

# Great Horwood Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2031

## CONSULTATION STATEMENT



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## **INTRODUCTION**

1. This consultation statement has been prepared to fulfil the legal obligations of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 in respect of the Great Horwood Parish Neighbourhood Plan (GHPNP). The legal basis of the Statement is provided by Section 15(2) of Part 5 of the 2012 Neighbourhood Planning Regulations, which requires that a consultation statement should:

- a) contain details of the persons and bodies who were consulted about the proposed Neighbourhood Development Plan;
- b) explain how they were consulted;
- c) summarise the main issues and concerns raised by the persons consulted; and
- d) describe how those issues and concerns have been considered and, where relevant, addressed in the proposed neighbourhood development plan.

## **BACKGROUND**

2. The policies contained within the GHPNP, although concerned primarily with housing development, follow a considerable degree of interaction and consultation with the local community, on these and other matters over a period of ten years. In particular the background work has included:

- a) Consultations, open days and workshops related to the development of the Great Horwood Parish Plan prepared between 2004 and 2006;
- b) A survey distributed to every household in October 2011 to help inform the Great Horwood Parish Council (GHPC) response to consultations on the Vale of Aylesbury Plan;
- c) Meetings and requests for comments directly related to the development of the GHPNP between May 2013 and April 2014.

Details of the community interaction which occurred before the Neighbourhood Plan process are included below as we believe that they are material to this consultation statement. The details given below illustrate that Great Horwood Parish Council has engaged in a continuing dialogue with residents on planning and related matters over the last ten years.

## **THE CONSULTATION PROCESS**

### **The Great Horwood Parish Plan (2004-06)**

3. GHPC initiated the process of preparing a Parish Plan in 2004 by setting up a Parish Plan Steering Committee. This was an independent body with representation from the Parish Council. Open days were held, and six working groups were set up to consider different aspects of village life: Development and Planning, Environment and Footpaths, Recreation, Village Hall, Public Transport, and Traffic. A community consultation held to gather views of residents achieved the remarkably high response rate of 76%; views were also received from local organizations.

4. The Parish Plan was published in 2006 (Appendix 3, cover only), and is available online at

<http://www.bucksvoice.net/greathorwoodpc>

The key proposals for the six topic areas are listed below in Appendix 4.

### **Community Survey for the Vale of Aylesbury Plan – October 2011**

5. The AVDC LDF Core Strategy was withdrawn as a result of the proposed revocation of the South East Plan, and work started on the development of the Vale of Aylesbury Plan (VAP). At that time proposals for Neighbourhood Development Plans were being promoted through the Localities Act and AVDC encouraged communities to start the process of preparing a plan.

6. A survey form (Appendix 5) was prepared and delivered to every home in the Parish. Responses were collected both online (using SurveyMonkey) and in paper form. The overall response rate, measured by households, was again very high, at 65%. A summary of relevant results is given in Appendix 6.

### **Great Horwood Neighbourhood Plan – phase 1 (2012–2013)**

7. As a result of the Community Survey the GHPC had a clearer picture of the issues that would be involved in the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan. It applied for, and was granted, “Front-Runner” status. The development of the Plan would be undertaken by an independent Neighbourhood Planning Team (NPT) with representation from Parish Council.

8. Building on the response to the Community Survey, and with the advice of AVDC Forward Plans, the NPT carried out an assessment of possible development sites in the Parish. Parallel with this a draft Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report was prepared in

order to ensure that the requirements of EU Directive 2001/42 and the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 were met.

9. A first proposal outlining possible sites for development was presented at an open meeting on 18 May 2013. The meeting was publicised in the free monthly Parish Magazine “FOCUS”, circulated to all households (Appendix 7), and a leaflet describing the proposal in more detail was also circulated (Appendix 8).

10. A number of adverse comments about this proposal were received, principally about all development being concentrated in one part of the village. There were also strong suggestions that redevelopment of the Old Mill, a disused industrial building, should be considered.

