

Note from Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to Parish Council: Implementing our Neighbourhood Plan: what role for the Parish Council?

13 January 2024

ACTION REQUESTED

The PC is asked to:

1. **Note** the attached draft introductory chapter of the NP. (While the PC as a body is not being asked to provide comments at this point, individual councillors are welcome to do so informally via the Parish Clerk if they wish.)
2. **Decide** on its role in implementing the NP. Options are listed below. The PC is asked to select which of the options it would like to include in the NP, and/or any other options it may devise.

Background

1. As the Parish Council (PC) is well aware, our Neighbourhood Plan (NP) is a great opportunity to set out the needs and aspirations of our community, and to translate those needs and aspirations into:

-> planning policies that will influence development.

Possible example: Requirement that new developments are well designed, as per our parish Design Code)

-> local initiatives that could potentially be taken forward within our community.

Possible examples: Working with Devon County Council to ensure bus stops on the A381 are optimally located and marked; Collaborating with Westcountry Rivers Trust to further develop a volunteer team monitoring water quality in the Harbourne.

2. The Neighbourhood Plan Committee (NPC) is now in the process of creating the final draft of the NP, taking account of evidence from recent consultant reports and ongoing consultation events. The draft introductory chapter is attached, for information. It provides an overview of the document, including a statement of its purpose and scope, and the overall vision and desired outcomes of the NP.

3. As we move towards completion of the NP, we need to consider how we can ensure that it is effectively implemented, i.e.:

-> NP planning policies do actually influence SHDC's planning decisions.

-> At least some potential community initiatives do actually happen.

We also need to consider how the NP will be reviewed and, if needed, updated over its ten year lifespan.

4. Many NPs explicitly state how they will be implemented and reviewed, and we would like ours to do this. The Parish Council bears overall responsibility for the NP, and could play a key leadership role in its implementation, in collaboration with community groups and other stakeholders. We need to know what the PC would like the NP to say about its role.

5. Effectively leading implementation of the NP could be seen as a powerful opportunity for the PC to increase its relevance to parishioners, local organisations and other stakeholders like SHDC. It would demonstrate the PC's active engagement with the issues that local people have said matter to them. This could in turn increase public engagement with the PC, help with recruitment of councillors and stimulate increased community cohesion.

Options

6. Options the PC may wish to consider include:

- a) Monitoring how SHDC implements NP planning policies by keeping a simple checklist of which NP policies are referred to in PC representations to SHDC on planning applications, and whether these are referred to in the decision; and whether the PC's recommendations are followed or not.
- b) Keeping a prioritised list of potential community initiatives, published on the parish website, to help spot relevant funding opportunities and other sources of support for them, and to galvanise local people to take them forward.
- c) Conducting an annual NP Implementation Assessment at a PC meeting, perhaps at the time of the Parish Meeting in April, on the basis of the planning implementation checklist and list of community initiatives. A simple summary to be published on the parish website.
- d) Explicitly confirming its role of "active facilitation" of community initiatives (i.e. include these words in the NP), for example by looking to identify and bring together people who may wish to lead them within the parish and district, and seeking to provide funding where possible.
- e) Organising a regular parish gathering to celebrate our parish, and consider the issues we face. This could be run along broadly similar lines to the NPC's Community Conversations event last year, which was well attended, attracted positive feedback and produced clear and useful evidence of local needs and aspirations. (This could be an example of "active facilitation" as mentioned above.) It could also incorporate public discussion of the year's NP Implementation Assessment above, and checking the prioritisation of the list of community initiatives. Frequency could be at least biennial.
- f) Reconvening the NPC after five years to report to the PC on whether the NP needs updating.

Chapter 1: Introduction DRAFT JAN 2024

What is Harberton Neighbourhood Plan (NP) and who is it for?

The overall aim of this Neighbourhood Plan (NP) is to stimulate and guide positive change in Harberton parish in the period 2024-2034.

The NP does this by presenting the needs and aspirations of the people who live here, relating them to relevant opportunities and challenges we face, and to existing local planning policy. From clarifying what matters most to local people, it seeks to:

1. **Articulate and celebrate the unique character of the Harberton parish** - its landscape and natural environment, its heritage and history, its amenities and the community that lives here. This is provided in a Parish Profile, included as Annex xx, which is an integral part of this NP.
2. **Stimulate and guide appropriate sustainable development**, for example of housing and energy provision, by ensuring developers, landowners, SHDC planning dept and others are aware of local priorities and needs, and setting planning policies that reflect them.
3. **Empower our local community to:**
 - identify and deliver its own initiatives and projects. The Harbertonford community shop is an excellent example of what our parish can achieve when local people organise themselves around a clear vision - see box on community shop on page xx.
 - allocate local resources effectively and appropriately in line with local need - for example, by helping our Parish Council allocate money from community energy schemes or [section 106 contributions - check this with SHDC/explain].
 - secure the resources and support it needs from government and elsewhere, by providing clear rationale and evidence of need - [add previous example of how the parish has done this?]
 - respond proactively and positively to change and proposed development, by enabling us to rapidly identify creative opportunities and, where necessary, to protect community assets.

