**Presentation – A Neighbourhood Plan for Woolpit**

**Slide 1 – Title – display until start**

**Slide 2 – Housebuilding in Woolpit since 1990**

*Initially shows past and current building – click to display new proposals*

These are the main developments over the past 25 years, with 257 houses between them. Between 20 and 40 other houses have been built in small numbers in various places around the village. This gives a historic building rate of about 12 houses a year.

*(Wrights Way (early 1990s) – 92*

*Hay Barn Meadow (1995-96) – 16*

*Cow Fair – 20*

*Abbotts Meadow (1999-2000) – 40*

*Cornmill Green (1995-96) – 19*

*Roman Fields (2001-02) – 40*

*Greencroft (2015-16) – 30)*

There are currently 2 new applications in the pipeline: *click* Green Road, which is for 50 houses, and *click* Old Stowmarket Road, for 150 houses.

**Slide 3 – Why the need for more housing?**

Due to the national housing shortage, the Government is putting pressure on all local authorities across the country to build more houses. Mid Suffolk is no exception. Demand is especially high in the south-east, within commuting distance of London.

Doing nothing is not an option; there is growing pressure for additional development in our region. Planning proposals have also been received in other villages, not just Woolpit

We may not be able to say ‘No’ to future proposals but it might be possible to mould them to achieve local aims. We need to have a realistic understanding of what may happen.

It is worth noting that in Woolpit’s recent housing survey a clear majority of people were in favour of building affordable housing.

**Slide 4 – National planning policy framework**

There is a National Planning Policy Framework. This is a general strategy setting out guidelines for planners and developers.

It includes the requirement for sustainable development. It also encourages community involvement and engagement, not just consultation. It actually invites us to shape our environment. It says that to achieve this, the community must be involved before planning applications are submitted. This explains why developers like Artisan and Pigeon have circulated the village and mounted exhibitions.

The last time Mid Suffolk District Council published a Local Plan was in 1998. They are currently working on a new plan, but they have been working on it since 2008, when a Core Strategy was approved. They have no certain date for publication of the new plan.

At the moment there is very little in place to make developers pay attention to the needs and preferences of communities, so many of us think that we should produce our own Neighbourhood Plan.

**Slide 5 – What is neighbourhood planning?**

This is an official definition of neighbourhood planning.

It is about a community using land and development to deliver somewhere to live, work, shop, eat, and drink. It is also about what it enjoys and cherishes and how it moves around.

It means moulding development, not preventing it.

It means understanding our community’s daily lives.

It means upholding our values.

**Slide 6 – What is a Neighbourhood Plan?**

It is a document, or a body of documents, which takes into account the community’s preferences when making decisions about new developments. It has to be about the use and development of land, but it can include other things we want, such as recreational areas and facilities, pedestrian and cycle access etc. The heart of the plan is a robust evidence base, drawn from surveys, questionnaires, discussions, comments by groups and individuals about their priorities, needs and wishes.

It usually takes about 2 years to complete, but once it has been formally accepted, it becomes part of the local planning framework, and by law, it has to be considered when making decisions.

**Slide 7 – Limitations on a Neighbourhood Plan**

What a Neighbourhood Plan isn’t – it isn’t a way of preventing or limiting housebuilding developments. The targets specified by the Local Plan still apply.

A Neighbourhood Plan has to comply with national and local planning strategies, although these are largely broad-brush frameworks.

In these days of climate change, it is not surprising that encouraging sustainable development is a requirement for a Neighbourhood Plan.

**Slide 8 – Neighbourhood planning: the roadmap**

Put simply, there are seven stages in the process of making a Neighbourhood Plan.

Initially we have to designate the area it covers; this would normally be defined by the parish boundary of Woolpit.

The next stage, and by far the largest, concerns preparation – this means gathering evidence through surveys, discussions and other means, and deciding what we want. This would be formulated in a policy or policies.

To quickly summarise the remaining stages, they are:

Publicising the plan, then submitting it to Mid Suffolk District Council, who will have it independently examined. This would be followed by a village referendum, and a simple majority of those voting would lead to the adoption of the plan.

The District Council has a legal duty to support us in producing a Neighbourhood Plan, and we may be eligible for a grant. In any case the District Council would pay for the independent examination and the referendum.

The Parish Council must lead the process, but can delegate the business to a Working Group. We are here tonight to find out if there is popular support for the idea, and if so, to find out who would be willing to serve on a Working Group.

We need to involve residents, businesses and interest groups such as village clubs and societies. Public agencies like the Health Centre and Woolpit School would also make an input.

**Slide 9 – Pros and cons**

The benefit of a Neighbourhood Plan would be that we could influence future housing and other developments in the village. As a community we would be able to help decide where developments should go; what type of houses and facilities we need; traffic management and access to keep our roads safe, for example parking and cycle paths.

*click*

If we do not make a Neighbourhood Plan we will have limited say and influence on where development takes place in the village, and on how much development there is. There is no Local Plan at present, so there are no restrictions on the developers who are making applications in Woolpit. They have free rein to submit whatever applications they want. Given the national shortage of housing, they know that the government will back them. Woolpit is a desirable place to live, as we all know.

*click*

Neighbourhood Plans do take up to two years to complete, however, as soon as we can lodge evidence with Mid-Suffolk about what the village wants, this will be taken into consideration.

Elmswell, Haughley and a number of other villages in Mid-Suffolk have already started their Neighbourhood Plans. If they can do it, so can we.

**Slide 10 – What do you think?**

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