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Hook Parish Council

Comments in response to Hartley Wintney Parish Council Reg 14 Consultation of their draft Neighbourhood Plan

Overall Impression of the Neighbourhood Plan

Foreword

Very useful as a signpost for what the reader is about to read with a short history coupled with 3 main principals in keeping with the Government's spirit and determination to ensure that engagement with local communities leads to the production of a practicable Plan. The abridged version of the Vision is far pithier than the longer version in either the executive summary or main body of the plan.

Introduction

Sets the scene very well with an attractive use of pictures and text to highlight the modern Hartley Wintney and short summary of services for existing inhabitants. A balanced view of present facilities is offset by relatively recent removal of others (i.e. Both banks and library), but little is made of the impact on the community of the lack of ATMs.

The Neighbourhood Plan Process

This is clearly set out with clear signposting of how policies and proposals are manifest in National Policy and other strategic elements. The resulting diagram is very helpful on page 10 and reveals the weighting of and determination of future planning applications.

Local Plan policies

Para 3.3.1 provides an excellent background with sound reasoning as to recent historical planning events. The withdrawal of Hart District Council's (HDC) Local Plan: Core Strategy 2011-2029 following an Inspector's findings that it failed to comply in its duty to co-operate with neighbouring councils is clearly what has set the scene for the current round of planning activity. Paras 3.3.2 nicely points the way forward for creating a new Plan and lists 3 principals by which it should comply. Para 3.3.3 states that existing saved policies from the withdrawn Plan remain in force for the current proposed Plan. It is noted (Appendix 4) that these Saved policies number 74 and are presumably reasonably constricting.

Para 3.3.3. discusses the various mechanisms by which the housing numbers for future development are laid down. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) appears to indicate that over the period 2016-2032 that some 7,534 dwellings might be required within the HDC which equates to around 382 per annum over the period.

Page 13. In summary, from this point it seems that the HW draft Local Plan outlined their contribution to meeting this number as 81. However, the subsequent Hart Cabinet paper in 2016 proposed that no housing was required by HW, but for

reasons that are not terribly clear, the HW Steering Group made a counter proposal of 40 houses. This number was further reduced to 23 following the publication of the HDC's Strategy and Sites paper in April 2017. Although there is much evidence and background as to the how the sites and latest figure has been arrived at, it is far less clear why the HWPC offered a counter proposal of some 40 houses in response to the HDC's Cabinet paper in the first place.

Comment: Furthermore, it is also clear that (vide page 65) that the inclusion of houses at Pale Lane have been excluded from the proposal. This option would mean too many houses being built on one site which would breach the HW self-imposed 50 dwellings on one site aspiration. Consequently, the final proposal is for 23 dwellings spread over 3 brownfield sites and over the next 15 years or so. The number seems very modest (one and a half houses per year) especially given the apparent progressive nature of the HWPC that offered 40 dwellings in the first instance, and without any pressure from HDC. That said, the existing 95 dwellings that are under construction might be argued as a reason for the conservative approach from the HWPC but these dwellings do not form part of the current Neighbourhood Plan.

Policies and Objectives

The early paragraphs on page 21 are fine; however, para 5.1.6 which details the 5 consecutive years in which Hart achieved the title as "best place to live" for a variety of reasons. However, the next para 5.1.7 then lists 2 reasons why Hart has dropped to 26th on the aforementioned Halifax "best place to live" list. A drop in average earnings and employment rate are the reasons cited. It is suggested that perhaps Hart in general, and HW in particular suffers from an aging population. Given this, one has to accept that more people of a pensionable age in the small demographic area of HW might not be fully addressed by the proposals listed in para 5.1.8.

The objectives set out to support the 3 sites for future housing seems well presented and evidence appears in keeping with the requirements to support the desired outcomes/objectives. However, although the evidence for Pools Yard is excellent, the evidence for the other 2 sites is relatively thin by comparison. Whether this is deliberate or not is not known, but it is clearly noticeable. The use of photographs throughout these pieces though is considered prudent.

Objective 8 - Protection of Local Greenspace - is very well written.

Objective 9 – Protection of Distinctive Views - is reasonably convincing with the exception of the evidence supporting the so-called "distinctive view" east of the A30 (vide Fig 22 Distinctive view E) which clearly has far less going for it. This is a relatively weak objective to achieve.