How with the NP make a difference?

The most concrete ways the NP can create positive changes is through:

- **planning policies:** the NP is part of the statutory development plan for our area, and its policies should affect decisions on planning permission in the parish (see box below). The NP also summarises other local planning policies relevant to its objectives. This is intended to support our Parish Council, and individual parishioners, to make valid, effective comments on planning applications.
- **allocating land for development:** as part of the statutory development plan, the NP supports housing development on specific sites in the parish based on community consultation, with particular requirements attached to these developments. This aspect of the plan is covered in Chapter xx.
- **identifying potential community initiatives:** these are not part of the planning process, but have arising from the NP consultation process and are intended to provide impetus for the community to take them forward.

More broadly, the NP will be referred to by decision makers of all kinds – planners, investors, developers, funding bodies, community groups and existing and future residents. It is intended to

stimulate and focus ongoing discussion in the parish about its priorities and what action is needed to pursue them. Its effectiveness in practice will depend in part on continuing local leadership and initiative, both to ensure its policies are applied fully and consistently in planning decisions, and also to facilitate community initiatives. What can we say will be the role of the PC in providing this leadership? What structures does it want to put in place to support it in exercising leadership? Eg annual review at the time of the Parish Meeting of NP policy implementation, community projects, etc?

Box xx: How does this NP fit into national and local planning policy and decision-making?

Neighbourhood plans form part of the statutory development plan for our area (the "Joint Local Plan" (JLP)). In accordance with national planning policy, the JLP supports the use of NPs as a way of allowing local communities to guide development, such as new housing and energy schemes (ref).

South Hams District Council (SHDC) must use our NP in making decisions on planning applications in our parish - and planning proposals that conflict policies in our NP should generally be rejected. Our NP will also be used by planning inspectors (or the Secretary of State) when they decide on planning appeals.

Our Parish Council routinely comments on planning applications, and its views, guided by our NP, should have influence SHDC's decisions.

Our NP covers only the administrative area of Harberton Parish (see parish boundaries map in the Parish Profile) (ref). It covers the period to 2034, the same as that covered by the JLP. Its allocation of sites for development are valid for that period, but its general policies, so long as they remain fit for purpose, will continue to apply beyond that date [check].

How was the NP developed?

The plan (NP) is the result of an extended period of public engagement within the parish, which has included a series of consultation events and questionnaires, culminating in 2023-24 in:

- A "Community Conversations" event in July 2023 to confirm vision and high level desired outcomes
- A consultation event on community energy in [forthcoming]
- An exhibition and related events on housing [forthcoming]
- Final consultation [forthcoming]

Annex xx gives full details of how the plan has been developed.

Following these steps, a parish-wide referendum was held in [date] in which the NP was approved by the community. It was then formally adopted as part of the local planning policy after being approved by an independent Examiner.

The NP will need to continue to evolve. This document is intended as an important milestone in an ongoing process of community conversation centred on collective clarity on what matters to us locally and what we need to do to create positive change in our parish. What does the PC want to say about how this will happen? Review in x years?

Structure of this plan

This chapter sets out a vision and key desired outcomes for our parish that have emerged from community consultation. The following chapters then address a series of specific themes: housing, energy, social amenities, the environment, heritage and transport.

Each of these chapters provides:

- an overview of the main needs and aspirations of the community relating to the chapter's theme, and setting out how they relate to the key desired outcomes of the plan, and identifying important issues arising from opportunities and challenges;
- specific objectives that contribute to the desired outcomes, justifying them based on the evidence of community needs, important issues, and on consistency with existing planning policy; and
- specific planning policies and potential community initiatives that will help achieve those objectives.

Notes and annexes then provide detailed evidence to supplement each chapter, referring to a range of source materials available online such as consultation responses.

Vision and key priorities of this plan

The following vision and key desired outcomes have emerged from community consultation.

Vision: A vibrant, healthy, prosperous, cohesive, community where people love to live and work, and that is confident and proactive in collectively creating positive change, and is effectively preserving and enhancing the parish's rural character, biodiversity and heritage for current and future generations.

Desired outcome 1: Make housing more affordable for local people

Desired outcome 2: Attract new young families and young people

Desired outcome 3: Ensure the needs of older people can be met

Desired outcome 4: Protect nature and make it more accessible

Desired outcome 5: Respond to climate change

Desired outcome 6: Support community and empower local action

Desired outcome 7: Minimise the impact of car use and the A381

[Cross reference summary table on how policies and projects contribute to desired outcomes:

Desired outcome	NP policies	Relevant JLP and NPPF policies	Possible community projects

]