11. The possibility of redeveloping the Old Mill site was discussed with AVDC Forward Plans, who indicated that there would be insuperable planning objections. A modified version of the first proposal was therefore published in the July 2013 edition of “FOCUS” (Appendix 9). Once again several adverse comments were received, and several members of the NPT resigned, feeling that they had lost the confidence of residents. An article describing the current situation was published in the September 2013 edition of “FOCUS” (Appendix 10).

### **Great Horwood Neighbourhood Plan – phase 2 (2013–2014)**

12. Continuation of work on the Plan was prompted by rumours of a large-scale development proposal on one of the sites in the village, and a residents' petition; see the front page article in the November 2013 edition of “FOCUS” (Appendix 11). The Parish Council resolved to work with Community Impact Bucks and a consultancy firm, rCOH Ltd, to develop the Plan. A State of the Parish report was prepared (Appendix 12, cover only) and the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report was circulated to statutory consultees on 11 February 2014 (Appendix 13, cover only).

13. A Housing Needs Survey was commissioned from Community Impact Bucks. A questionnaire was delivered to all households in the Parish (Appendix 14) and the results analysed to inform the Neighbourhood Plan of local need for affordable housing.

14. A new proposal for development in the Parish, using the information provided by residents' feedback on the earlier proposals, and taking into account the results of the Housing Needs Survey, was prepared during March 2014. A series of Newsletters was distributed to provide information about progress and encourage feedback (sample Newsletter in Appendix 15).

15. A community event was held on 29/30 March 2014 to allow residents to assess these proposals; opportunities were given to other interested parties to display proposals for

development. A questionnaire available at the event allowed residents to vote on the Neighbourhood Plan proposals, and also to vote on the alternative proposals, including the principle of whether they would prefer larger developments to those proposed in the Plan (Appendix 14, results given in Appendix 16).

16. In view of the positive results from the Community Event, GHPC resolved at its meeting on 14 April 2014 that the pre-Submission Neighbourhood Development Plan should proceed to its Regulation 14 consultation, with a deadline for submissions of 5pm on Monday 9 June 2014.

17. A report of these developments was made to the Annual Parish Meeting on 29 April 2014, advertised by a large 4m x 1m board in the village centre, and with approximately 50 people attending. (See Appendix 17 for the slide describing the consultation process. Printed copies of the Plan were also lodged in St. James' Church and in the two village pubs, as announced at the meeting.) Residents were encouraged to contribute to the consultation by further newsletters and an article in the May 2014 edition of "FOCUS" (Appendix 18). A full list of consultees notified is given in Appendix 18.

18. Throughout the process of preparing the Plan there has been regular contact with senior officers in AVDC Forward Plans. They have provided consultancy services for the preparation of the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report, and they have offered advice on the suitability of sites within the Parish for potential development and, at later stages, on draft versions of the Plan.

## **THE KEY ISSUES RAISED DURING THE CONSULTATION PROCESS AND HOW THEY ARE ADDRESSED IN THE PLAN**

19. The initial community consultation in October 2011 made it clear that residents would be happy to see some additional residential development in the village, but there was no consensus about possible locations for development. Nevertheless, the initial proposals from the NPT in May and June 2013 resulted in responses indicating that concentrating all development at the eastern end of the village would be regarded as unfair.

20. Various counter-proposals were suggested during this period. Some of these could not be taken further, as they were contrary to the NPPF (isolated development in the countryside, or development to the detriment of heritage assets) or to advice from AVDC Forward Plans.

21. A major issue concerned the size of developments. Feedback from the 2013 proposals indicated that several smaller developments would be regarded as more acceptable than a single larger development, as this would allow development in different parts of the village. There was also a feeling that large developments would damage the character of the village. This has been accepted.

22. The view that smaller scale developments would be preferred received confirmation at the Community Event on 29/30 March 2014 when residents, when asked to consider the proposed 15-dwelling limit on site size, or alternatively consider developments of between 15 and 50 dwellings, supported the first proposition and rejected the second, in both cases by large margins.

