

SPC Standon Parish Council

Clerk of the Council – Ms. Belinda Irons
14 Crawley End, Chrishall, Herts, SG8 8QL
Tel: 01763 838732

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Minutes of the Meeting of Standon Neighbourhood Planning Group

Held on Thursday 20th November 2014 at 7.30pm at Roger De Clare School, Station Road, Puckeridge,

PRESENT: Standon Parish Council:

Cllr James Cartwright, Cllr Richard Stacey, Cllr Michael Marshall, Cllr Dick Rainbird MBE, Cllr Pat Foot, Cllr Ruth Arikans, Cllr Graham Cowell, Cllr Richard Boxall.

Planning Consultant: Mr Jed Griffiths: Griffiths Environmental Planning

Public: 35

Standon Parish Chairman James Cartwright opened the meeting and thanked all those present for attending. He asked for volunteers for the position of Chairman.

14.07 Appointment of a Chairman

Mr Jonathan Law, a local resident, stood for election to the position of Chairman.

Cllr Richard Stacey seconded Mr Law. A show of hands elected Mr Law unopposed.

Cllr Cartwright stood down.

Mr Law took the Chair.

14.08 Apologies: Cllr D Andrews EHDC & HCC, SPC Cllrs Lang and Wilkinson, Miss A Osborne,

Mrs J Cunningham

14.09 Introduction to Planning Consultant

Jed Griffiths of Griffiths Environmental Planning will oversee the production of the Neighbourhood Plans and ensure compliance with regulations

Jed outlined his background in Local Government as a Chief Strategic Planner, and his involvement in the Royal Town Planning Institute. He has been a planning consultant for the past 20 years.

Jed is involved with other Neighbourhood Plans including Cleve Prior.

Central Government has 'simplified' the planning process and now includes Town and Parish Councils through the Localism Act 2011 – Chapter 3, Section 116-119 provides details.

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Central Government is encouraging the production of Neighbourhood Plans (N/P), which must be produced in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and East Herts District Council District Plan (D/P).

Town and Parish Councils are termed ‘qualifying bodies’ for the purposes of the production of N/Ps.

EHDC has a duty to advise and assist Parish Councils during the production of the N/P. The EHDC officer is Isabelle Haddow and she will assist Standon.

A N/P must be ‘positively prepared’ and should include the type and style of development the community wants. It can promote more development than directed by EHDC in D/P. It can include transport, employment, environment, etc. It cannot prevent development.

Currently, 34 N/Ps have been made by District and Borough Councils and now form part of the respective District and Borough Statutory Development Plans. 1,200 are now in process in England.

There is an eight step process to follow:

1. Getting Started: identify the area of the plan. Standon Parish Council has agreed the area is to be the whole parish which includes part of Wellpond Green, Broken Green, Barwick, Colliers End, Old Hall Green, Standon, Puckeridge, and Levens Green.
2. Project Group: this is the establishment of the Steering Group, including the appointment of the Chairman – confirmed tonight.

Once the area is identified, an application is sent to EHDC to start the process. However, grant funding must be applied for before the submission to EHDC. The ‘relevant body’ is Standon Parish Council.

3. Vision to 2030: the group needs to look forward to the built and environmental future it envisions for the children and grandchildren of the present community.
4. Options: the working groups establish their areas of interest which will include housing, transport, employment, economy, etc. EHDC can help with the evidence base which will form the basis of the plan.
5. Write it up: Jed will help put the wishes of the community into ‘planner speak’ to ensure the plan is written in a way which will ensure it is compliant with the NPPF, fits into the EHDC D/P and will also be acceptable to the Examiner. East Herts Policy Section can also assist. The submitted plan will include where development is wanted, and where it isn’t wanted, both marked on a detailed Proposals Map. This will also include protected areas and buildings.

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The policies and proposals need to be agreed with EHDC, therefore the plan will need to be realistic, and will also need to specify funding.

6. Consultation with the Parish: consultation will take place at all stages, but especially before the N/P is formally submitted to EHDC.
7. Submit to EHDC for examination in public: the N/P will be 'on deposit' with EHDC for 6 weeks for public scrutiny before it goes to formal examination. If the N/P is found by the Examiner to be 'sound', it is then submitted for referendum. EHDC pay for both the examination and the referendum. EHDC can only agree the N/P is to be 'made' as part of the Statutory Development Plan if 50% of the electorate who vote in the referendum vote in favour of the N/P. EHDC will make the N/P part of the Statutory Development Plan by a resolution of the Full council.

