

Harberton Parish Neighbourhood Plan (HNP)
MINUTES of the meeting of the Steering Group

7.00pm Monday 25th September 2023 at Harbertonford Village Hall Meeting Room

In attendance: Cllr Chris Bowley, Peter Cogley (observer), Alex Crowe, Jem Friar, Cllr Douglas Hambly (Chair), Sally Lougher, Prana Simon.

Members of the public: 2 South Hams District Council Officers: Graham Swiss, Strategic Planning Officer at South Hams District Council (SHDC), and responsible for Neighbourhood Plans and Steph Rixon, Affordable Housing Officer. 2 landowner representatives: Nigel Worth (land at Preston Farm) and Tom Lowry (land at Ford Farm)

Apologies: Cat Radford (Parish Clerk/HNP Minutes Secretary). *NB minutes of this meeting refer to notes taken by Alex Crowe and Prana Simon and by Cat Radford listening to a recording of the meeting*

Public Session None

Agenda

1. **Apologies** were received as above and sanctioned.
2. **Elect new members to the committee** None
3. **Declaration of Interests**
 - 3.1. Register of Interests: Steering group members were reminded of the need to update their register of interests if they have changed.
 - 3.2. No interests were declared on items of the agenda.
4. **Approve Minutes** of the last meeting. *A motion to amend the minutes was not resolved. The minutes remain unsigned.*
5. **Update on actions** from the last meeting *As circulated with papers for the meeting*

Item	ACTION	Owner	Progress
230904 6.2	To liaise with AECOM Design Code Consultant on finalising the draft design code and to go ahead with a meeting to discuss revising the Character Boundary as per the agreement made at the previous meeting.	Cat	In progress. Comments have been forwarded. AECOM consultant will be in touch in coming weeks.
230904 7.3.5	Forward the letter from Eden Property Group to the AECOM Site Options Assessment team as if there are inaccuracies within the draft report they should be corrected.	Cat	ACTIONED AECOM Site Options Assessment team is reviewing the draft in light on the comments received.
230904 7.3.5	When writing to AECOM SOA consultants to include comments made by the representative from the Ford Farm site with regard to suspected inaccuracies in the calculation made on housing density for the site.	Cat	ACTIONED AECOM Site Options Assessment team is reviewing the draft in light on the comments received.
230904 7.3.5	Contact Eden Property Group contact and request the Heritage report as referenced by as referred to within the letter.	Cat	Contact with Eden Property Group made, Heritage Report not yet received. Will chase.
230904 7.3.5	Contact South Hams District Council with regard to setting a meeting with representatives of the Local Planning Authority as soon as possible.	Cat	ACTIONED. Officers/members will attend meeting of 25/09/23
230904 7.3.5	Make contact with South Hams District Council Affordable Housing Officer to request a meeting to discuss the Site Options Assessment report.	Cat/Prana	ACTIONED. Officers/members will attend meeting of 25/09/23
230904 9.1	All individual members of the steering group were invited to make any detailed comments directly to Alex to	ALL	None were made.

	enable him to absorb these when undertaking rewrites.		
230904 9.1	Alex and Prana agreed to collaborate on rewrites to the Housing Chapter, and that Prana would undertake a first draft before forwarding to Alex for the next phase.	Alex/Prana	<i>Discussion on wording of this action was not resolved.</i>
230904 9.1	Continue to undertake redrafts of the remainder of the plan.	Alex	For discussion on the agenda
230904 10.2	Respond to AECOM SEA consultants to ask if it would be preferable if a meeting was held before, during or after consultation with the community and after a meeting could be held with the Local Planning Authority.	Cat	ACTIONED AECOM SEA consultants keen for discussion after a meeting with the Local Planning Authority can be held. Dates in October are in circulation.
230904 10.2	Ask Nick Williams to draft a one page summary about the CLT for inclusion within the Neighbourhood Plan.	(unallocated)	ACTIONED. Circulated with agenda.
230710 6	Make contact with the owners of Little Owl Cottage and request information on the property as noted in the Design Code draft. Cat agreed to contact the owners if no update were to come from Jem.	Jem/Cat	ACTIONED. Information received and shared with AECOM Design Code consultant.
230619 6.2.1.2	Think about possible questions to ask farmers and landowners.	Cat	<i>Ongoing</i>
230619 6.2.1.2	Talk with Cllr Richard Morris with regard to brokering conversations with farmer and other landowners.	Alex	<i>Ongoing</i>

6. Discussion with invited South Hams District Council Officers and Members

6.1. Welcome and overview South Hams District Council (SHDC) officers were welcomed to the meeting and given a brief overview of the status of progress of the Neighbourhood plan, to note that the Site Options Assessment had now been received and the steering group is embarking on a thorough redraft of the plan.

