

ADDITIONAL HOUSES IN WALSHAM

Where would you put them?

On Wednesday 19th November we had an extremely useful and very well attended meeting in the Village Hall to start looking at the challenge of accommodating quite a large number of additional houses in Walsham. At first sight the idea of 190 more houses looks pretty daunting, but when various factors are taken into account, such as the number of sites and units that are already in the pipeline, the task becomes more approachable. At this stage imagining that we need additional sites for, say 120 houses is probably more realistic, and this is spread over 20 years. This is very similar to the rate of growth that Walsham has experienced over the last 20 years.

But where would you put the extra housing? It was suggested at the meeting that it would be helpful if this question could be posed through the pages of the Observer, so that people could study maps of the village, mark on a site or sites that they feel would be suitable and then return their thoughts to the Parish Council. This is what we would now like people to do. This questionnaire is intended for those who attended the meeting in the Village Hall, but we are equally keen to get responses from all those who could not attend.

Keep in mind that the Parish Council cannot decide where new housing goes. Much depends upon which areas are put forward by landowners in response to MSDC's "call for sites", but collectively we can influence what happens after that.

There are some factors that need to be considered and which need to be adhered to:

- normally new sites should join on to the existing Settlement Boundary (drawn in blue on the map) so that they can be more easily integrated into the rest of the village.
- there is a large area to the west of the village which is designated as an Area of Local Landscape Sensitivity and is seen as valuable both as a landscape area, but also as a wildlife corridor - this area should be avoided.
- we have a number of open spaces such as the allotments, the play area, the Wild Woods and the Sports Club which are defined as Local Green Spaces and should be seen as sacrosanct.
- building will not be permitted in a Flood Zone as shown in Fig 23 page 68 of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- as part of the Neighbourhood Plan it was agreed that we did not want the two settlements - (Walsham and Four Ashes) - to coalesce.
- in the past the majority of people have said that they would prefer 2 or 3 smaller sites rather than one big one; this would also make it easier to spread construction over the 20 year period rather than have it all at one time, although with one site it would still be feasible to stagger building over several phases.

Richard Belson, Chair of Parish Council