8. Additional Important Information:

Ideally, the N/P must work in parallel with the EHDC D/P, and must be compliant with the NPPF.

The findings must represent the wishes of the whole community across all demographics.

Grant funding: Locality has a bridging fund available to assist with start-up, but grant applications must be made before a formal application for the area is made to EHDC.

EHDC: once 'made', EHDC must take the N/P into consideration when it takes decisions on planning applications and appeals.

Questions & Answers:

1. Q: What is the time allocation to commence the N/P?

A: A draft programme and action plan has been drawn up for the Steering Group to consider. Grant funding applications and a budget need to be ratified by Standon PC. Standon PC will make grant funding applications.

2. Q: More people need to step forward to help with the process – what resources will be made available?

A: the main resource will be the people in the group: there will be a wealth of experience and expertise found in the volunteers both for the Steering Group, the sub-groups, and also in the community. It is important to seek out the skills base needed such as landscape, communications, journalism, IT, graphics, etc. Communication is vital, and can include social media, leafleting, newsletters, stalls at events, notice boards, web site, etc.

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3. Q: How long will the process take?

A: It will take approximately 18 months to submission, but is dependent on volunteer availability. It is likely that community liaison, which is needed to establish the concerns and wishes of the community, will take one day per week. The most effective use of time is to have stalls at community events eg May Day, fetes, social gatherings, etc. It is vitally important to stimulate public engagement.

4. Q: What is the minimum turn out for the referendum?

A: There is no minimum, but it is usually for approximately 1/3 of the electorate to vote if the community is actively engaged in the process. The N/P could be legally challenged if there is a low turnout.

5. Q: What existing N/Ps should the working groups consider when assessing their recommendations against the EHDC D/P?

A: There are many already posted online including The Lyn Plan, Winslow and Tattenhall. Locality has case studies which are relevant. Broughton Astley includes costs.

6. Q: Housing allocation: how binding will the recommendations of the N/P be on EHDC?

A: The current situation with the lack of an adopted District Plan, and a lack of a demonstrable 5 year land supply by EHDC, has led to a rash of speculative applications which the Planning Inspector has upheld at appeal including some in Buntingford. Because of this situation, EHDC is not defending all appeals. Once the N/P becomes part of the Statutory Development Plan, its policies and proposal must be taken into account by EHDC in decision making. This is a 'plan led' system. Increasing 'weight' is given as both the N/P and the D/P progress and evidence gathered to uphold the policies.

7. Q: If the D/P is in place, but the N/P is not completed and adopted, can EHDC use 'delaying tactics' until the N/P is completed and adopted?

A: There will be speculative applications which will need to be judged against the NPPF, the EHDC draft D/P and the saved policies of the EHDC Local Plan 2007. The community will have to provide a robust defence against speculative applications. EHDC Development Management Committee Meeting considered the Gladman application in Braughing last week. More than 100 residents attended the meeting, and it was refused unanimously by the Committee. This speculative application was not refused on housing grounds, but on environment and conservation grounds – previous applications for this site and their subsequent appeals were dismissed on these grounds, and this supported the EHDC decision.

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8. Q: Are there any legal implications for volunteers involved in this process?

A: No: all volunteers are covered under the constitution of the Parish Council which is the qualifying body. The clerk will undertake all formal submissions. Once submitted, EHDC will take over and fund the process. There is no 'come back' for preparing plans. *It is recommended that the Steering Group has a formal constitution.*

9. Q: Is the Steering Group and sub-groups an extension of the Parish Council/ unincorporated?

A: The group is set up by, and responsible to, Standon Parish Council. A minimum number of Councillors to sit on the Steering Group is recommended to be two. The rest of the group should be made up from the community as a whole.

10. Q: What is the legal framework under which the N/P resides?

A: NPPF, Localism Act 2011, and the regulations of 2012 will be valid at least until a General Election takes place. However, there is now such a strong movement towards the production of Neighbourhood Plans that it is unlikely any incoming Government would change the process. The N/P is part of the Statutory Development Plan. What is now missing is a Strategic Framework for Hertfordshire as a whole. N/Ps are for real and it is important to get involved in the process now.

