

## **Chairman's Report 2007**

This has been another busy year with planning being the dominant issue on the agenda.

### **WRHA site in Green Lane**

The Wiltshire Rural Housing Association Scheme was granted planning permission in September and the 10 traditionally built homes are expected to be available for occupation by 30<sup>th</sup> November. The Development will offer families, couples and individuals the opportunity to remain in or return to the village. This is only possible in Codford due to the generosity of Maurice Cole who made the land available for affordable rented accommodation only for those with local connections, a legacy that will benefit future villagers in perpetuity.

The urgent need for rented accommodation giving priority to local people will not be met by just 10 houses- the WRHA build to 33% or 25% of perceived need. In Cherry Orchard there are two sites that meet the criteria under the Private Finance Initiative, another scheme where only local people will be considered. An application for 6 homes on the allotment site is being processed –providing permission is granted the size of these houses will be decided after a housing needs survey once the WRHA scheme is filled.

### **Cherry Orchard PFI sites**

There is also permission for 3 houses to be built under the PFI scheme on the garage site at the top of Cherry Orchard. The two main areas of concern for councillors regarding this site was the problem with the sewerage treatment plant and the loss of overspill parking. At the planning committee meeting in February some additional parking had been offered however it was not enough to accommodate the vehicles presently parking on the garage site. Despite a recommendation from the Planning Officer to permit the application we convinced the committee to defer for additional parking. The result was that 3 parking spaces were allocated specifically for the residents facing the High Street and instead of 6 extra spaces we secured 11. As a direct consequence of this decision a precedent has been set, the planning committee now look at the loss of parking as part of the application and the Housing Society has accepted they need to include overspill parking when they put in for permission to build on other garage sites.

Regarding the Cherry Orchard sewerage treatment plant the PC have continued to object to any further pressure from new properties being added to the system without an upgrade. This is now taken as read, it is a 'Grampian Condition' – a negative condition first applied to a road in the Grampian area the application is only approved if a condition can be met- in this case either a separate sewerage system for new development or a refurbished treatment plant for the whole estate.

Given the urgent need for affordable rented homes for locals across the whole of the WWDC area, with private rents in Codford advertised at between £600- £800 a month, we are very fortunate in having 2 suitable exception sites where only local people will be considered for tenancies. Once the 10 Green Lane development now under construction and the 9 Cherry Orchard houses financed by PFI funding, [3 on the garage site with permission- 6 on the allotment site going through the planning process] Codford is unlikely to get any more local homes in the foreseeable future. Even if there were a suitable exception site there are villages all across the district desperate for houses for their own people and the PFI has to address the problem, we are fortunate that the WRHA financing did not come from the same pot as the PFI. Codford has been seen as a pioneer community by taking the initiative in addressing a national problem with lack of local housing at grass roots level, this was acknowledged at the Affordable Village Housing Seminar organised by the Rural Housing Trust and supported by Salisbury District Council last December.

### **The Barn in Chitterne Rd**

The building was constructed late March/early April 2003 without planning permission. Retrospective planning permission has been refused 3 times, in January & November 2004 and February 2006. A Planning Appeal was dismissed in July 2005 – the Inspector agreeing with the PC and the WWDC Planning Officers that the development, by virtue of its size and siting was contrary to Policy.

A Planning Contravention Notice was served in March 2006 and an Enforcement Notice on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2007. On 14<sup>th</sup> March this year an Appeal was lodged against Enforcement. The Parish Council has now submitted a second Appeal document for the Inspectors consideration and await events

### **Housing Allocations**

Housing Portfolio holder Councillor Tom James, Andrew Myatt from West Wilts Housing Society & Laura Lyons the Letting Team Supervisor attended the last PC meeting in order to explain the housing allocation policy and to answer questions. The PC had raised 4 issues as being regular complaints:

1] Single local individuals denied tenancies while single people from outside the village are given preference; 2] As families grow there are difficulties moving on to larger properties to accommodate the additional children; 3] Problem tenants moved in & 4] tenants not using accommodation as their principle home.

Councillor James raised a relevant point into the discussion- pointing out that villages were allowed ‘exception sites’ giving priority to rural locals but that there was no such arrangement

for the urban areas. The other side of the coin is that homes in the towns needed by townspeople are allocated to villagers- something we should all take into account- the unfairness is not one sided.