Transport and Accessibility

The objectives 16 and 17 are well covered under RUR 17 (as carried over from the last Hart Plan), and measures planned for the period are conservative and realistic.

Appendices are all good and Appendix 6 especially should serve the HWPC as a useful tool/yardstick to measure/document progress.

Suggested corrections/queries to address when the draft Plan is revisited:

1. The sequence of the text is in some parts confusing and, in some areas, not consistent with the section headings.
2. There is repetition and some duplication with National and Local existing Planning Policies.
3. Para 1.16 - The River Whitewater does not form the Western Boundary of the Parish as it is well within Hook Parish.
4. Para 2.3 – It is hostage to fortune to say the NP will be monitored on an annual basis, however on the other hand what does this actually mean?
5. Para 3.1 – Until the NP is adopted then Hartley Wintney Parish Council does not have a Planning Policy. The LPA is the lowest tier of Planning Policy until the adoption of a NP.
6. Paras 3.3.12 and 3.3.13 - Introduce the SHLAA sites then there is not follow up comment on how they are dealt with in the NP?
7. Para 3.3.3 - The last sub-bullet begins with the number 366 SANGS. It is believed that this number is not truly representative of the status quo and is simply an anomaly.
8. Para 4.27 - Does not read accurately; suggest it should say “all are above this lower threshold” to be consistent with the following paras.
9. Fig 3 - Needs to be an A3 fold out as not legible or it would have to be re-formatted.
10. Para 4.2.22 - James Farm is remote from the village centre and outside of the settlement boundary so the choice of this site is queried.
11. Para 4.2.25 – This section could be expressed better, as the current wording tends to undermine the good work done by the Steering Group?
12. Para 4.4 – Housing Objective/Aim is providing for max 23 new dwellings but on sites having no more than 50 dwellings?
13. Para 4.4 – Para 4.4. The coloured tables which summarise the means and objectives that will be employed as a vehicle to achieve desired outcomes is a useful tool/aide memoire. However, the infrastructure aim is rather thin and the whole document does not include any sport related objectives?
14. Para 5.1.7- It is noted that Hart was No 5 in the 2017 survey so the 2016 result is suspect.
15. Page 18 – The Vision comes as a surprise in this location so late in the document, and follows paras on consultation and site selection. The Vision is too long and attempts to be a panacea to all.
16. Page 20 - The “boxed” aspirations at the foot of the page appears almost as an afterthought and doesn't hang very well. A few more words as a precursor here might reap dividend.

17. Para 5.2.13 – The words “planning pipeline” are meaningless and this document needs to have clarity i.e. does this site have extant planning permission, if do then say so? Otherwise it has no status.
18. Para 5.4.2 - Add an “s” to the last word of the para to form “services”.
19. Policy 3 (page 31) – This is strange as it is well outside of the current settlement boundary of the village.
20. Policy 5 (page 35) – This Policy only applies to development within the settlement boundary, so it does not apply to HW Policy 3.
21. Para 6.1.9 – Policy 5 should read Policy 6.
22. Para 7.1.3 - Mentions the measures the HWNP wish to achieve in this area and refers to “Policies will improve highway safety and minimise conflicts”, but little is offered by way of perceived solutions and there are no such policies included in this document.
23. Para 7.1.5 - Car Parking Standards are set by the LPA, i.e. Hart DC.
24. Para 7.1.8 – It is mis-leading to say that traffic volumes will be reduced, including HGV/LGV vehicles, as that is a function of the existing highway network and that can only be changed by Hampshire CC.
25. Fig 26 (page 55) - Is an area wide map of leisure footpaths possibly taken from the County Council register of public rights of way (RoWs), hence it does not accord with para 7.5.1 which refers to better pedestrian access within the settlement area to key community facilities for all persons.
26. Policy 13 (page 56) – Reference to fig 21 should be fig 27.
27. Para 8.1.1 – Suggest an inclusion to the text to highlight the fact that the retail area is also a vital part of the ‘community cohesion’ i.e. encourages residents to meet and socialise as opposed to travelling to other destinations.
28. Fig 27 – The village centre is rather closely defined.