11. Q: There are many speculative applications pending. It is unrealistic to think these will not be approved. If they are approved, what is the best method of obtaining benefit for the community? How can the community influence how and when it will happen, and achieve resolution to infrastructure concerns, and achieve developer resources – S106?

A: S106 is going to be replaced largely by the Community Infrastructure Levy which will fund infrastructure changes to support the new houses. 25% may be allocated to Parishes. It is important to identify infrastructure issues which need resolution in the N/P such as an extension to a doctor's surgery, water, sewage, highways, etc.

12. Q: What can't be done because of infrastructure constraints? WGC hospital has closed, A120 is overburdened to the point vehicles can't access it from side roads, there are no downsizing opportunities in new developments, or 'eco' homes. No benefit had been achieved from the Fairview development.

A: It is important to get engaged in the process to achieve the best outcome for the community.

Cllr Stacey commented that S106 funds had been achieved from the Fairview development for the play area, community centre, and bus shelters.

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Jed commented that Buntingford had achieved a very detailed specification under S106 for the community as part of the developments which have been upheld at appeal. It is important that the N/P is achieved quickly to ensure the community identifies development sites at an early stage, and feeds this into EHDC when commenting on planning applications.

13. Q: How effective will personal contributions be to the process?

A: Not all applications will be refused, but if a local group looks carefully at the applications, and talks to the community about it, any issues can be addressed in an open and transparent manner. Such a forum will have input to the planning system through the usual channels. It is important to assess any benefits which can be achieved for the community.

14. Q: Is EHDC likely to go against its own recommendations regarding the number of dwellings allocated to the parish? If more dwellings are granted permission than specified in the D/P, could the parish mount a legal challenge?

A: EHDC will specify the number of dwellings for the parish, and the N/P will specify the sites. If EHDC were to grant more dwellings than specified in the D/P and the N/P, the Parish Council could intervene and challenge.

15. Q: Will the currently indicated 150 new dwellings all go in Puckeridge?

A: It is up to the N/P groups to look at sites and allocations. It will also depend on the level of speculative applications, how far EHDC has progressed the D/P, and how Planning Inspectors views proposals which go to appeal.

16. Q: What is the boundary area?

A: Howe Fencing on the A120, to Wellpond Green including Broken Green, Levens Green, Barwick, Old Hall Green, Knights Hill, Standon and Puckeridge.

14.10 Moving forward: appointments and discussion

Assistance is available from EHDC through Isabelle Haddow, and also EH District Councillors David Andrews and Andrew Dearman (at least until the elections in May 2015).

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Appointments:

Steering Group: to include two Parish Councillors

Chairman: Jonathan Law
Claudia Chalkely
Maureen Wren
Karen Hill
Bernard Hart
Colin Jenkins
Nial Magraw
Kala Thomas
Mike Gill
Alan Cooper
Neil Johannassen
Jacqueline Veater
Cllr Dick Rainbird
Cllr Graham Cowell

Sub-groups: for discussion at the next meeting.

Housing
Employment
Transport
Water
Food
Social & Leisure
Health
Education
Environment

Next Stage:

It is important to keep momentum going, and it is recommended that the Steering Group have a meeting in the near future to discuss the draft action plan, funding applications, submission of the N/P area to EHDC, and consider a public consultation to take place in March 2015. It is important to publicise the public consultation. PS News submission date for the March edition is 10th February 2015.

Evidence bases: Isabel Hadow can assist with the evidence base. All documentation is on the EHDC web site. EHDC evidence base covers the whole District, but is not specific to Standon. The evidence base will need to be tailored to Standon, which will mean the N/P group will need to liaise with statutory bodies such as the Environment Agency, Herts County Council, etc.

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Discussion: communication: Jed recommended a dedicated section on the Standon PC web site specifically for neighbourhood planning. Full utilisation of all mediums was recommended included notices and leaflets. Ensure the Neighbourhood Plan is high profile and get information into the Hertfordshire Mercury.

14.11 Dates of next meetings

9th December at 7.30pm in the Lankester Lounge.

An alternative venue could be the Bowls Club for Steering Group meetings.

Meeting closed at 9.00pm

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