

sympathetic development goes up near your front door and you look for help and support from the other end of the village.

Conclusion: We all need to be more engaged, more opinionated and more vocal on matters affecting the conservation of Stanford Dingley. We need to show planning officers, councillors and new-comers that we are passionate about protecting, conserving and even sometimes enhancing our local natural and built environment.

This is particularly so when a planning application threatens to establish a precedent that could undermine the special planning considerations to which the village has been subject for the last 40 years or so.

This responsibility is entirely in our hands and we can rely upon only ourselves to be the custodians of our quintessential English village.

**Stanford Dingley Parish Council
September 2019**



A note from your Parish Council...

The development policies that apply to Stanford Dingley, why our built environment is the way it is and what we must do to safeguard its conservation.

Introduction: We are lucky to live in a very special environment, but the quality of that environment has not come about by accident. Over last 30-40 years, the village community has clearly expressed its views on development in the village. This has been achieved in many ways but most notably, 1) through collective contribution to long term collaborative initiatives such as the Parish Plan and the Parish Design Statement, 2) through actively commenting on individual Planning Applications, and 3) effectively lobbying WBC on the unique considerations of our situation.



The planning policies which apply to the village are complex and It has become clear through recent planning applications, that the basic planning regime pertinent the village is poorly understood. This is not surprising. Planning policy is not always interpreted consistently and that is one of the reasons why village/community engagement on the matter is so crucial.

This note sets out to give a little of the background to our current fortunate position and what we must do as a community to maintain it and guide any development in a manner that is desirable and sustainable to us as a village.

How has this come about? The key is that in planning terms we have no 'settlement boundary'. This means that all planning applications are considered to be in the context of Open Countryside where there is a presumption of **no** development unless subject to some **very** restricted conditions. This has meant that we have been able to protect and maintain our all-important development gaps in the village.



Other forces for conservation: In addition we have our position in the North Wessex AONB, and the protected status of the 1971 Stanford Dingley Conservation Area (which runs from Ingle Spring on Bushnells Lane through to between St Denys' and Bradfield Farm on Cock Lane). In addition

we have a wealth of Designated Heritage Buildings (24 Listed Buildings out of 80 or so houses). All of these usually contribute to very intense scrutiny being applied to planning applications in the village by the Planning Department at West Berks. However, we cannot rely on that in every situation.

When it gets more difficult or controversial: West Berks deal with many thousands of planning applications every year. The vast majority of these are decided under "delegated authority" where the default is the planning department makes the decision without Ward Members (West Berks Councillors) getting involved.

The exceptions to this are when 10 or more public objections to the planning application are received from the Parish, or the Ward Member "calls in" the application to Committee. When this happens the application is decided by Councillors with advice from Planning Officers and direct input from interested parties such as Parish Council, applicant/agent etc. In our case, this is the Eastern Area Planning Committee (EAPC).

When we have controversial applications it is often better for these to be considered and decided by the EAPC as we know that these applications will receive a more thorough and rigorous scrutiny across a broader set of considerations other than pure planning policy. We will explain to you our rationale for objecting or supporting and invite you to make your own minds up as Parishioners and submit comments in your own words.

It is entirely your decision whether to voice your opinions to West Berks on any particular planning application and whether that voice is to support or object. However, as your Parish Council, there will be applications to which we will wish to draw your attention because of their sensitivity relative to conservation, amenity, aesthetic, economic or community considerations.

The Devil at the Door – Precedent: The recurring concern that the village has faced for the last 30-40 years is that the whole planning policy framework that has protected our village comes crashing down as a result of a single poor planning decision.

One flawed or inadequately ring-fenced decision could set a precedent that opens up a flood of applications to develop the green gaps that are the dominant and defining characteristic of our village.

We need to be very vigilant to specific planning applications that could set such precedents and be diligent in preventing the approval of any applications which could threaten the strength of the planning protections we enjoy. This extends to working with friends and neighbours who are putting in Planning Applications to ensure that any development is in line with the wider Community and Village intent, or at the very least, does not detract from it.

Helping each other: We are all part of a larger community and need to work together to achieve community goals. Recently, we have seen a number of planning applications where people have said, "It is at the other end of the village – it doesn't affect me so I won't get involved". That is fine until an orange notice for a less than