

Dear Parishioners

As you will be aware we recently ran a consultation exercise to receive your views regarding the sites that might be allocated for housing in the Neighbourhood Plan. More specifically there were two sites in Harberton (none in Harbertonford) which our independent consultants had assessed as suitable for allocation about which your views were sought - a Western 'Ford Fam' site and an Eastern 'Preston Fam' site.

A summary of the two consultation meetings (online and in person) and the questionnaire results can be found on the following pages.

During the consultation meetings the site owners of land at Winsland House Farm advocated for allocation of their site for development. This did not form part of the official Consultation, because our independent consultants had assessed it as unsuitable for development. However, given the interest in the site expressed by consultation participants, your Steering Group is now in active dialogue with the Local Planning Authority at South Hams District Council and is proposing to re-engage the consultants in order to review and check their conclusions on which available sites in the parish are suitable for development.

We will let you know the outcome of this review as soon as possible. In the meantime, no final conclusions have been drawn on which sites to allocate for development.

In any event there will be a further public consultation once the Neighbourhood Plan has been adopted by the Parish Council when you will have another opportunity to input.

It is important that we get this right, as your Neighbourhood Plan will be in place for many years to come and is quite a complex exercise. Please bear with us whilst we work on this.

For and on behalf of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Harberton Neighbourhood Plan

Summary of Housing consultation events - July 2024

As part of the consultation process for Harberton Parish Neighbourhood Plan (HNP), public events were held online on 10 July and in person at Harberton Parish Hall on 13 July 2024. Both events included:

- an overview of the process of developing HNP
- a summary of the current position on the possible allocation of sites for housing
- presentations from the two sites considered eligible for allocation by HNP steering group
- a question and answer session.

Participants were encouraged to complete the consultation questionnaire. Details of the events, and the exhibition materials published alongside them, are available at <https://bit.ly/nplan24> .

This note summarises both consultation events together.

Summary of presentation on Western ('Ford Farm') site

- Landowners' family has a longstanding connection with the village, their parents used to farm at Ford Farm.
- Proposal would help keep the village socioeconomically sustainable and vibrant.
- It has responded to the Parish Council's emphasis on affordable housing, offering some 10-17 homes of which 30% would be affordable.
- With its scale and location, it would represent an organic expansion of the village.
- Location on main access road would minimise additional traffic flows through the village.
- Avoids the flood zone and preserves hedgerows, trees and wilder area along the stream.
- Attenuation pond would ensure a net reduction of surface water run-off, and so reduce flood risk downstream.
- Planning permission is being pursued separately to the HNP although the landowners remain engaged with the HNP process and hope the site will be allocated. An Outline planning application is in process, with the number of dwellings within the 10-17 range identified in the consultation. Detailed plans for the site would be developed once there is greater clarity that planning consent will be granted.

Summary of presentation on Eastern ('Preston Farm') site

- Landowners' family has long involvement in the village, and they and their children will soon be resident there.
- Proposal aims to help ensure people brought up in the village can continue to live there by providing about 15 new dwellings of which 30% will be affordable. Would help ensure amenities like the pub, bus service, church and Daynes Farm shop can continue to be viable.
- Would provide nature/amenity space for the community at the north end of the land and perhaps around the stream.
- Would provide footpath access from village centre/CLT site to Vicarage Ball, and is open to providing road access too.
- Envisages bungalows on the higher ground to the east of the site to allow for roof ridge lines to be roughly level across the whole site.
- Envisages housing with annexes to allow elderly relatives to live with extended family.
- Accepts responsibility for not increasing flood risk, and envisages porous surfacing materials (eg modern porous pavings) to help this. Would provide a pipe through the site to divert current run-off down Vicarage Ball from the east into the stream.

- Further development of detailed plans is dependent on confirmation that the Western ('Ford Farm') site will go ahead.

Summary of questions, answers and comments organised by theme

1. Flood risk

A number of participants at both events expressed serious concerns that the developments could increase flood risk for existing houses, referring to the flood of September 2023. The following points were made:

- The area around Ford Farm, and where the Harberton stream crosses Vicarage Ball, already floods regularly.
- The existing sewage pipe from Meadow Close gets blocked regularly. This problem needs addressing before any new housing is connected to it.
- The existing drains at the lower end of the village are already regularly overwhelmed by surface water, including muddy water flowing down Vicarage Ball from Luscombe Cross. The drains also regularly silt up and need clearing.
- The flood plain is in fact larger than the current Environment Agency maps, and climate change will increase it further.
- Concerns were expressed (based on professional experience and observation) that attenuation ponds and similar infrastructure are often not properly maintained, eg silt up, and become ineffective.

