

Harvington Neighbourhood Plan

Frequently Asked Questions

There were many interesting questions and comments raised during the May / June 2018 Regulation 14 consultation on the draft Neighbourhood Plan (NP). It is not practicable to respond to individuals, so the NP Steering Group has compiled the following answers to those points which were frequently raised.

1) Why do we need a Neighbourhood Plan?

The UK planning regime is specified in the National Planning Policy Framework. We are now working to satisfy the July 2018 version, termed **NPPF2**. You can find this by Googling “**NPPF2**” and making sure you get to the July 2018 version. It’s actually very well written and quite easy to understand.

Under the NPPF2, there is less protection for villages without neighbourhood plans, particularly if and when the presumption in favour of sustainable development arises, at which point speculative and unplanned development may be very difficult to resist.

However with a neighbourhood plan in place, the law gives the community the power to shape and guide development.

This is why, to protect Harvington and shape its future over the next 10 years or so we *need* to have a plan in place, one which has been drawn up by the community and represents villagers’ preferences.

2) Why have we proposed building more houses?

Two reasons:

1. The NP is *required* to be a community-based plan. When we asked villagers in October 2015 how much growth they want, 60% said they wished to see it grow at the same rate as the previous 15 years. Our draft plan would result in a average of 4 new houses being built each year over fifteen years.
2. The NPPF2 places district planning authorities under increased pressure to find sites for houses. So far, the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) has only asked us to provide 9 in the first five years (this is the site at the top of Crest Hill). By providing sites for the next ten years we should meet the needs of the next version of the SWDP.

3) Why do we have to designate a specific site?

Some have suggested that we could just rely on ‘windfall’ sites, i.e. ones that just turn up through infilling, demolition of old houses and so on. The new NPPF2 has anticipated this approach: If a NP relies on ‘windfall’ it has to produce evidence that the needed rate of windfalls has happened recently in the area. We are relying on just 4 windfall sites; we can produce evidence to show that

this rate is justified by the historical trend. It is simply not credible that 40 ‘windfalls’ could occur within the built-up part of the village in the next ten years.

4) Can’t we build on ‘brownfield’ sites?

Brownfield sites are ones which have been previously used for other purposes (such as businesses) and are now unused. There is a Worcestershire County Council register of all the brownfield sites; there are currently none in our Parish.

5) By designating a development site, are we not just opening the flood-gates to further expansion?

No, quite the opposite! If we had no plan, or no designated site, we would be open to developers empowered by the NPPF2’s ‘presumption in favour’ of open development. Of course, no one can tell what changes future legislation may bring, but – given the current rules - we believe we have put in place the strongest possible way of managing and shaping the growth of the village in line with villagers’ wishes.

6) But we thought you found there was no local need for more housing?

It is true that, in our 2016 Housing Need survey, **no one said they had relatives who wanted to move into the village.** (*Quite frankly, we were amazed by that!*).

We also asked local businesses if they knew of anyone trying to move here; none of them did.

But relations wanting to move in are not the only people with a ‘local need’. Under the NPPF2 district plans (such as the SWDP) have to assess their overall ‘local need’ (i.e. the whole of South Worcestershire) and even consider the needs of neighbouring planning districts. We in Harvington are required to satisfy our part of this need.

The other need for housing arises from within the village. Our survey showed that there are not enough single-storey (or single-level) dwellings for those who are becoming elderly and want to remain in the village. We can’t *require* any particular style of house to be built, we’ve done all we can to ‘nudge’ developers in that direction.

7) Why haven’t you allocated a site for an old people’s home or sheltered accommodation?

When we started the plan we thought the community would ask us do this. Much to our surprise, the Residents’ survey in 2015 and the Housing Need survey in 2016 told us that there’s hardly any need!

It seems that people feel that, when they get to the stage of requiring assistance, they would rather be in a town (such as Evesham or Pershore) where they can easily walk to a range of shops and social facilities.

8) Why the site opposite the Golden Cross?

There have been four, independent searches for available, suitable land:

- a) In the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) undertaken in 2015 as part of the SWDP activity,
- b) Our request for opinions on sites in the October 2015 resident's survey,
- c) Our 'Call for Sites' in 2016,
- d) An independent search undertaken by the Aecom consultancy in 2017.

The full search process, and the reason this site was selected, is written up in our Evidence Reasoning and Justification (ERJ) document, available on the Parish Council's web site <https://harvington-pc.org.uk> .

In filtering sites the following rules were used:

- We have strong policies on preserving and protecting agricultural land around the village – the higher its quality the less it should be suitable for housing,
- The land owner has to have indicated that they are prepared to make the site available for housing.

9) Why haven't you specified the layout or housing mix of this site?

The Neighbourhood Plan is only allowed to specify the use of the land. All details of how the site is actually developed will be considered later, when a planning application is made. Applications will be assessed against *all* of the policies specified in our NP.

