



East Hagbourne Neighbourhood Plan (EHNP)
8th Steering Group Meeting, 7:30pm, 27th July 2017, 12 Main Road

This meeting was convened to discuss the status of the draft NP report, the discussions with SODC and in particular the proposal from SODC that we should consider allocating land for development.

1. Attendance and apologies, declarations of interest

The meeting was attended by

Bill Barksfield, Sally Barksfield, Andy Barmer, Iain Duff, David Rickeard, Crispin Topping (Chair), Justine Wood, Marcus Wood.

and for CFO by Hilary Lombard, Tom McCulloch

2. Background and Status

Since the last meeting, Grainger have applied for a Judicial Review of the rejection of their appeal. This process could take a further 2-3 months.

SODC's Local Plan continues to take shape and 'second preferred options' have been issued. East Hagbourne is listed as a 'small village' for which an indicative 5% housing growth is expected over the period of the Plan to 2032. However, the Plan is not expected to be adopted until mid-late in 2018. In addition, SODC does not have a 5 year housing land supply.

Planning applications have been submitted by Greenlight for land adjacent to the Village Hall and by Catesby for land to the north of Coscote. The Parish Council and residents are opposed to both developments. We are aware of further activity to the east of Millbrook and to the east of Blewbury Road, although no planning applications have been submitted.

The Character Assessment prepared by by Jeremy Lake and Steven Warnock has been completed and circulated publicly.

3. NP Report Status

A public meeting was held on Thursday 18th May in the Pavilion to explain the draft policies and gain public feedback. The drafting group has continued to meet to develop the the draft NP report. Further meetings have been held with Ricardo Rios of SODC who has provided detailed feedback and guidance. CFO have provided valuable help in addressing the comments and in particular Andrea Pellegram provided advice on shaping our vision, objective and policies into appropriate planning language.

The result of this work was the submission to Ricardo Rios on 10th July of a 'final draft' of our NP report, together with eight appendices:

- 1: A description of the Parish of East Hagbourne
- 2: Consultation Statement
- 3: East Hagbourne Village Character Assessment and Landscape Study (2017)
- 4: Evaluation of Green Spaces and proposals for designation
- 5: SWOT analysis
- 6: Neighbourhood Plan Community Survey (NPCS), 2016



7: East Hagbourne Conservation Area - a character study (SODC, 2000)

8. East Hagbourne Parish Plan Consolidated Report 2011-2015.

This version was circulated to the full Steering Group and to the Parish Council, but not to the general public.

After reviewing the report, Ricardo provided a few procedural comments which have been incorporated and otherwise says that remaining issues can be addressed as part of the consultation process.

However, Ricardo has strongly suggested that we reconsider our decision not to allocate land for development. This is because SODC will not have a 5 year land supply until late 2018 at the earliest.

Such a decision would have very big implications for our Neighbourhood Plan - this meeting was convened to consider the best way to proceed and what recommendation to present to the Parish Council.

4. Consideration of whether to allocate land for development

Background

Because SODC does not have a 5 year land supply, many provisions of the current Local Plan are considered to be out of date and carry little weight in the planning process. This means that the National Planning Policy Framework with its presumption in favour of sustainable development takes precedence and opens the way for speculative developers to put forward proposals.

Our NP Report is essentially complete and could go out for consultation in September subject to a resolution to that effect by the Parish Council. However, if it is approved in its current form, as part of the current Local Plan it would be immediately considered as out of date and hence carry less weight in planning decisions. It would only carry its full weight when SODC regains a 5 year housing supply which will be at the earliest late 2018.

In December 2016, Housing and planning minister Gavin Barwell presented a written ministerial statement, saying that Neighbourhood Plans would not automatically be deemed out of date in such circumstances if the following conditions applied when a decision on an application is made:

- The written ministerial statement is less than two years old, or the neighbourhood plan has been part of the development plan for two years or less
- The neighbourhood plan allocates sites for housing
- The local planning authority can demonstrate a three-year supply of deliverable housing sites

SODC is estimated to have at around 3.9/4.1 years supply, so this statement could potentially give us some protection, at least for the first 2 years of the NP. The Minister's statement has been challenged in the courts, but so far seems to be considered robust.

To make an allocation in our NP would raise some significant issues:

- It would require more work and delay, estimated at a minimum of 3-4 months, but would give us some protection in the period where SODC has no 5 year supply. An SEA may be required, which could further delay completion. CFO advised that the overall process had take 6/7 months in other NPs.
- It would require us to accept one or more housing developments in the parish.
- It may not be acceptable to the community, in which case the NP would fail.

CFO confirmed that the alternative mechanism of a Community Development Order would not help in our situation, because this would not free us from the requirement for a 5 year housing supply.



Discussion

Discussion centred firstly on clarifying the implications of the options before us and secondly on how we should best respond.

The NP Report could be sent for consultation in its current form, without allocation. The timescale for completion in this eventuality was assessed by CFO as around March 2018. However, the NP would then become part of the Local Plan and hence be deemed out of date and have limited weight in planning decisions.

The basis for considering allocation is the lack of a 5 year housing supply coupled with Kevin Barwell's statement, which would give us some protection for at least the first 2 years. While nothing is certain, it seems that the minister's statement is so far holding up against challenges. This process would, however, take time and add at least 3-4 months for the allocation process plus perhaps further time for an SEA. CFO feel that we could steward this process through ourselves, but it would take a lot of work.

CFO have circulated a 'toolkit' that we would need to follow in the process of deciding on a site or sites for allocation. The process needs to be objective, open and well documented. There are some generic criteria that must be applied, but there is also the option to include criteria tailored to local conditions and needs.

Landowners need to be informed of what we are doing, but we do not seem to be required to engage with lobbying from each interested landowner. The potential to engage with landowners of those sites being considered for allocation and to press for developments that meet community needs was discussed.

The basis for deciding how many homes would be covered by the allocation was discussed. The Local Plan provision of 5-10% growth was considered the most appropriate guidance.

It was recognised that allocation for new development would be contrary to the wishes of the community as expressed in the Neighbourhood Plan Community Survey where the strong desire was for infill development only. However, this objective seems unlikely to be achieved and some development in the village may be inevitable. The Steering Group needs to reach a view on the best way forward and recommend this to the Parish Council and the community.

A third option was considered: to proceed to consultation, but at the same time start the allocation process with a view to updating the plan when it is completed. This would have the advantage that we would have a made plan as quickly as possible, but would require a considerable effort to engage the community, who might be unwilling to support two referendums in close succession.

It was noted that, following SODC's guidance, the NP Report had not yet been shared with the whole community, but had been in the hands of a small drafting group for a considerable time. A public meeting was overdue and should be scheduled for September.

The Group were not able to reach a firm decision on which approach to recommend at this meeting, but recognising the need to decide promptly, decided to proceed as follows:

- Seek advice from SODC on the practicalities of the allocation approach and whether it would benefit our community.
 - Crispin will discuss with John Cotton.



- Whatever we decide, we will be expected to engage in some way with the allocation process, so all Group members should familiarise themselves with the Toolkit and think about what objective criteria we would use to evaluate sites
- Recognising the need to reach a decision without delay, be ready for further discussion in the next week or so.

Following the discussion with John Cotton it was decided to hold a further discussion with Ricardo Rios when he returns from holiday, with 4/5 delegates from the SG.

djr 29 July 2017