

Harberton Parish Neighbourhood Plan (HNP)

Meeting of the Steering Group

7.00pm Monday 16th September 2024 at Harberton Parish Hall

Committee Members Present: Alex Crowe, Cllr Chris Bowley

Apologies: Cllr Douglas Hambly, Jem Friar, Sally Lougher

Public: 14

Clerk/Minutes secretary: Cat Radford

There being fewer than three elected committee members present, the meeting was not quorate and no business could be conducted.

NOTES of the informal discussion

As 14 members of the public were present, it was agreed to have an **informal discussion** around some of the agenda items. Some summary notes follow:

- Attempts would be made to reschedule a meeting before the next formal meeting is due in October. Dates will be circulated.
- Those Members of Public who were new to the Neighbourhood Planning process were informed that the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group is a committee of the Parish Council tasked by the Parish Council with the development of the Neighbourhood Plan. Members are elected to the Steering Group by existing Steering Group members. Anyone is eligible to stand for election, though voting members must be on the Parish Register of Electors. Potential new members are expected to undertake a simple induction so they are able to contribute to the committee's work programme. A key part of the Steering Group's work is to conduct public consultation but Steering Group meetings themselves are not public consultation events. Being conducted in public, members of the public are welcome to observe meetings, but participation is reserved for committee members (unless at the discretion of the chair). A quorum for committees of the Parish Council is three. If fewer than three members are present, then the meeting is inquorate and no business can be conducted.
- A brief update was given on the status of the Plan. It was noted that a public consultation on housing had just been completed and, had this meeting been quorate, the steering group would have reviewed the results of consultation and take next steps to finalise the housing chapter, finalise other chapters within the plan before proceeding to 'regulation 14' (of 'Neighbourhood Planning General Regulations'). 'Regulation 14' describes the statutory 6-week consultation period on the final draft plan undertaken locally by the Steering Group. Comments gathered during that consultation period are responded to and any necessary modifications are made, before handing the plan onward to South Hams District Council on approval of the Parish Council. South Hams District Council then conducts a second consultation under 'regulation 16' and submits the plan to a District Council appointed independent examiner. Once the examination process is complete and any further modifications are made in response to the examiners report, the plan goes to a referendum where Harberton Parish residents on the electoral roll are given the opportunity a 'yes/no' vote on adopting the plan. The experience of voting in the referendum was described as being similar to voting in a local or general election.
- There was discussion about the housing sites that had been included in the recent consultation and reference to those that weren't. There was discussion about the indicative housing targets set out in the Joint Local Plan (the strategic development plan for the local area to which the Neighbourhood Plan must align). It was clarified Joint Local Plan has identified an indicative target of 20 homes for the village of Harberton and 30 homes for the village of Harbertonford. It was clarified that this means dwellings in those villages, not a target of 50 for anywhere in the Parish.
- The outcome of the public consultation was not discussed in detail, but it was mentioned that consultation data showed overall support for development of the Ford Farm site in combination with the Community Land Trust development at Oak Tree Field that already has planning permission for 12 dwellings. It was noted through discussion that the site at Ford Farm is likely to bring forward between 10 – 17 homes, plans are still in progress. It was commented that the District Council is encouraging an application for the larger number (i.e approx. 17 dwellings) in order to bring forward more affordable homes. The meeting was reminded that the Joint Local Plan's requirement for affordable homes is for 30% of the total number of dwellings for any site larger than 10 dwellings.
- There was discussion about sewerage infrastructure in Harberton Village and queries raised about when bodies like South West Water are consulted. It was commented that those infrastructure organisations are consulted at various stages of the planning process: they are consulted at the time that the Local Authority develops a strategic Local Plan in order to help the Local Authority set appropriate indicative targets for housing, they are consulted on the draft Neighbourhood plan at Regulation 14, and a number of statutory bodies are also consulted as part of the 'Strategic Environmental Assessment' (SEA). The Harberton Parish Neighbourhood Plan SEA is in process, waiting for the draft plan to be ready for regulation 14 before the next steps are taken. It was noted that any landowner/developer also consults with South West Water as part of the planning process.

The example given that the CLT is consulting with South West Water on plans for Oak Tree Field, just as Origin Land will consult with South West Water on development of dwellings at Ford Farm. Adequate measures to manage surface water run off also form part of planning requirements. Origin Land gave some information about their plans for water attenuation at the Ford Farm site. It was agreed that it would be useful to share that information with the group of residents looking at flooding matters in Harberton.