10) Why have you changed the Development Boundary?

The Development Boundary (DB) marks the limit of the 'built-up' part of the village. Within it infilling and the expansion of existing buildings is permitted. Outside, the NPPF2 places severe limits on what can be built.

We have extended the DB to include the new designated site and to include parts of Crest Hill, where recent building and the allocated site for 9 houses have effectively extended what can reasonably be considered 'the village'.

Some other small 'tweaks' were applied to correct earlier drafting errors (there is a full explanation of the changes in appendix B of the ERJ).

11) Why does the Development Boundary run through my back garden?

The Development Boundary effectively defines the 'outer building line' of the village. It is intended to prevent creeping expansion of the village into the surrounding open space and countryside

(regardless of who owns it). This is why there are around 14 properties around the edge of the village in which the house and immediate grounds are inside the DB but parts of the large garden (and, in a few cases, non-residential buildings) are outside.

12) You have reserved a community area within the development site. What is it for?

Under national and local planning policies, in some circumstances, developers are encouraged to make land available for community purposes. If you look around Harvington you'll see that this doesn't seem to have previously happened in the larger estates.

What we have done here is 'stake a claim' that the site they *have* to provide should have a frontage on Village Street, since ensuring easy pedestrian and vehicular access seems to be sensible.

It will not actually be available for community use until the residential development is under way, so there's no urgency about deciding what to use it for.

The community could have a say in what it might be used for.

Among the uses that have been suggested are:

- A skateboard park with half-pipes for older children,
- Move the infants play apparatus from the playing field into this area (so that its more accessible for parents with toddlers) and put more equipment for older kids (half-pipes, etc.) in the playing field,
- Some form of community health clinic,
- A quiet park with lawns, benches and flower beds ,
- Although the village hall has had an excellent refurbishment, it was only capable of being given a 20-year extension of life (starting in 2011). Our plan runs to 2030 – might we need a replacement village hall in the next 20 years or so?

These are just some of the ideas that have been suggested. What are yours? There's no urgency and nothing has to go into the NP. Just look forward to the village debate when the opportunity arises!

13) How can Local Green Spaces be used?

We have proposed to have 12 sites designated a Local Green Spaces because they are of particular importance to our community. Successful designation has the following impact:

- Designation does not in itself confer any rights of public access over what exists at present.
- Existing public rights of way are unaffected.
- Any additional access would be a matter for separate negotiation with land owners, whose legal rights must be respected.

- Designating a green area as Local Green Space will give it the same protection as if it were part of a Green Belt.
- The construction of new buildings, or any other form of development, will not be approved, except in very special circumstances (*See NPPF2 paras 101 & 143 - 147*).

14) Have you followed the correct process, done the correct calculations, consulted the right people at the right time?

The process we are required to follow is laid down in planning law. We have been supervised by our independent planning consultant, by Wychavon District Council planning department and by the Parish Council's clerk.

Each time the Parish Council has approved our recommendations and draft plans they have been made public. We've tried to tell everyone what we are doing in the Village News, which goes to every household every month.

The Steering Group has also had stalls at the last three village fêtes, with maps and displays.

It has been important to be fair by making sure that information which might impact individual properties is made visible and equally accessible to everyone at the same time.

All our research results and calculations are recorded in the Evidence, Reasoning and Justification (ERJ) document, available on the <https://harvington-pc.org.uk> web site.

15) Who approves the final plan?

We have just completed the Regulation 14 community consultation. The next two stages are:

- A Regulation 16 consultation to be undertaken by Wychavon District Council,
- Examination of the plan by an independent examiner appointed by Wychavon District Council.

The examiner will examine all our processes and calculations in detail and will visit the village to check all the physical evidence.

These two stages may result in further changes to the plan.

Once the final version has been prepared it will be submitted to a **referendum of all the eligible Harvington voters**. If a majority of those voting approve the plan it will be 'made' by Wychavon District Council and will become an integral, mandatory part of the planning regulations applying to Harvington.

16) Who is this Steering Group?

The Steering Group has been made up of twelve community volunteers who have spent over 3 years researching and preparing the draft plan.

The majority of the policies in the draft plan were initially defined and researched in six specialist working groups, using the findings of the community consultations and other research. A further sixteen people contributed to these working groups.

The Steering Group compiles the wishes of the community into draft plans. The Parish Council approves the drafts, and then passes them onward in accord with the legally-mandated process. At any one time there have been two representatives of the Parish Council on the Steering Group.

All of the work so far has been funded by grants from Locality (which channels central government funds into neighbourhood plans) and from Wychavon District Council. There is an allocation to the NP in the Parish Council budget, but, so far, we have not had to draw on this.

We have been guided and assisted in 2017 and 2018 by Neil Pearce of Avon Planning Services.

These FAQs have been prepared by the Harvington Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, on behalf of Harvington Parish Council.