Harberton Parish Neighbourhood Plan (HNP)
Meeting of the Steering Group
7.00pm Monday 19 October 2026 Harberton Parish Hall

Steering Group Members Present: Jono Stirrup, Francesca Smith, Cat Radford (Clerk/Minutes Secretary), Anne Watson**.**
Working Group Members Present: None
Apologies: Guy Soulsby (Steering Group) Joanna Poulton (Working group)
Members of the public: 3

Public Session

- A member of the public observed that the agenda of the meeting suggested that the steering group would be considering whether there was any value in continuing work on the Neighbourhood Plan. The commented that, in their view, the Neighbourhood Plan should continue for the following reasons:
  - the draft Neighbourhood Plan and its policies concerning heritage and access had been discussed by the Development Management Committee in relation to a live planning application.
  - When under discussion by Development Management Committee it was noted that the draft plan did not allocate any sites for development, and that justification for this appeared to have been accepted.
  - the ways in which planning applications will be decided is on the cusp of change, now that decisions will be delegated to planning offers, and most planning applications will not go to Development Management Committee. Having a Neighbourhood Plan in place would support officer decisions and provide a framework for consideration by parish councillors.
  - a great deal of work has already gone into the plan, worthy of being seen through to completion.

1. Apologies were received as above.

2. Steering Group Membership It was noted that Joanna Poulton had withdrawn from contributing any further work to the working group. No new members were elected to the Steering Group.

3. Declaration of Interests

3.1. Register of Interests: The Steering Group and Working Group members were reminded of the need to update their register of interests if they have changed.

3.2. To declare any interests No interests were declared on items on the agenda.

4. Minutes *Consider approval of the minutes of the meeting of the Harberton Parish Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group 11 May 2026* **It was RESOLVED** to sign the minutes as an accurate record.

5. Habitat Regulation Assessment (HRA) and Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) *Receive outcome of HRA and SEA Screening Process as undertaken by the Local Planning Authority on the Regulation 14 draft Neighbourhood Plan.*

It was noted that the HRA and SEA screening assessment had been undertaken by the Local Planning Authority and returned. The screening assessment noted that neither a full SEA or HRA Assessment are identified as being required, since the Harberton Neighbourhood Plan is not not allocating sites or proposing development.

This assessment will now go to Natural England, Environment Agency and Historic England as part of the Reg 16 consultation, in case either body has any comments to make.

If the allocation position changes, this Screening Assessment would need to be updated.

6. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) *Consider key aspects of the updated NPPF and potential impacts on current draft of the Neighbourhood Plan*

It was reported that the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 17 August 2026, replacing the December 2024 version. It applies immediately to decision-making. A summary of changes had been circulated ahead of the meeting for information.

The following matters were considered during discussion:

- The key safeguard for neighbourhood plans, Policy S6 of the NPPF that effectively protects the plan from being overridden, applies if the plan was adopted in the last 5 years, and if it contains active housing allocations meeting its identified housing requirement

- Without allocating land for development, it is not clear how much weight the Neighbourhood Plan will have. The Design Code, and policies might have some weight if this version of the Plan is adopted.
- Members shared the view that there is a robust case for non-allocation of sites for development, and that a clearly evidenced, reasoned policy explaining why allocation isn't possible and a robust design code strengthens this position, even without protection that would otherwise be given through Policy S6 of the NPPF.
- A concerning factor is that other neighbourhood plans in the South Hams (e.g Modbury) have been overruled by the Development Management Committee, which creates ongoing uncertainty on the value of Neighbourhood Plans in local decision making.
- If there is any implication for the neighbourhood plan if new sites for development come forward in Harberton parish as part of a Strategic Land Availability Assessment connected to the development of a new local plan for the South Hams and West Devon.

ACTION: Jono request that the Parish Council ask the planning authority if outcome of the call for sites, as it may impact on the Neighbourhood Plan's decision to progress.

7. Overview of current position:

7.1. Working Group Update Update on actions following closure of the Regulation 14 Consultation. The following tasks were identified by members:

- Review and update the chapters in relation responses to the Regulation 14 Consultation Members of the working group have done some work on this using AI tools, but there is considerable re-writing to do, particularly in responding to comments from the Local Planning Authority on justification for non-allocation of sites.
- Addressing consultation points A table should be drafted showing Regulation 14 comments made, and a response to those comments.
- Review the plan in relation to the NPPF All references need to be checked against the new NPPF and new coding/numbering. This is a significant administration task.
- Write Basic Conditions Statement, once the NPPF review has been undertaken.
- Write Consultation Statement Having addressed the matters above.

7.2. Neighbourhood Plan Workstream Members reviewed of proposed workstream, illustrating what is needed to get the plan to the next stage

7.3. Capacity of active group members Members of the steering group that have been driving this process forward now have less capacity than they had, and working group members had withdrawn. It was agreed that the steering group needs additional capable help. Some suggestions were made about individuals who could be invited to contribute time for the process and rewrite the draft. There were, however, concerns that onboarding new members would also be time consuming.

It was RESOLVED: i) the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group publish responses to consultation, redacting all personal data. **ACTION: Francesca** redact this and send it to the clerk. **ACTION: the clerk** to publish this on the Parish Council website.
ii) **ACTION: Jono** approach individuals to invite them to join the steering and/or working group.

8. Plan Conclusion Discussion of whether there is value to concluding the plan or if change in the regulatory environment make it unfavourable.

The outcome of discussion during the meeting was that the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group is of a view that there was provisionally value in pursuing completion of the plan, recognising the limitations of the plan under the new NPPF, and ideally would be informed by the outcome of the call for sites. The Steering Group however needs additional capable help to undertake the weight of work required by the process.

9. Summary of actions before next meeting

ACTION: Jono request that the Parish Council ask the planning authority if outcome of the call for sites, as it may impact on the Neighbourhood Plan's decision to progress.
ACTION: Francesca redact the responses to consultation, redacting all personal data and send it to the clerk.
ACTION: the clerk to publish this on the Parish Council website.
ACTION: Jono approach individuals to invite them to join the steering and/or working group.

10. Confirmation of next meeting date and venue 7pm Tuesday 24 November, Harberton Parish Hall

Meeting closed at 20:28