

Friends of Old Woodstock (FOOW) – initial meeting

1. A small group of residents met on Thursday 24 January 2019 to provide a cross-section of opinion about our approach to the intended housebuilding on the field bounded by Hill Rise and Vanbrugh Close.
These were: Colin Carritt, Manor Road; Charlotte English and Mandy Miller, Hill Rise; Peter Ayres and Emma O'Regan, Vanbrugh Close; Steve Harrison, Kate Bird and Stan Scott, Rosamund Drive.
2. Objections were made by many residents in 2016/17, but despite this the land was allocated as suitable for development and approved by the Planning Inspectorate in September 2018. Great regret and disappointment were expressed that Old Woodstock, a settled community with access to Woodstock only by the A44, was selected for expansion by half again.
3. A planning application is expected in about a year's time, and individuals can object to specific aspects of it then should they wish. In the meantime, we have a chance to engage with Blenheim about how the development might be carried out, and to keep everyone in Old Woodstock informed and involved as far as they would wish. Looking to the future, Old Woodstock is likely to become much busier than it is now. The increase in population is likely to affect everyone living here, including the newly housed families.
4. The play area and small football field are seen as focal points for the existing communities in Hill Rise and the Barn Piece estate, and one of our priorities should be that these are preserved. If developers drive through the play area, even if it is re-located, traffic generated from the new housing estate and serving it will soon cause chaos at the junctions of Rosamund Drive and Vanbrugh Close. We suggest that the developers are urged to seek access to the new development site from the A44 only, perhaps by means of a roundabout built on the site north of Hill Rise, so slowing and managing through traffic on the main road as well as coping more easily with local traffic. Talks between the developers and Oxfordshire County Council and West Oxfordshire District Council are likely to be necessary at an early stage.
5. Increased pedestrian use of the narrow pavements towards the town on the A44 are likely to raise extreme concerns about safety, and yet the pavements and the road itself, narrow at particular 'pinch' points, can hardly be widened or made substantially safer. Air quality might also be an issue. The possibility of a new footpath and or cycleway, to give greater connectivity to those in Hill Rise, Barn Piece and the new development to the town, could be considered, and a suggested route has been identified. Careful consultation will be needed with residents of Hill Rise, Vanbrugh Close and Mavor Close whose homes and gardens back on to this suggested route, and a 'buffer' zone of several metres between those gardens and the new path if it is built, would be desirable. The path would need adequate but possibly low level lighting, particularly as it might pass through lonely and dark areas.

6. The drafting, printing and delivery of an information sheet was proposed, inviting residents of the 262 households in Old Woodstock to respond to an invitation to sign up to a group email address, a Facebook page and perhaps a website and telephone number. Offers of printing facilities are being sought. Residents could then ask questions and make suggestions, all of which can be conveyed to Blenheim, who are the developers and builders, either directly or by way of the consultation and review they propose to conduct over the next few months. All funding for infrastructure, including school and doctor provision as well as any new roads and pathways, can only be met by a finite amount which the development attracts, and all requests or needs, however important, may not be met.

7. Following the distribution of the information sheet and any response to it, a meeting is proposed, perhaps at a meeting place in the town still to be arranged, to which all residents of Old Woodstock can be invited and updated.