

STANDON PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN
SUMMARY NOTE OF RESPONSE TO REGULATION 14 LETTERS

Introduction

Under Regulation 14, the draft Neighbourhood Plan was published for pre-submission consultation on 26th October 2016. The closing date for comments was 13th December 2016. Altogether 54 sets of comments were received from individual parishioners, landowners, developers, and the District Council. A summary of the responses is attached to the Neighbourhood Plan documents.

Six more detailed letters and emails were received, containing comments and suggestions for changes to the draft Plan. This note summarises the responses of the Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Committee to those representations.

Under each heading below, there is a summary of each of the comments set out in the letter. In italics, there is a summary of the response from the Advisory Committee. Where changes have been suggested, or made, the action taken is summarised in bold type.

1. Letter (by email) from Gladman Developments Limited (December 2016)

Legal Requirements

There is a reminder of the legal requirements to be observed in the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan.

The Advisory Committee were well aware of the requirements as set out in the letter.

National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance

There is a summary of the key policies in the NPPF, including the need to support strategic policies in Local Plans (paragraph 16) and the presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 17). There is also a reminder of paragraph 49 and the requirement to maintain a five year supply of housing land.

Reference is also made to changes in the PPG section on Neighbourhood Plans, which were made in February 2016. These advised on the provision of reserve housing sites and delivery schedules.

The dilemma for the Advisory Committee was that the statutory development plan for the area remained the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007. Nevertheless, the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan was carried out in parallel to the emerging District Plan, in the context of its emerging policies for housing supply and distribution. Thus, there is a positive link with the District Plan and its emerging policies.

In terms of the PPG, the Advisory Committee determined that sufficient land was being allocated to satisfy the requirements of the District Council. In the work of the Housing Group more sites had been identified, but these would be re-considered at the next review of the District and Neighbourhood Plans.

Development Plan

There is some scepticism about the emerging Local Plan and whether it will be found sound at Examination. Policy VILL1 and the 10% growth are questioned as an “arbitrary” figure. It is considered that the Neighbourhood Plan should have sufficient flexibility and that the Plan should allocate sufficient land, with contingencies.

See above. The Advisory Committee, in considering the amount of housing land to be provided, was guided by the emerging District Plan and draft policy VILL1.

Policy SP1

Reference should be made to the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

The reference to the emerging Local Plan is “unsound”. The policy should refer to the “development plan”.

The reference to the “presumption in favour” is made in paragraph 5.7 of the Plan.

The policy was changed to refer to the Submission District Plan.

Policy SP3

Concerns are raised about views and vistas in the policy, and how the policy will be applied in the development management process.

The views and vistas were identified after some considerable background research. The methodology is set out in background document SNP5. The policy was discussed with EHDC, who accepted it in principle.

Detailed changes were made to the policy, which then listed all the views and vistas, crossed referenced to the Policies Map.

Policy SP4

Gladman recommended the policy be modified in accordance with NPPF paragraphs 133 – 135.

The reasoning for his was not clear. EHDC officers were happy with the policy as written.

No changes were made to the Plan.

Policy SP5

The designation of the 8 Local Green Spaces in the draft Plan is queried, as to whether they are justified in terms of firm evidence, in accordance with the NPPF and PPG.

As a result of these comments, and others, the Local Green Spaces were re-evaluated against the three tests in paragraph 77 of the NPPF and PPG. The process is described in background document SNP5.

Changes were made to the Policy. The list of Local Green Spaces was reduced to those which fitted the tests set out in the NPPF.

Policy SP6

The policy was considered to be too restrictive. Loss of some assets will often be replaced by improvements.

The comments are noted, but need to be set against general support for the policy.

The words “Development will only be supported where the hedgerows listed above are to be retained” were added.

Policy SP7

The response notes that development will only be allowed within the defined village boundary. The Plan does not identify what development would be considered acceptable beyond this “artificial” limit. A detailed amendment to the policy is set out which refers to development to be permitted adjacent to the existing settlement.

This argument was rejected. The allocation of housing sites within defined settlement boundaries has been a long-standing feature of planning in East Herts. Thus, there is a presumption against development in the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt outside these boundaries. In the draft Neighbourhood Plan, the village boundary of Standon & Puckeridge is extended so as to accommodate the required numbers of dwellings. To include the policy suggested by Gladman would not be in conformity with either the 2007 Local or the emerging District Plan.

No changes were made to the policy.

Policy SP10

There was a concern that the policy would lead to inconsistencies in the development management process. Additional wording is suggested on “the most up-to-date housing needs evidence available.”

The comment prompted a discussion as to whether it would be deliverable.

The policy was subsequently removed and the wording was included in the adjoining text.

Policy SP13

Opposition is expressed to set density standards. It is suggested that the policy should be re-visited to state that developments should be assessed on a site-by-site basis.

The justification for this policy was set out in paragraph 5.46 of the Plan. The standard clearly reflects the average densities in Standon & Puckeridge, based on the work of the Land Allocations Sub-Group.

The policy wording was changed to refer to “all major housing developments”.

General Comments

The letter queries whether an environmental assessment of the Plan was required under the SEA Regulations.

The District Council had advised that SEA was not necessary. This was finally confirmed by a formal letter from EHDC on 5th September 2017, following a screening report.

2. Email and Statement from Strutt and Parker (dated 13th December 2016)

Policy SP7

Welcomes the inclusion of the lower part of Café Field as an allocation, but considers the failure to include the whole site as lost opportunity. The current position with regards to the emerging District Plan is noted and the lack of a strategic direction to policy. It is suggested that the whole of the Cafe Field should be included in the Neighbourhood Plan “to boost significantly the supply of land for housing.”