23. The issue of traffic has been raised on many occasions. An informal traffic survey was carried out on Little Horwood Road between 07:00 and 10:00 on 16 July 2013 (during school term time). Altogether 176 vehicles were counted in this period, with a peak flow of 16 vehicles in the five-minute period 08:30–08:35. There were, on that date, 60 dwellings in Little Horwood Road east of the census point; the proposed developments would increase this to 90. A plausible projection for the increased traffic flow would suggest a peak of 24 vehicles in a five-minute period, about one vehicle every ten seconds.

24. There is a different issue regarding traffic in Nash Road, as this is a classified road (B4033) and carries traffic between Winslow and the A421 trunk road. A 40mph speed restriction was introduced by Buckinghamshire County Council in 2012 as part of the Area 12 Speed Limit Review (this was a request in the 2004 Great Horwood Parish Plan) but there is evidence from the Parish MVAS that a significant number of vehicles exceed this limit. Suitable traffic calming measures would therefore be needed in order to provide safe access to a development along Nash Road.

25. There has been much discussion of view during the preparation of the Plan, particularly those of dog-walkers (of which there are many); often, though, there has been little care to distinguish between views into the village and views out to the countryside. Views out to the countryside will not be affected much by any of the proposed developments, except obviously from certain fixed vantage points. There will, however, be some changes to views of the village, and care needs to be taken to ensure that these are acceptable. One development site included in the original proposal, the site at the end of Weston Road, would have resulted in little change to the view of the village, but that site is no longer available for a development of an acceptable size.

26. One final issue raised during consultations concerns the historical status of the village, both in terms of the built environment (there are many listed buildings) and surrounding countryside. Great Horwood was subject to a particularly late (1841) parliamentary enclosure, and most of the fields retain evidence of ridge and furrow farming. Archaeological investigations would be needed before development in order to determine if there were any specific historical features to be recorded, although overall only a small proportion of the ridge and furrow fields would be affected.



## **CHANGES MADE RESULTING FROM RESPONSES TO THE PRE-SUBMISSION CONSULTATION**

27. A Report on the Pre-Submission Consultation was prepared by Neil Homer of rCOH Ltd and presented at a Public Meeting of the NPT on 18 June 2014 (Appendix 1); a list of notified consultees is given in Appendix 2.

28. The Report summarises the main issues raised by residents during the Consultation as:

- The merits or otherwise of the three sites allocated in Policies 2, 3 and 4
- The exclusion of other sites, notably land off Weston Road and off Willow Road
- The ability of the Plan to exert effective control once it is made

29. The report notes that there was a majority opinion in favour of the plan proposals, although not a significant majority. It summarises the comments from AVDC concerning general planning issues, from Buckinghamshire County Council concerning highways and archaeology, and from English Heritage and the Environment Agency. It records the responses from three developers not favoured with a housing allocation, giving their objections to the Plan.

30. The modification of the Plan for submission is based upon consideration of the following questions:

- Can the GHNP control the growth and distribution of development in the parish in the absence of a Local Plan?
- If so, can it convince enough local people that to do so requires the plan to be positive about development in the village and to propose enough new houses as a result?
- In doing so, can it convince a sufficient majority to support its proposed site allocations?

31. The most difficult of these questions is considered to be the third, concerning where the new houses should be built. It is accepted that all three sites have weaknesses in planning terms, but it is a question of weighing the relative merits of these sites against others, and that this is carried out in the Strategic Environmental Assessment, part of the Sustainability Appraisal. The conclusions, though not ideal, appear to be acceptable.

32. The Report concludes that, in the absence of any objection from the Statutory Authorities, the Plan can proceed to examination with minor modifications to improve the clarity of the text and to address concerns on how the three schemes could be made more acceptable in planning terms. In particular, the Submission Plan will ensure that the design requirements of each proposal will be required to ensure clear defensible boundaries, and will also ensure that each gives proper attention to the Conservation Area and its setting. In addition, confirmation will be obtained that the planning obligations included in each planning policy pass the tests of such requirements and are acceptable to the respective land owners.