### **Exception Site Allocations**

It has been brought to the attention of the PC that individuals and couples putting their name down on the WWDC housing list in order to comply with the criteria for being on the WRHA list for tenancies are being told they are only eligible for bungalows or flats. Codford is the first exception site in WWDC area in many years and the criteria is not the same as for District Council housing. Phone calls go through to customer services where the staff are in the process of being trained, their response is in line with WWDC policy but does not apply to exception sites. We have spoken to Nicole Smith whose Department is aware of the criteria and have been told all staff will be properly briefed on the Codford site. Meanwhile if anyone has been told they are not eligible for the two bedroom homes being built so have not registered with WWDC they should contact them again.

### **Village Policy Limits**

The PC was unhappy at the ambiguity of the WWDC policy and has asked for clarification.

### **Communication Problems**

There were a range of issues regarding planning matters and in almost every instance the source of contention was due conflicting information. On 30<sup>th</sup> November 2006 the Vice Chairman, the Clerk and myself met with Councillors Davis and Newbury at WWDC office of David Hubbard the Development Control Manager. A full and frank discussion ensued and the PC was assured that there would be better communication from WWDC in future.

Other issues raised at the meeting concerned:

A] Deadlines were set for compliance and not followed through.

B] Lack of response to two letters on the same subject asking for clarification- sent 18<sup>th</sup> October 2005& 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2006 answered on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2006.

C] The lack of action regarding a retrospective planning application turned down at Appeal 14<sup>th</sup> July 2005. The Planning Contravention Notice was not served until 10<sup>th</sup> March 2006 - 5 months after the deadline for removal of the building had passed and 8 months after the Appeal was dismissed. It took a further 10 months after numerous phone calls and e-mails before the Planning Enforcement letter was served on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2007.

### **The Last Year**

We have provided the Environment Agency with information for the Flood Archive project – the text, photos, graphs and map references will be available to the Agency and for research purposes on disc.

Our Anzac Day Service last month was a great success and Caroline and Christine provided an amazing breakfast. The Badge cleaning event went well and the Badge has never looked so good. This year the event will be 7<sup>th</sup> July.

Waste collections and recycling is as much on the local as the national agenda- a source of grievance. The PC and the Village Hall management Committee are seeking to regain the bins taken from the Codford Recycling site.

Thanks mainly to Louis's perseverance the Parish Stewards have agreed to repaint the white railings in the High St, Chitterne Rd and New Rd.

### **Thanks**

We are very lucky to have so many community minded people who make their expertise available for the benefit of the village including all those people who contribute to the Badge leaning lunch. Special thanks to Frank West Jnr for keeping our streets clean, to Brian Marshall for the brilliant planning documents he produces at very short notice, to John Gaines for delivering flyers around Cherry Orchard, to John Wyeth for getting the Millennium Gate refurbished and to Robin White for the new Codford Village website.

I would like to thank all the Councillors for their contributions to the village and on a personal note for the support they have given me over the year. To the retiring Councillors Janet Nuth, Chris Garratt & Maurice Cole a vote of thanks from us all for their hard work, in some cases over very many years- we will miss you. Welcome to new councillors Penny Edmonds, Chris Brayne and Don Bartlett- we look forward to working with you.

Finally to the two people who have been unfailing towers of strength during stressful periods- Karen and Louis. Karen is a reliable sounding board who also proof reads, sifts through volumes of documents and attends many long planning sessions & less than stimulating meetings. She has incredibly energy & organisation skills and villagers needing help and advice inevitably turn to her if they have a problem.

Louis in his role as Parish Clerk is the wheel that keeps the cogs of village affairs moving- a decision made at the PC meeting only happens because somebody makes it- that person is usually the Clerk, sometimes aided by the Chairman or the Vice Chairman. He is responsible for the smooth running of the village and keeping councillors in touch with the intricacies of local government. He has completed the initial clerks training and this has been of enormous

benefit given the ever-growing amount of paperwork and legislation we have to deal with. Louis also has the happy knack of being able to communicate with all manner of people in a way that gets things done.

Finally Congratulations to the Woolstore Company who last week hosted what is planned to be a Biannual Festival of One Act Plays. 'The Extraordinary Revelations of Orca the Goldfish' swept the board- it scored 90m out of 100 and won the Best Comedy Play, Bob & Jenny Johnson were joint winners of the Best Comedy Actors, Derek Miles won for Best Director & for the Winning Play. Congratulations too to Maureen Marshall for winning the Best Costumed Drama for 'The Wooing of Katherine.'