The comments on the development plan position are noted, but the Advisory Committee had decided that the Neighbourhood Plan should be prepared in parallel with the emerging District Plan. This has set the context for the housing numbers. The selection of the lower part of Café Field was determined as a result of the work carried out by the Land Allocations Group. The decision not to include the upper part was made on landscape grounds.

No changes were made to the policy SP7.

Current Outline Application

Comments were made about the current outline application and how many of the policies in the draft Plan would complement the proposals.

These comments were noted, but this part of the statement was not concerned with possible changes to the Plan.

Comments on Other Aspects

SP9

The letter comments that the NPPF does not establish a presumption against development in areas outside Group 1 and Group 2 villages.

The Advisory Committee is guided by the strategic policies of the Local Plan 2007 and the District Plan, which relate to the Rural Area Beyond the Green Belt.

SP3 and SP5

There is a suggestion that these policies are not supported by any evidence, and that they should be deleted from the Plan.

Both policies were supported by very detailed work which is described in the background report SNP5.

Changes were made to both policies. SP3 lists the views and vistas, which are depicted on the Policies Map. SP5 was also revised in the light of the three tests in paragraph 77 of the NPPF, listing the Local Green Spaces.

SP18

The statement considers that the policy should be removed from the Plan until there is sufficient evidence that there is a realistic prospect of it coming forward.

The Advisory Group were aware of the problems of the delivery of this as a firm project. There was no commitment from HCC Highways.

The policy was amended to refer to the monitoring of the traffic problems associated with the A120 and Puckeridge High Street.

3. Thames Water (letter dated 12th December 2016)

Thames Water welcomed the plan, with minor amendments.

Reference in paragraph 5.76 to policy WAT5 of the District Plan should be to policy WAT6. This was not done.

4. Representation on behalf of Mr John Greenaway, of Wellpond Green (December 2016)

The letter states that paragraph 5.36 of the draft Plan is in conflict with the NPPF and PPG. Wellpond Green, not being a Group 1 or Group 2 Settlement, is by default a Group 3 Settlement. There is no justification against infill development in Wellpond Green as set out in policy SP9.

The points were taken - this was not the intention of the policy.

Policy 9 was amended to state that “Limited infill provision for housing will be made in the hamlets of.....” This list included Wellpond Green.

5. Representation on Behalf of Beverley Homes (December 2016)

Paragraphs 1 – 3

Objection is raised as to the inclusion of a limitation of the number of dwellings (23) on the Chestnuts and Glanton site in policy SP7. The use of the indicative figures in the SLAA is criticised. Information is provided on the current position with regards to the planning application which had been submitted to the District Council for 29 dwellings.

The dwelling figures shown in draft policy SP7 are indicative and many have been drawn from the SLAA. All the sites, however, were re-assessed by the Land Allocations Group, using density figures of 25 dph against the area of each site. The figures are not limitations.

For the Chestnuts and Glanton site, the housing figure was changed to 27 dwellings to reflect the actual number of units in the planning approval. In the final version of the Plan, however, it was omitted because planning permission had been granted.

Paragraph 4

The density of 25 dph should not be applied prescriptively to every site.

This figure is based on the work of the Land Allocations Group as set out in the Background Report SNP7. The justification is set out in paragraph 5.46 of the Plan. It applies to major sites only.

Minor changes were made to policy SP13 to make it clear that it applied to major sites.

Paragraphs 5 and 6

Strong objection is raised against the inclusion of the link from the Cambridge Road to the A10.

The Advisory Group noted this comment and was conscious of whether the policy could be delivered.

Policy SP18 was changed to refer to the monitoring of traffic problems on the A120 and the Puckeridge High Street.

Paragraph 7

The statement objects to policy SP19 in that the proposed parking standards exceed considerably those set out in the District Plan.

The car parking standards do differ from the SPD on Vehicle Parking in New Developments. They are based on a detailed survey undertaken of car parking in Standon and Puckeridge. The justification for this local variation is set out in paragraphs 5.58 – 5.60 of the Plan and in Background Document SP7 Housing.

Some amendments were made to the detailed wording of SP19, but the essence of the policy remains the same.

6. EHDC Comments (December 2016)

The EHDC Policy team sent an email with comments on the Regulation 14 draft. The draft was drawn up following earlier meetings with EHDC, so the Regulation 14 response was more focused.

Policy SP5

EHDC were concerned that the designated Local Green Spaces should satisfy the criteria set out in the NPPF and the PPG.

As a result of these comments, and from others, the list of LSPs was re-evaluated against the three tests in the NPPF.

Changes were made to the policy. the list was reduced to include only those sites which met the three tests in paragraph 77 of the NPPF.

Policy SP16

This was unclear and may be interpreted as being more restrictive than the NPPF.

This was not the intention of the Plan.

The policy was re-worded to state that changes of use from employment to non-employment uses on a list of sites only be permitted subject to certain criteria (as listed).

SP18

It was not clear whether this road was needed or whether it was deliverable. The policy should be deleted from the Plan or further evidence will be required to justify its inclusion.

This was the subject of objections from others. The Advisory Group was mindful of these views, but felt that provision should be made for a link should it be required in the future.

After discussions with EHDC and HCC Highways, policy SP18 was changed to refer to the monitoring of traffic problems on the A120 and the Puckeridge High Street.

Other Comments

These consisted of some helpful advice on the relationship between the Neighbourhood Plan, the District Plan, and the NPPF. There were also points about referencing.

Detailed comments on the text were set out in a schedule attached to the note.

All of these comments were taken on board by the Advisory Group. where appropriate, queries were addressed to EHDC officers.