

WHAT THE NDP IS TRYING TO ACHIEVE

Consultations with village residents going back more than a decade (see the Parish Plan), and again during the last year through meetings, SEDCA feedback, and the recent parish-wide questionnaire, have confirmed that our overarching priority is to ensure that Sherfield English continues as a working rural village, rather than becoming either a fossil or a dormitory area. This can only be achieved by making better provision for young individuals and families to live and work in the village, and by helping retirees to downsize within the village, freeing up family homes for the next generation. The current imbalance is confirmed by two things: The average house price in Sherfield English is about twice the Borough average, and the demographic information extracted from national census data, made available by TVBC as a 'Parish Profile', shows clearly that, relative to the rest of TVBC's rural community, we have a very significant skew towards the older age ranges. The Parish Profile is available for download on both the village's and TVBC's web site.

In a nutshell, therefore, we need to create a steady supply of smaller, and in the general sense of the word, more affordable, houses.

We have already defined, in the VDS, the character that these developments should have to preserve the rural feel of the village, so we are now shaping a plan based around a series of small-scale developments, typically with 5 to 15 dwellings in each. All developments will make a 'Community Funding' contribution which will allow us to implement some of the other objectives identified, such as better footpaths, and enhancements to the sports and recreation areas.

These are the specific proposals which have taken shape over the past year:

The character of developments

1. We care about preserving the open rural feel of the village, and do not wish any developments to encroach significantly on the spaces between the existing groups of dwellings. We expect to carry the VDS's specific descriptions of the relationship between dwellings and open spaces into the NDP.
2. This does not mean that developments must somehow be 'within' existing groups of dwellings. They may well be an addition to the edge of a group, or only loosely connected, but they should 'fit the pattern', as defined in the VDS, and not be intrusive. There is in fact a presumption against infill, in the usual sense, everywhere in the Test Valley except within defined development zones, of which there are none in Sherfield English. The NDP will not create any such zones – each development proposal is to be judged in its entirety against the NDP's base rules.

The size of developments

3. Developments must be for not less than 5 dwellings, to meet community funding limits. Below this the existing TVBC planning rules for 'development in the countryside' will continue to apply, which is essentially a restriction to one-for-one replacement dwellings.
4. Developments must be for not more than 15 dwellings to keep the percentage population increase to a manageable level in any given year. More specifically the long term average should ideally be about 8 dwellings per year. A proposal for a development phased over several years would be considered on its merits, but would still need to meet the requirements for low impact, the new dwellings' connectivity with surrounding woods and fields, and the overall mix of dwellings.
5. The main rationale behind this upper limit is that developments are only being allowed at all in order to restore balance to the village's population. But crucially we are looking for a single enlarged community, not for a village with separate old and new communities, so the process must be gradual, giving time for adjustments.

6. We are happy to be making a contribution to TVBC's housing targets, but this is a secondary benefit, not a primary motivation.

The types of dwelling

7. Every development must provide only small and medium sized dwellings, addressing in particular the needs of young couples who would otherwise need to move away from the village, and of retirees currently living in the village who wish to downsize. We would also welcome newcomers who specifically wish to live in the village. We would plan on a mix of 1, 2 and 3 bedroom dwellings at an average density of 8 per acre – much lower than is targeted in urban and suburban schemes, specifically to preserve the existing rural character of the village.
8. A proportion of dwellings must be 'shared equity' or cater by some other means for young individuals and couples who would otherwise struggle to meet the deposit or income requirements associated with mortgages.
9. Some dwellings may be created for private rental, although probably not through a Housing Association as part of a formal 'affordable housing' scheme – we already have two such schemes.
10. Restrictions on further development and changes to the type of dwelling are likely to be achieved through long leasehold contracts, but in all cases without more than a peppercorn 'ground rent' being payable.

The shape of developments

11. A likely pattern for a development within the NDP would be a simple, non-folding, cul-de-sac, although a short service road, similar to that in Melchet View, would be equally suitable. In either case the development must comply with the requirements of the VDS, particularly in maintaining the direct connection with woods or fields for at least one boundary of both new and existing properties. There will be no back-to-back development with either new or existing dwellings.
12. Due consideration must be given to 'sustainability' requirements. Specifically, developments should be within easy walking distance of a bus route, which for us probably means on, or within ¼ mile of, the A27. They should also be within walking distance of the main community facilities, but since these are somewhat dispersed there will need to be some flexibility in assessing this. Very broadly speaking, we are probably looking at either side of the A27 from Melchet Court to Branches Lane, and perhaps a little further up Branches Lane than the other side roads on account of the Post Office and village shop now being in that direction. In this context Developer Contributions would pay for additional footpaths.

Other considerations

13. We expect to support any proposals which would add to employment within the parish, provided there is no clash with the requirements of the VDS, or the aspiration expressed in the Parish Plan that businesses should not create noise, dust or a noticeable increase in lorry traffic. The NDP would specifically support the conversion of redundant farm buildings.
14. Some amenities, particularly the village shop, the pub, the village hall and the sports/recreation field, are very highly valued by residents, and the NDP should therefore do what it can to protect and promote them. This would be mostly in two areas: support where there are planning policy questions, and allocation of funds from developer contributions.
15. We plan to improve and extend the footpaths and tracks within the parish. Specifically we would like to create a footpath along Branches Lane between the A27 and the Caravan Park / Village Post Office. Since the verge is not wide enough everywhere to accommodate this we would need land to be donated or acquired as part of the 'community benefit' deriving from the NDP. A longer term plan would link up existing paths and tracks to create an off-road link to the New Forest, and perhaps to the Test Valley.