February 2024

Dear Sirs

After receiving information regarding the proposed Sherborne Masterplan, I would like to object to all of it and you have my full support to continue with this objection.

Yours faithfully

John, 27 February 2024

Good morning

We understand that there is a plan to create a country-style theme park in Sherborne with one of its' aims to help relieve the pressure of the visitor numbers on Bourton-on-the-Water.

We strongly object to this plan as we do not need or want our small historical village overrun with tourists. Besides there are no suitable routes into the village - most of them are single-track roads which will inevitably lead to more traffic accidents. We are also concerned that the livelihood of our precious village shop could be severely impacted with additional food and drink offerings across the estate.

Unfortunately we are unable to attend the next public consultation and are appalled that there has been no consultation with Sherborne residents to date.

This must be addressed before any further development of this project is undertaken.

Yours faithfully

Duncan, 26 February 2024

Good Evening

I would like to make you aware of our feelings, on the above project and plan, that are causing concern at the moment, and advise I have made a couple of comments on the CDC District Local Plan direct.

We find it very difficult to understand how neither the CDC or NT appear to have consulted or communicated with residents of Sherborne, where we have lived for nearly 30 years, in the last couple of years, their thoughts and intentions, with regard to the above plan and project, either individually or jointly.

We would have thought at the very least CDC, would have advised on the two open meetings more openly, as we have been unable to attend last week, or attend in early March, when we are away. More importantly we would have expected the NT to hold one or two open meetings to present their plan - 2022-2025, and actually provide a six monthly or annual update for us all to see, as well as communicate more transparently in their newsletters. We are now over halfway through the first 4 years of the project, so it would be great to understand if they are on track, where they have been successful, and where they have issues, to help us understand the situation more fully

The last meeting, as far as we are aware, was with regard to their plans for Sherborne Brook, which was nearly two years ago, where they said they would hold an update, after the computer modelling had taken place, and I do not believe that has happened, although I believe the first computer modelling of flow of the brook was not successful.

There are many very positive parts of the Project with regard to tree planting, grassland, solar power for villagers, to lessen dependence on oil, work on waterways, opening up of paths for visitors, especially going over the brook, holiday lets, to utilise redundant buildings, better visibility at Water Meadows car park are a few of these.

Our main concern is how many visitors do they expect to attract, if they are expanding car parks, providing catering and toilet facilities at Lodge Park, and will the roads, already badly potholed, and services we currently have be able to cope with these numbers? Are they able to share their information on this, as merely for CDC to look for a relief valve in Sherborne, for Bourton on the Water, may not be in the best interests of residents and wildlife of Sherborne?

With work that has already been done on pathways in the Parkland, on a fine sunny day, the road is filled with parked cars, making it more dangerous, and the Village Shop can be overwhelmed with customers, who have only a small space to sit, and often sit on our wall, and even enter our garden. During COVID, there were times when we were overtaken by visitors, so we already have some idea, of what may happen in the future, if facilities are not sufficient to cope with demand. With the plans to charge for parking at all car parks, this may make the problem worse, rather than better.

The A40 is already a busy and dangerous road, and the increase in both traffic, crossing the A40, as well as walkers and cyclists, will increase the dangers, and we are not sure, this has been thought through. We already know that when the A40 is closed between Burford and Northleach, the alternative route through Sherborne, is not easy, and the roads are not designed to handle huge volumes of traffic, and the potholes, which are already a problem, will only get worse. In addition, the water that continues to flood the road on the way to Clapton-on-the-Hill, has already caused accidents for cyclists. The Highways Agency and Thames Water or NT Contractors need to deal with these problems, as part of the overall solution.

As we highlighted earlier, there are some very positive parts of the plan, which we would welcome, but we are concerned that without further discussion and consultation with residents, with regard to future plans and timescales, that the beauty and heritage of Sherborne, where we are proud to live, could be damaged and diminished, which is the exact opposite of what the plans and projects are trying to do

Kind regards

Bob, 26 February 2024

Parish council

There seems to be some welcome thoughts in the concept paper. Such as many more trees to be planted and the development plan for the Broadwater. (this is much needed since the stream has become clogged with weed considerably reducing birdlife activity - where are the visiting flocks of ducks and geese of old? Only one swan left?)

I do have concerns about the change of use of farmland. No doubt flower meadows would look attractive to visitors, but the country needs more food production as we are not self sufficient in food. The local tenant farmers should be incentivised to grow crops or use pastureland for cattle or sheep. What a waste of a valuable natural resource.