It was commented that the purpose of engaging with SHDC officers at this point in time was to ensure that steps taken in redrafting the plan are done so in alignment with District Council policy, that the process is efficient as possible, and the policies drafted make sense.

It was commented that whilst the Neighbourhood Plan is a planning document that is predominantly about housing it also references lots of other topics, such as transport and energy for example. Following recent community consultation, it is clear there is scope for quite a visionary strategic document, and the opportunity could be taken to maximise leverage within the Neighbourhood Plan to take that vision forward.

6.2. Context in which the Neighbourhood Plan is being drafted.

Officers were asked to give a broad overview on how the local and national planning framework may or may not change in order for the Neighbourhood Plan steering group to be able to move forward confidently.

The Strategic Planning Officer commented there was likely to be a lot of change in the planning framework over the next 2-3 years. A major factor in those changes is the progression of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill currently going through parliament and if it becomes law before the next general election. It was commented that the current national system for calculating housing targets could change, and local development management policies could be replaced by national level ones. The Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan (JLP) review has been put on hold until there is greater clarity on this wider context.

The Officer's advice was that the steering group should continue to progress work on the Neighbourhood Plan as if members wait for greater certainty, a plan would never be finalised. It was commented that the JLP will be in place for at least 3 or 4 years. If the Harberton Parish Neighbourhood Plan were to be finalised and adopted soon, there would be a period of effective implementation before any potential changes in national policy would come into effect, following

which the steering group may wish to undertake a light touch review to take into account any significant changes.

It was commented that the target of 50 homes for Harberton Parish will not change until the JLP is reviewed 3-4 years into the future. The Neighbourhood Planning Officer commented that a benefit of producing a Neighbourhood Plan is to bring forward sites that have support of the community. If the steering group completes an appropriately managed land allocation process but only part of the housing requirement can be met, this would be seen as 'fair enough' as all efforts would have been made to identify sites. It was commented that some areas were not producing Neighbourhood Plans or allocating any land for development at all, making it more likely that individual development projects could go ahead without community backing or meeting community need.

6.3. Outcomes of the Site Options Assessment Report (as produced by AECOM)

There was not detailed discussion on the findings of the Site Options Assessment report for each site, but there was a wider discussion on how and where the housing allocation for Harberton parish would be best met.

There was a discussion on the rationale on which a potential development at Winsland House, a site on the northern boundary of the parish, had met with community support in the past. Reference was made to the size of the site being big enough to bring forward affordable homes for local people, its connection to the infrastructure and services within neighbouring Totnes.

The Strategic Planning Officer commented that when the overall housing requirement for the JLP was set, strategic decisions were made about which homes would go where in the District. The JLP set housing targets and preferred sites for development, which did not include a substantial western extension to the town of Totnes in the Winsland House area for a number of reasons. Totnes Town Council was also against the idea.

To address housing need within the Parish a target of 20 dwellings was set for Harberton and 30 for Harbertonford, intended to apply specifically to the villages, not to the parish as a whole. Allocating housing on the Winsland House site would fail to do this. It was pointed out that as parish support for the site was based at least partly on the fact that its size would mean the provision of a substantial amount of affordable housing, if affordable housing were made available at other sites in the parish, those sites would be likely to gain support instead.

There was discussion in which it was acknowledged that the Site Options Assessment produced by AECOM provides the evidence base for exclusion or inclusion of sites within the emerging Neighbourhood Plan, based on whether they are deemed suitable or unsuitable for development.

The Officer commented that if any landowner whose land is not allocated within the Neighbourhood Plan will have opportunity to put in representations that will be considered by the examiner. If formal objections to the Neighbourhood Plan site allocation came forward, ultimately it would be for the examiner to consider those objections on their merits and make their recommendations accordingly.

6.4. Project for land east of Harberton

It was noted that the Site Options Assessment found sites on land east of Harberton is suitable for development. It was commented that discussion at the last meeting identified some consonance between the needs and aspirations of the community and what the landowners would wish from development. Whilst still in early stages of conversation, a possibility seemed to emerge of quite a visionary development at the site that includes housing allocation and use of the land for community and for nature.

Officers were asked if there are resources available at the District Council that could support discussion of that kind of vision going forward.

The Strategic Planning Officer commented that the aspiration sounded positive, and noted the potential value of the Neighbourhood Planning process helping the two landowners to work together to create a bigger site that could bring forward a mix of housing, some affordable, and deliver other elements that would be welcome by the community.