- It was noted that none of the sites that came forward for development in Harbertonford were assessed as being suitable. As such, the indicative target of 30 homes for Harbertonford can not be met by the Neighbourhood Plan at this stage. It was clarified that this does not imply any expectation that these 30 homes be developed elsewhere in the parish.
- There was discussion about the land at Winsland House. It was noted that the Neighbourhood Plan steering group had not put the site forward in consultation as it had agreed to accept the outcome of the Site Options Assessment that had deemed the land at Winsland House, and a number of other 'red' sites, as being not suitable for development. The District Council had also made it clear to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group through attendance at minuted Steering Group meetings, through consultation discussions and responses to the emerging draft plan, that it would not support the development of land at Winsland House. Its grounds for this were that development of this site would be inconsistent with the spatial strategy of the Joint Local Plan, in particular strategic plans for the development of Totnes, and it is a statutory requirement of Neighbourhood Plans that they are in conformity with the Local Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group had requested the position to be clarified in writing again over the summer, and the letter clarifying the District Council's position had been included in papers for the meeting. Extracts were read from this letter. There was discussion about how/when/if the District Council could "veto" the Neighbourhood Plan if the land at Winsland House was allocated. According to information from District Council officers (including the letter in the meeting papers), the District Council could potentially prevent the NP from going forward to referendum after independent examination. Reference to opposition from Totnes Town Council and residents of Follaton was made. It was reiterated again that if the land at Winsland House was developed, those 50 houses would not count towards the indicative housing targets of 20 for the village of Harberton or 30 for Harbertonford. It was commented that it could be possible to draft narrative within the Neighbourhood Plan that referred to public comments in support of development of land at Winsland House as this site could bring forward affordable housing for parish residents who may be priced out of the area and would otherwise need to move to Torbay, Dartmouth or Plymouth, for example. Making reference to public opinion on the site within the narrative would potentially enable the inclusion of the site at some point in the future, should the Local Authority's position change; perhaps in response to an overall increase in housing targets for the District.
- There was discussion about the Site Options Assessment as had been drafted by consultants at AECOM. Some criticism was levelled at the document by members of the public present. The landowner/developer of land at Winsland House disputed the outcome. In response to queries, information was given about technical support available to Neighbourhood Planning Groups i.e. who had completed the Site Options Assessment and how they were selected. The organisation 'Locality' receives funding from central Government that is distributed on application to groups undertaking Neighbourhood Planning processes. Cash grants are available to support groups undertaking their planning processes and can be used to employ consultants, run consultation processes, employ a project manager to drive forward the Neighbourhood Plan with the voluntary Steering Group, for example. In addition, Neighbourhood Planning groups can apply for 'technical support' which is paid for by funding from central Government at no cost to the Neighbourhood Planning Group. AECOM is the group of consultants contracted by Locality to provide this support. All applications for technical support are signed off by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).
- In response to comments and queries about the Site Options Assessment process it was confirmed that consultants had visited all sites in order to produce the Site Options Assessment report. It was noted that all landowners and agents that had submitted sites in response to the 'call for sites' had received the first draft of the Site Options Assessment on which to comment. Comments received were considered by AECOM and amendments made before the Site Options Assessment was signed off. Comments received and AECOM's response, including reasoning where they disagree with comments, are noted in minutes of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. It was commented that perhaps the Neighbourhood Plan could request that the Site Options Assessment be reviewed. It was pointed out that even if some aspects of AECOM's assessments were changed, this would be unlikely to affect the District Council's opposition to the Winsland House site on the grounds that it is not compatible with the strategic aspects of the Joint Local Plan.
- A member of the public commented about the proposed timeline for completion of the plan, querying whether the process could be slowed to enable further analysis of the sites. It was noted that the Harberton Neighbourhood Plan is now in its 11th year, on its third committee, and has had to repeat significant pieces of work undertaken between 2013-2016 deemed too 'out of date' to be relied upon. It was commented that the clock is ticking on acting on the current evidence base – the 'new' Housing Needs Analysis, Site Options Assessment for example. It was noted that whilst the plan is a 10-year plan it can be 'modified' in the future, if necessary, particularly if there is narrative within the document

that points to potential future additions or amendments. It was commented that until it is adopted following a referendum the draft plan has no legal standing and, as the Local Planning Authority, South Hams District Council can meet indicative housing targets for the villages of Harberton and Harbertonford through current planning processes until community wishes are made clear through the adoption of a Neighbourhood Plan. It was noted that landowners and developers with an interest in developing land in Harberton Parish do not need to wait for the Neighbourhood Plan to seek planning permission for development.

- A question was raised as to what the barriers are to taking the next steps on the plan. It was replied that there were no particular barriers, beyond the Steering Group finding consensus in order to take the next steps and for that voluntary group to have the capacity/energy to manage the workload required to finalise the plan.
- Discussion was closed at 8:35. Hard copies of Notification of Interests forms were circulated amongst those members of the public who wished to nominate themselves for election to the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

The meeting of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group due to take place on Monday 16th September was not quorate and no business could be conducted. There are therefore no minutes against the agenda items as the meeting was postponed.

Public Session

Agenda

1. **Apologies**
2. **Elect new members to the committee** (if any)
3. **Declaration of Interests**
 - 3.1. **Register of Interests:** Steering group members are reminded of the need to update their register of interests if they have changed. New steering group members are required to complete 'Notifications of Interests' forms.
 - 3.2. **To declare any interests** (nature and scope) on items on the agenda
4. **Approve minutes** of the meeting on 15th July 2024*
5. **Update on actions***
6. **Steering Group Work Plan*** *Consider provisional work plan paper, detailing key aims for Sept – Dec 2024 and sequencing of key deliverables*
7. **Housing Chapter*** *Consider draft summary of responses to housing consultation and proposed housing policy discussion document, taking into account any comment arising from the meeting of the Parish Council 10th September 2024*
8. **Heritage Chapter*** *Consider the District Council's advice to draw up a list of "Non-designated Heritage Assets" (NDHAs) in the parish*
9. **Technical Support funded by Locality**
 - 9.1. **Strategic Environmental Assessment Technical Package** *Consider any actions necessary*
 - 9.2. **Evidence Base and Policy Development Package*** *Consider dates to offer Locality for an 'in office hours' meeting to launch this technical package*
10. **Finance** *Authorise payments submitted for approval, if any*
11. **Any other business**
12. **Summary of actions before next meeting**
13. **Date of next meeting**

*indicates papers are provided.