I am also worried about potential visitor numbers overwhelming the facilities of Sherborne. In the plan I can see no mention of target visitor numbers and how the NT proposes to attract them. How is it possible to develop a plan for car parking, food and drink outlets, toilets without an idea of target numbers.? The plan as I have seen it seems to be a matter of guesswork which if not enumerated and costed properly could easily go wrong leading to cars clogging up Sherborne village or food and beverage outlets being loss making. I do not see any commercial analysis having been done.

Finally, I admit to a NIMBY tendency. 24 years ago, I bought a house in Sherborne because I was attracted by the quiet natural beauty of the village and its surroundings. I do not want to see a large overflow of tourist from Bourton spoiling the tranquillity of the village.

Do not change the character of Sherborne (and possibly reduce the value of my property!)

Anthony, 26 February 2024

Good Morning

I have recently moved to Aldsworth and was yesterday told about the Sherborne Masterplan which apparently includes a country-style park developed by or supported by the National Trust. To say that I am shocked and disappointed by this would be a gross understatement. You will know that there are two tiny roads leading to and from the A40 through Aldsworth. In the event that such a development was to take place both of these roads would inevitably become key links to such a site and that would ruin the peace and quiet of this lovely village. Furthermore one, or indeed both, would have to be widened and or straightened in the interests of safety. You will already be aware that buses and farm vehicles cannot easily pass each other and at certain times of the day than is already a problem.

The Cotswolds are a beautiful example of rural England at its very best. The A40 is already an extremely busy and often dangerous road carrying too much traffic to the west and between Oxford and Cheltenham. Of course, tourism and the hospitality industry are vital to the well-being and commercial success of our county, and rightly so, but in the final analysis this success must not be achieved at the expense of the people who live here. Our interests must also be taken into account.

We are told that one aim of this proposed development is to relieve the pressure of visitor numbers on Bourton-On-The-Water. If this plan is allowed to proceed it will simply make the A40 more dangerous, life in Aldsworth intolerable, and be yet another nail in the coffin of the Cotswolds as we know them. By all means do something to improve living conditions in Bourton but please not at the expense of the rest of us and the Cotswolds as a whole.

Very sincerely

Karen, 20 February 2024

Dear Mr Brain,

I am horrified to hear about the plans which are laid out for the future of The Sherborne Estate. This is one of the few iconic estates left in the south of England.

It is a peaceful, quiet, unpolluted, unexploited place, a diamond surrounded by over populated areas of tourism, leaving litter and human waste where ever one goes, but at Sherborne we have a precious GEM. We have here otters and water voles and kingfishers on our Brook, water which is crystal clear, which we drink.

Please consider all the amazing wildlife which would be destroyed by this horrendous plan, wildlife can only survive in quiet unpolluted, unpopulated areas, and these areas are now very few and far between. This one we must retain, and not be tempted by financial gain and greed which has caused so much destruction all over our small country.

With regards,

Patricia, 20 February 2024

Dear All

I understand that the NT probably doesn't make money out of Sherborne Estate, but I think most of their proposals are poorly thought out.

We certainly have more visitors since Covid and village parking, the lack of toilets and dog bins are a big problem, but in a landscape with a myriad of safe back roads why on earth do we need more cycle tracks? Or, with a v friendly and traditional village shop, why more beverage experiences round and about?

In a quiet Cotswold landscape of some 18-century estate significance, turning it into an amusement park for the Bourton overflow visitors seems far-fetched.

The only good news here is that they would have to make the river scape worth viewing first with dredging etc.

I see the doc EN 18 in the CDC plan refers to renewable energy projects on the estate, great, but The Stables put up a plan for revitalising the electricity engine house in about 2005 and it was turned down (despite the NT doing similar in Bradford on Avon).

However, all is not lost if the parish council could use its influence to get the NT out of their offices and to have a good discussion with the locals. I am sure we would all like to help move some of their plans forward but for a national organisation their communication skills are non-existent.

