

# Northleach Neighbourhood Plan Update

## Spring 2016

For more than two years, a group of local residents has been working towards the Northleach Neighbourhood Plan.

Grant aid and Town Council funding has enabled a specialist consultancy firm, rCOH Ltd, to guide us through the process.

### The story so far

Northleach is a wonderful place to live. It has a distinct history, typical Cotswold architecture and some beautiful countryside, all set in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. We all want to preserve our unique heritage for future generations. But we must also address the shortfalls in the town, to secure its future.

In its emerging Local Plan, Cotswold District Council has allocated two specific sites in the east end of town for residential development. However, these proposals do not address the town's needs in terms of parking, education or employment.

The working group sought to identify ways to provide the required infrastructure. Allowing some further areas to be developed could make it possible to deliver and fund these improvements.

### What do residents want?

You may remember that we held open days and carried out a survey in the summer of 2014, to find out what was important to local residents and how you would like to see your town develop.

These consultations informed the State of the Parish Report, published in October 2014, which summarises the issues facing the parish and residents' views on how we could maintain and improve the quality of life in Northleach.

The main issues identified were:

- The need for better employment opportunities
- Parking, in particular the need for a small visitors' car park
- Land to allow expansion of the primary school
- Provision of a nursery school
- Land for a multi-use games area, mainly for young people
- Improvements to the Market Place.

### What have we been doing?

Working with the consultants and liaising with other bodies including landowners and the district council, the working group has been examining the various options, with the aim of finding development sites that could contribute to improvements to the town, but without damaging its character. We have carried out the following activities:

- A workshop for local landowners and other bodies to help identify and discuss land suitable for development.
- A detailed review and examination of all possible sites for development
- Identification of three potential areas where new development could contribute to improvements to the town.
- A Strategic Environmental Assessment to determine whether sustainable development is possible on these areas, and could realistically expect the support of the planning authority.
- Production of a draft Design Statement that captures the distinctive character of Northleach, and provides guidance for future developers.
- Preparation of the draft Neighbourhood Plan.

### What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

A Neighbourhood Plan – also known as a Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) – provides an opportunity to set a framework for the development of land in the parish up to the year 2031 and to set policies to address the wider needs of the town beyond simply building more houses. This should help ensure that we deliver the infrastructure needs that go hand in hand with development but that are otherwise ignored.

Cotswold District Council is currently working on a Local Plan, which sets out the planning policy framework for the district as a whole. Creation of a Neighbourhood Plan for the parish provides local residents with the best opportunity to exercise some control over future housing development and infrastructure, and to ensure our local needs are firmly embedded in the district's planning policy.

### What do we hope to achieve?

It is initially for landowners to put sites forward for development. But clearly, if local residents are to support the proposals, any sites must not only be economically viable, they must be acceptable across a broad range of landscape, sustainability and other criteria. Some sites simply do not pass the necessary tests but we believe there is scope to achieve the following:

- Land for existing Ferrari garage to expand and/or for new light industrial units
- Provision of a visitor car park
- Allocation of land for future expansion of the school and/or provision of a nursery as well as a ball sports area.

The Northleach Neighbourhood Plan's draft proposals are:

1. To allocate some of the land between the Coalyard Farm industrial estate and the BT exchange for provision of a visitor car park, alongside new industrial units and some additional housing. (Marked as site 'A' on the plan below).
2. To help fund the car park, some residential development may be necessary on the lower slopes of the land between Chequers and the traffic lights. (Site 'B' on the plan).
3. Allocation of the land behind the school (Site 'C' on the plan) for school expansion and school car parking, building of a nursery school, and provision of a floodlit ball sports area.

## Your views are important

The Neighbourhood Plan working group is keen to hear what residents think about these proposals. To give your feedback, you can come to one of our open days, write to us at the Westwoods Centre, Bassett Road, Northleach, GL54 3QJ, or email [clerk@northleach.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@northleach.gov.uk).

**Open days will be held on Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> March in the Cotswold Hall and Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> March in the Westwoods Centre from 10 am – 5pm, where you can view the proposals in more detail, discuss them with volunteers from the working group and tell us what you think.**

After the open days, we will review and respond to the feedback, then press ahead with writing the Pre-Submission Plan, describing the vision, objectives and policies for Northleach.

Following a statutory six-week public consultation period, the Pre-Submission Plan will be revised to take into account the representations received before the final version is submitted to the local planning authority for approval.

The Neighbourhood Plan will then be subject to an independent examination. Any recommendations made by the examiner must be considered by the Town Council and the plan amended as necessary before proceeding to the final stage – a local referendum.

If supported by a simple majority vote at the referendum, our Neighbourhood Plan will be adopted as part of local planning policy. This means the plan has legal weight and must be taken into account when the district council considers planning applications in the parish.