It was noted by the Preston Farm landowner representative that development at land at Preston Farm required development of land at Ford Farm, since the latter was closer to the village; and because there would probably need to be a single road access point for both developments this was likely to need to be on the Ford Farm land. It was noted that the land being put forward for

allocation at Preston Farm had reduced following AECOM's Site Options Assessment which took into account development constraints identified. The land that had been removed could be used as amenity space for the village, or offered to extend the churchyard, for example.

The landowner representative for Ford Farm raised the issue of housing allocation for the village of Harberton. Taking account of the 12 CLT dwellings and the 9 dwellings in the current provisional plans for Land at Ford Farm, the target of 20 new dwellings for Harberton had already been exceeded, even without including potential development on Land at Preston Farm. Landowners were concerned about how the steering group, and the community, would respond to this. Members of the steering group pointed out that community consultation would be required before a substantive response could be given on this issue. The principle of 'additionality' in planning policy was highlighted: that extra new housing needed to add unique, 'forward looking' benefits to be considered acceptable.

The Strategic Planning Officer noted that the targets of 20 and 30 for the two villages are only indicative and advised that the steering group view these targets as a minimum, rather than a maximum, noting that the District Council has declared a housing crisis since targets were set and it was unlikely that there would be objections to the target for Harberton being exceeded. It was noted that it was well understood that the target for Harbertonford would be extremely challenging to deliver, and that there could be a justification for increasing dwelling numbers in Harberton instead.

Later in the meeting, the representative for the land at Ford Farm showed the steering group the plans for the site put forward for pre-app advice. It was noted that an initial ecological survey had been completed, and that the landowners may now submit an "application for approval in principle", to establish that the site is suitable in principle for housing, before commissioning further ecological survey work.

In closing discussion, the Strategic Planning Officer agreed to help the steering group by being available as a first point of contact to draw on relevant expertise at the District Council, for example with regard to biodiversity and climate change, in developing a vision for the site east of Harberton, should this be needed. However, it was noted that it would be down to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to articulate that vision.

6.5. Ensuring high quality Neighbourhood Plan planning policies.

The Strategic Planning Officer suggested that the steering group send him a 'preview' copy of the draft Neighbourhood Plan before it goes to statutory Regulation 14. He would be happy to provide informal advice, comment on the draft and draw on expertise of relevant colleagues at SHDC, at that stage.

It was commented that the District Council would only be able to offer limited help brokering engagement from relevant agencies (e.g. Devon County Highways) on community aspirational initiatives, and suggested that the County Councillor might be better placed to do this. Maximising delivery of affordable housing for local people was a key District Council priority, and that both the Strategic Planning Officer and the Affordable Housing Officer would be glad to offer advice and assistance on this.

It was suggested that the steering group may wish to review any of the 21 Neighbourhood Plans that have already been adopted in the District, and that there is a lot of good advice available through examiner comments that could be taken into account when undertaking work on redrafts.

6.6. Maximising use of the Neighbourhood Plan to catalyse local improvements.

There was some discussion on issues that may appear within the Neighbourhood Plan document that are not planning issues, such as those relating to highways or traffic management. It was noted that matters that are not planning issues should be clearly identified as 'community aspirations' instead.

There was discussion on the topic of affordable housing, in which the overview presented by Cassandra Harrison to the Steering Group in February (2023) was comprehensive and there was nothing further to add at present but that the Affordable Housing Officer would be available should members of the steering group wish to stay in touch.

It was commented that there can be spikes housing need that align with the presence of permissions for affordable housing being given assent. There was discussion on different

ownership models and mechanisms that could help make housing within allocated sites affordable, which could be shared back with the landowner and the Steering Group.

Both Officers offered a willingness to come to future meetings.

District Council Officers and the landowner representative of Preston Farm left the meeting at this point.

7. Preparation for redrafts of Neighbourhood Plan *Update on progress and discussion on process for redraft.*

There was a discussion on the mechanisms in which the whole Neighbourhood Plan can be drafted coherently when writing processes are taking place in parallel.

After that discussion it was agreed that

- Prana would seek comments from the whole steering group on the housing chapter and process those comments into a further version, which could then be adapted as necessary into the rest of the draft document developed by Alex.
- The agenda for the next meeting would include a discussion of the idea of 'panels' to review and develop each chapter and clarify the process for finalising the draft.

8. Consultation plans Not discussed.

9. Any other business

9.1. Energy Webinar Prana reported having attended a webinar on the topic of Energy and asked to be reimbursed the £16.00 it cost her to attend. It was agreed to discuss financial reimbursements at the next meeting.

9.2. Thanks Sally took the opportunity to thank Alex for the work that he had done so far on redrafts of the plan.

10. Summary of actions before next meeting No additional actions.

11. Date of next meeting 16th October 2023