Responses from landowners/developers

- Developers' flood zone mapping is based on 2017 Environment Agency data, and is required to take account of climate change increases.
- Planning regulations require that surface water run-off is reduced, eg via an attenuation pond or underground tank that captures flood water and releases it slowly over time. Modelling of this is required to build in a 45% increase in flood water flows above existing levels to account for climate change.
- South West Water can and should block any development that exceeds the capacity of the existing sewage infrastructure, so it can be assumed that the infrastructure will be adequate. In response, some participants expressed scepticism that this process could be relied on.
- Planning conditions require a maintenance plan for on-site infrastructure like attenuation ponds. Implementation of the plan would be the responsibility of the site owners/residents, as with any housing (e.g. a residents' collective management company). In response, some participants expressed scepticism that maintenance would be reliably carried out in practice.

2. Traffic and parking

Several participants expressed concern about additional traffic flows through the village (including, but not only, construction traffic) causing congestion and risks to pedestrian safety, and about pressure on public parking space. The following points were made:

- It can be assumed that each new home will be associated with at least 2 cars. With both sites and the CLT developed, this means some 80 extra cars in the village.
- Doubt expressed on whether the housing density being proposed for the sites allows for adequate off-road parking.
- It was noted that while the sites were on the edge of the village on the main access road, traffic would still inevitably increase through the village. It was pointed out that the

Highways Agency had objected to the CLT development because of road safety concerns in the village.

- The utility and viability of a "village bypass" via the Eastern ('Preston Farm') site was called into question.

3. Housing design

- Concern was expressed that affordable housing should be of an adequate size and standard.
- The importance of energy efficiency in the design of new houses, exceeding building regulations, was emphasised.
- The view was expressed that 1-2 bed houses are needed, to allow for downsizing for older parish residents, and there was a concern that current proposals do not take enough account of this.
- One participant suggested co-housing, as seen for example in Stroud, for the sites.

Responses from landowners/developers

- There are minimum sizes set for all houses, including social housing, which will have to be adhered to.
- South Hams is a progressive planning authority in this regard, and already requires new developments to exceed building regulations, effectively mandating airtight buildings with heat pumps and solar.
- Detailed plans for housing design and architecture would be available at a later stage.

4. Other sites

Several participants asked why the site at Winsland House had not been put forward for allocation and included in the consultation process. The landowners and developers for the site were present at both events, and highlighted that their site was available for allocation. At the in person event, they were invited to set out their views. The landowner noted their personal connection with the site and the parish. They pointed out that the site had been the most popular option in the previous (2015) HNP consultation process, and would provide a large number of affordable homes (around 50-60 homes of which 30% would be affordable) in a location with good links to amenities/Totnes, and provide a number of public benefits (eg improved road layout). They disagreed with the AECOM consultant report commissioned by HNP steering group, which had assessed the site as unsuitable for development for a range of reasons.

A member of HNP steering group explained why the site had not been put forward for allocation:

- The indicative housing targets for the parish apply to the villages of Harberton and Harbertonford, and so the Winsland House site would not contribute to meeting these. The need for development within the villages would remain: the Winsland House site is not an alternative to those being put forward for allocation. It was not clear that this had been clearly understood at the time of the previous HNP consultation.
- While the site is in the parish, it is for all practical purposes an extension of Totnes and has little meaningful or practical connection with the parish's villages and communities. Anecdotal evidence suggests that local people wanting to live in the parish want to live within the existing communities.
- South Hams District Council have repeatedly made clear that they are strongly opposed to the development of the Winsland House because it is not consistent with the strategic plan for Totnes. SHDC has the power effectively to veto the entire Neighbourhood Plan if it allocates the Winsland House site.

- The site appears to be unsuitable for development (i.e. could meet planning regulations). In assessing this, taking a consistent approach to all the 22 sites put forward, HNP steering group has followed the views of its own, independent consultants rather than those of the consultants appointed by the developers. SHDC has also said that they agree with the independent consultants' conclusions.
- The landowners/developments are free to put forward a planning application for their site at any time, irrespective of whether it is allocated in HNP, i.e. not allocating it in HNP does not prevent the development of the site.