Dear Woldingham Parish Council,

Thank you very much for replacing the old bench on our Green. This had done great service but was unfortunately well past its mend-by date. The new bench is not so big, but sits up higher and looks far better and is far more comfortable. And as you can see it can carry seven of us quite easily for the time being. We hope that all Woldingham residents will have the opportunity to sit on it for many years to come.

Happy days!

Charlie and Kit (back row)
Teddy, Matilda, Florence, Barnaby and Oscar (front row)
A GUIDE TO THE POLICIES OF THE PRE-SUBMISSION PLAN

POLICIES 1-6: Design policies
Like all planning policies, these will need to withstand examination and challenge. However, our strong and declared intention is to use them to defend the special character of Woldingham. Tandridge Council’s planning policies are designed to cover the whole of the District. Despite our best efforts to keep them, most previous policies that were specific to Woldingham were omitted from the new Local Plan (Part 2, July 2014), including the 0.2ha minimum plot size requirement. We have merged elements of the Woldingham Design Guidance and the Woldingham Village Design Statement with elements of TDC’s former Woldingham Policy (BE7) to form a new composite policy which would reintroduce the 0.2ha minimum plot size requirement throughout the built-up area of the village, in accordance with the preference expressed in the January consultation. A point for those not familiar with the ‘character areas’. They were established by the Woldingham Character Assessment and the Woldingham Design Guidance (2011). Woldingham’s character areas vary according to factors such as their layout, topography and development history. We had hoped to boost Green Belt protection through the Plan, but have not found it easy to do so, since Green Belt is a strategic matter reserved to Tandridge. Policy 6 (Landscape) is our attempt to reduce the harm being done by large extensions and replacements to the open landscape, and particularly to the Green Belt in which much of the village lies.

POLICY 7: New dwellings suitable for downsizing
We are responding here to considerable documented local interest in downsizing as well as to a national housing priority. Our intention is to make it easier to build a small number of dwellings suitable for downsizing in the centre of the village. The policy includes both general and site-specific elements, as supported by the recent consultation. In response to some concerns expressed about ‘policy creep’, we have strictly defined the area to which the policy applies. We also need to include an exception to the 0.2ha minimum plot size requirement. Without this exception, we believe that Tandridge would have to refuse non compliant site-specific development projects, even though many plots in the central area are already less than 0.2ha. We would have thrown away the opportunity to facilitate downsizing through the Plan. The policy reflects views, both from Tandridge Council and from our consultants, that this policy is the best way to achieve our aim. The policy ‘strikes the right balance between being permissive of a type of housing to meet a specific local housing need and reflecting the character constraints that apply in the village.’

POLICY 8: Community facilities
In recent years the organisations that provide recreational and sporting facilities in the village have faced stiff competition from other local providers. This policy is intended to facilitate future improvements to village facilities over the next fifteen years. The frontrunner for a possible development is The Glebe. The Trustees have identified the need to redevelop their pavilion facilities to enable them to serve better the aims of their charitable trust. This, however, is at a very early stage and timing will be dependent on many considerations, not least funding.

POLICY 9: Regeneration of The Crescent
Through this policy we offer to work with the residents and those operating businesses in The Crescent to improve the vitality of this key area. Residents place particular value on the village shop and post office. We shall look for ways to help all businesses in The Crescent to thrive, for example by improvements to parking. We shall resist any reduction in retail outlets.

POLICY 10: Parking at Woldingham Station
Our purpose is to make it possible for residents to have reliable access to parking at the station. It’s a long way back up the hill! Station parking problems appear to be highly dependent on levels of usage by non-residents, over which we have little control. Parish Council records show that the problems always come back even after parking charges have gone up. We have a new opportunity to look for at least a partial solution through dedicated parking. Some additional options are available to explore, but we shall remain mindful of the sensitivity of the location in Green Belt.
**POLICY 11: Broadband & mobile communications**

We intend to press for better signal coverage and quality around the village. We would also like more say in the placement and appearance of equipment, which can be a controversial matter, and to make sure that reinstatement work is carried out to a satisfactory standard.

**POLICY 12: Local Green Spaces**

The formal designation of eight areas around the village as Local Green Spaces (in accordance with paragraph 77 of the National Planning Policy Framework) should help to increase their protection and give them recognition as important parts of the local green environment.