Good luck

Appendix 2 – Sherborne traffic map and A40 accident map

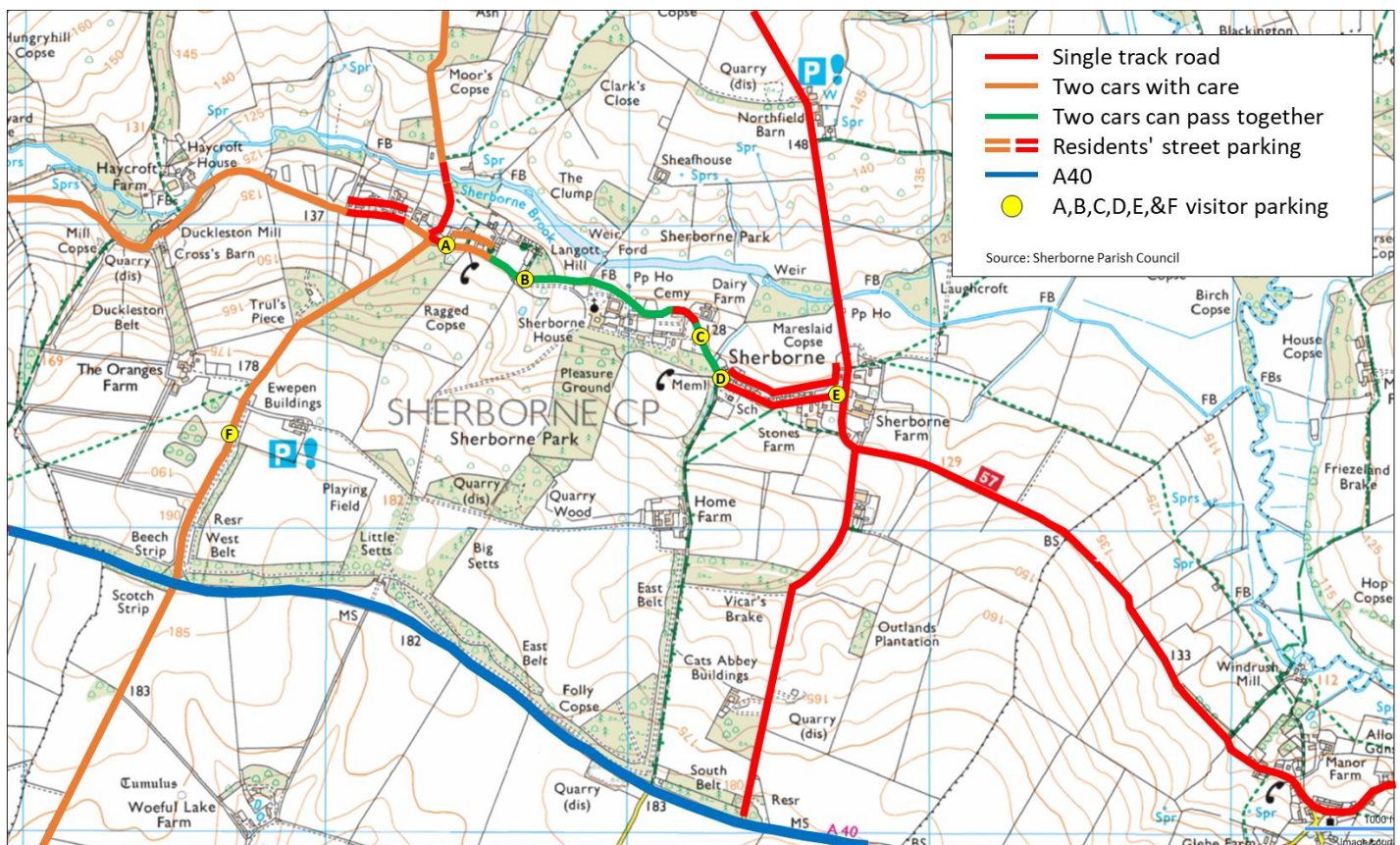
Sherborne traffic map

Already at weekends and public holidays, there is a significant increase in visitor traffic and regardless of signs and information available to visitors prior to their arrival, visitors disrupt residents' parking, park on grass verges (point F), and field gateways to avoid NT car parks. Points A-B, C-D & D-E are already visitor parking hotspots.

Access between villages with today's road usage is already challenging. Disruption to the local community, as well as general road safety, are already important themes.

Policy EN18 criteria to "Maximise opportunities for sustainable travel" must carefully consider suitability of the local road network for more traffic through Sherborne and surrounding villages.

An independent specialist road/traffic study should be commissioned.



A40 accident map

The Windrush to Northleach stretch of the A40 is already recognised as a serious accident blackspot (see below A40 accident map) with 29 recorded accidents between 2012 and 2022 – 15 slight, ten severe, and four fatal. Anything which increases slowing and turning traffic on this stretch of road should be regarded as dangerous.

An independent specialist road/traffic study should be commissioned.

