

Harvington Neighbourhood Plan

Allocation of building development sites

Proposal for decision-making process

Neighbourhood Plan - process reminder

The Harvington Neighbourhood Plan is being developed by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (SG) and its working groups, on behalf of the community and of the Parish Council.

The remaining steps in the process (in outline, and with estimated dates) are:

- SG prepares a draft of the entire plan and submits it to the Parish Council (Summer / Autumn 2017),
- Parish Council amends / approves the draft,
- The plan is passed to Wychavon District Council, who arrange for its inspection by an independent planning inspector, and who then submit it to the required statutory public consultation (Autumn / Winter 2017),
- When the above processes are complete (and the plan further amended where necessary) it will be submitted to a referendum of the voters of Harvington, where it must be approved by a simple majority of those voting (hopefully in Spring 2018).

The key message here is that the final plan has to be acceptable to a majority of the voters of Harvington. If it contains any issues which are sufficiently contentious that enough people are motivated to turn out and vote against it, the entire plan could be lost, or put back another 12 months or more.

Thus the Steering Group feels it is important that any potentially contentious issues are identified and, hopefully, resolved at this stage in the process - **before** the full draft is offered to the Parish Council.

The Neighbourhood Plan has a 15-year scope – it must identify the needs of the village up to 2033.

(Reminder: the current South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) has a 5-year scope; there could be two or more successor plans, each seeking to release more development land in the South of the County)

The SG has, so far, identified two issues which have the potential to cause much debate and contention in the village:

1. The extension of the Settlement Boundary, which defines the ‘inside’ of the village within which development can take place,
2. The choice of specific development sites to include in the plan.

The need to extend the settlement boundary

The SG's planning work so far has shown that:

- Villagers wish the village to grow at a controlled rate,
- Not enough of this growth can come from in-filling or the replacement of existing dwellings: new land is required,
- There is insufficient undeveloped area within the existing settlement boundary to provide this needed land; the settlement boundary must be extended.

There is no evidence of any need to allocate development sites for commercial purposes, it is all for new housing.

Extending the settlement boundary

Proposals for extending the settlement boundary will require careful, democratic management because:

- The locations chosen will create strong local feelings,
- The decisions will be 'market-sensitive' - for both landowners and owners of adjacent properties,
- The need is for a phased extension over 15 years, implying the progressive inclusion of parcels of land, rather than a one-off release to support the entire stock,
- Immediate developer interest and activity is to be expected in released land.

Consequences of not managing the settlement boundary extension

If it were decided not to extend the settlement boundary as part of the Neighbourhood Plan process we could almost certainly expect:

- The imposition in years 5 through 15 (by the successors of the current SWDP) of new targets for release of land,
- For the land for those targets to be decided and imposed at District or County level,
- It is probable that these impositions would be of single, large development sites, rather than the phased approach the villagers seek.

Strategy: Extend Settlement Boundary to just encompass selected development sites

The SG's proposed strategy is to:

1. Select new development sites which:
 - Are the most acceptable (or least unacceptable) to the Community,
 - Conform to the SWDP policies and to the proposed (Harvington-specific) Neighbourhood Plan policies (which, for example, will protect views from public footpaths),
 - Are of modest, yet economically-viable, size (10 to 40 houses),
 - Together, will provide enough land to accommodate the development needs of the village for the next 15 years.
2. Gradually widen the Settlement Boundary over the 15 years of the plan, to encompass just these selected sites, so that development takes place at a reasonable scale and is spread over a number of years.

Rôle of Parish Council

The Parish Council will, some time in late 2017, have to receive, debate and approve the draft Neighbourhood Plan. It will include the proposed settlement boundary extensions and the selected development sites.

So the Parish Council must, by that time, have assured itself that the proposals are the ones most likely to be acceptable to the village in the subsequent referendum.

This proposal is that the Parish Council itself makes the development site decisions in Spring 2017, in whatever way they feel will best reflect village acceptability.

Proposed decision-making process

The Steering Group recommends the following process:

1. The Steering Group will issue a public "call for sites", inviting land-owners to identify any sites they wish to be included in this process. It will also approach known land-owners and other 'stake-holders' directly.
2. The Steering Group will draw up a 'short-list' of potential sites (using a similar methodology to that used at county level in compiling the SWDP), including only those sites which conform to the planning policies and whose owners say that they are prepared to make them available for development,
3. The Steering Group will then, in the Spring of 2017, provide the Parish Council with:

- a) A short-list of the development sites which would conform to the SWDP and proposed Harvington Neighbourhood Plan policies,
 - b) The size of each site (in hectares and indicative number of houses),
 - c) The total area of land / number of houses which the SG research shows is needed to meet the villager's desires & needs for the next 15 years,
 - d) The relevant evidence from the Residents' Survey of 2015 (which includes villager's preferences for development sites) and from the Housing Need survey of 2016.
4. When the Parish Council has selected sufficient sites to meet the development needs, the Steering Group will then incorporate that list into the draft Neighbourhood Plan, and will propose the (probably time-phased) extensions of the Settlement Boundary to encompass these selected sites.

Note: If, in drawing up the short-list, it is found that there is not enough (or only just enough) available land to meet the needs of the plan, there will be no need to consult the Parish Council. The SG will let the Parish Council know if this is the case.

Invitation to Parish Council

The Parish Council is, at this time, simply being invited to decide whether or not it wishes to take part in the decision-making process described above (step 3), which is planned to take place in Spring 2017.

If the Parish Council decides it does not wish to participate, the Steering Group will devise its own decision-making process, in which it will employ reasonable efforts to select sites in accordance with the expressed needs, desires and wishes of the community of Harvington.

If the Steering Group is to continue to meet its plans, it would need to know the Parish Council's decision on this invitation by the end of December, 2016.

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Harvington Neighbourhood Plan
Proposal for development site decision-making process-03
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