**POLICIES 13-16: Promoting residents’ safety around the village; Improving Local Transport; Improving Pedestrian and Cycle Routes; Networking**

These policies are not classed as ‘land use’ policies and as such might have been omitted from the formal Plan. However, they have plenty of importance for those living in the village. The opportunity comes perhaps once in a decade to hold a comprehensive village survey and draw up a wide ranging plan. The Residents’ Survey and the project groups that followed it up identified these four policy areas as priorities. We have put them under the loose title of ‘getting around and getting involved’. They will feature in the Parish Council's priorities for action along with the other policies.

**PLANNING**

**FIRST, FOUR PIECES OF GOOD NEWS!**

The Inspector’s decision in the Public Inquiry on appeals in Caterham on the Hill (in which the Parish Council participated last year as a Rule 6 party) was released in December. He found that TDC’s 2008 Core Strategy was not out of date taken as a whole, and decided that it was not necessary for him to take any view on the appellant’s claim that the housing numbers were no longer valid. If that claim had been accepted, it would have created a situation of uncertainty and opportunity for development without proper regard for TDC’s policies. That would have been very damaging for the whole District, including Woldingham. While the smaller of the two applications in Caterham in the Hill was approved and the larger refused, it was very important that the wider principle was not conceded. That outcome fully justified the participation of the Parish Council.

The same appellant developer, under a different name, had challenged TDC’s Local Plan Part 2, adopted in July 2014. The case was heard in the High Court in January. The Court found LP2 to be valid and refused leave to appeal, although there has been a further application to the Court of Appeal itself for leave to appeal. This has not yet been decided. Again, if LP2 had been struck down by the Court, there would have been great uncertainty about the rules for development in the whole District, with opportunities for developers to have a field day. That could have done great harm to Woldingham. Provided that there is no successful appeal, that threat has been seen off.

Revised guidance from the Department for Communities and Local Government has clarified the point that planning authorities are not obliged to yield up Green Belt land if they are otherwise unable to meet their Objectively Assessed Needs (OAN) for additional housing. That important clarification will help to protect the Green Belt in this parish.

Last, the Parish Council has succeeded in its 5-year campaign for correction of an error in the Permitted Development rules that was allowing almost unlimited development on the front of a house if it did not front a highway. This anomaly was always an unintended nonsense, but the delay in correcting it has allowed some unsatisfactory proposals through, to the detriment of the Green Belt. We are grateful to Sam Gyimah MP for taking the issue up repeatedly with successive Planning Ministers and to David Hodge, our County Councillor, for raising it in person with Eric Pickles, the Secretary of State. A good outcome, but the correction was only published on the day before Parliament rose for the dissolution. We first wrote to Sam about it in May 2010. It remains baffling why it took the whole 5–year life of the Coalition Government to get this result.
**Planning Applications in Woldingham**

We commented on 45 planning applications published for comment in the period from October 2014 to March 2015, showing some autumn/winter lull in the flow of cases compared with 67 cases in the previous 6 month period over spring and summer in 2014. We objected in a smaller proportion of cases than in the previous period. While TDC allowed 2 out of the 6 completed cases to which we had objected, the small sample does not allow any meaningful conclusion to be drawn from this. We took no action in 2 further cases in which comments were not requested since they represented only the preliminary stage of neighbour consultation on larger home extensions under permitted development.

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A. Pirie

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**Woldingham Parish Council Invites all Residents to Attend the Annual Parish Meeting**

**To be held on Thursday 21 May 2015**

**Main Hall, Woldingham Village Hall**

**Refreshments 7.00 pm; Meeting 7.30 pm**

The evening will include an opportunity to discuss the Woldingham Pre-Submission Plan. Sarah Thompson, Head of Strategic Planning Policy at Tandridge District Council, will take part in a panel session on the Plan.

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**Woldingham Village Shop and Post Office**

The Village Shop is at the centre of the Crescent and for many it is a focal point of the centre of Woldingham Village. Recognising this, the Parish Council has in the past provided some support to the Post Office to ensure that it remained viable. Recently, the Shop has become part of the “One Stop” network. This enables it to be price-competitive with the major stores on a number of product lines, so it no longer needs to cost more to shop locally. The Amins can also order items in if required, so if you are planning a party and need to order catering items, ask the Amins because they may well be able to help!