

Witherley Parish Neighbourhood Development Plan
Notes of the meeting of the Steering Group Monday 15 July 2019

Present: Kay Conway (Chairman), Derek Ridgway, Brian Conway, Dayle Flude, Laura Dyer, Helen Bullivant, Mark Simpson

Apologies : Dave Wilkins

Guests; Paul O'Shea & Peter Cullinane from Hollins Strategic Land

1. Declaration of interests

MS declared an interest in land in Fenny Drayton owned by his family farming business

2. Past Minutes

Minutes 9 July agreed.

Matters arising

Item 7 – Dropbox. BC reconfiguring the access and architecture to ensure there is a folder for each theme group and he will then circulate for us to upload data and files onto so we can, as outlined at meeting on 9 July, have a central log for all of our documents which the whole of the Steering Group can access. This will ensure we can all keep up to date with the activities of the various theme groups in between steering group meetings

3. Financial report

DR highlighted that he has now received invoices from Ratcliffe for the use of their church room, so now only 9 payments outstanding. No other changes since 9 July.

4. Meeting with Paul O'Shea, HS Land (for Lord O'Neil)

KC then moved to the main item on the agenda, the introduction of Paul O'Shea & Peter Cullinane from Hollins Strategic Land. She welcomed them, thanked them for travelling from Manchester to see us and asked them to outline their role and their proposals for potential housing development in our parish.

PoS introduced HSL by saying they are a development company that has been trading for 10 years. The company is a planning led specialist company which is a private investment company, not shareholder led, a 'needs led' company that works with a range of private and public companies. HSL had also recently established a small house building company in the North West called Hollins Homes. PoS said that he and his colleague PC were interested in having an open conversation. He informed the meeting that HSL had been chosen as a development partner for O'Neill estates because of their experience and willingness to work with local communities. PoS said that, as a developer, they wanted to deliver what the community wants. HSL will work within Borough Council housing requirements. He stated that HSL don't yet have any clear development proposals as they want to look at what the community needs are, not just housing but other amenities too, including green infrastructure and social amenities. He stated that whilst O'Neill owns extensive land across the Parish that HSL only have 2 parcels of land that they have a partnership agreement to work with O'Neill on, those are the two pieces that have been offered as part of the Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council's (HBBC) SHELAA on Kennel Lane in Witherley.

The steering committee then asked PoS and PC a number of questions:

What other projects has HSL worked on?

They are currently planning a Garden Village in Warrington with Homes England. He stated that this project fits with their company ethos, as it is being led first by social need and green infrastructure, looking to where housing can fit after that. It is a large-scale development of 5-6,000 houses creating 3 new villages. HSL also works extensively in the South West.

What is their role in the development – would they see it through to the actual build?

Currently their role is to get the project to an agreed outline planning application.

What scale of development are they looking to achieve in Witherley?

Initially PoS continued to say that was dependant on the needs and wishes of the community but when pushed on the economic viability and landowner's expectations for return he accepted that they were looking at a development of potentially 35 dwellings on the north site and 25 on the southern site. He stressed that this could be a phased development over time. He acknowledged that the call for sites that the Witherley Parish Council had just published outlined a need for 10 houses but queried whether this would be sufficient, given the under achievement against targets for new housing achieved by HBBC.

Have you identified any potential limitations on development in terms of logistics etc? How have you assessed the barriers and how will you overcome those?

PC replied that they understood that the Kennel Lane junction on A5 created a real challenge. They would need to undertake a transport assessment of the site and the junction to consider capacity. This would need to consider whether the village could take those additional traffic flows. On questioning they acknowledged that they had examined why a previous planning application, for a smaller number of houses, had been refused and therefore recognised that access to the A5 presented a real challenge. They believed, however, that solutions could be found. This included extending the current 'ghost island' on the A5 and there was the potential to create a whole new junction onto the A5 at the east of the village, towards Hinckley, possibly across the O'Neil-owned land behind the public house. Again, on questioning they stated that they recognised this would present further planning challenges and constraints because of the archeological site. They felt, however, that with the support of the community, these problems were surmountable. PoS also stated that a new access point would bring an additional benefit for the whole village. Their first port of call, however, would be whether improvements could be made to the existing junction.

You have seen that the Parish Council, based on the evidence the Neighbourhood Planning Group has gathered, is asking for proposals for sites to accommodate up to 10 additional houses. What is your response to this?

PoS said that he was pleased that the parish accepts the need for some development. He queried, however, whether this level of housing would protect the village from speculative development in the future. PoS stated that, in his opinion, a 10-house target would give our plan a 2-year shelf life. By proposing more houses and extending the end date of our plan, it would be more defensible. He then went on to highlight what he saw as the pressure on HBBC to identify more housing sites because of the issues around their land supply. He suggested that whilst Witherley Parish may not have any housing target numbers yet, it could in the future as HBBC are looking urgently at the potential for housing sites to distribute its housing numbers. He suggested a new number may be defined for the parish within the next 6-12 months.

What mix of housing would you propose for the site?

PoS & PC outlined they would be looking at a mix of housing including smaller units, starter homes and potentially units for 'senior living'. They stressed this could be refined further in

collaboration with the community. No explicit commitment was given by HSL to provide rented or affordable homes beyond the Council's standards and no response to the issue of affordable homes for local people.

What is HSL's vision for the site and what conditions would they want to set to any development?

PoS & PC outlined a potential vision for the site which would see the housing being fully integrated into the village with the units abutting the existing housing. They said it would be low density with lots of social land including the potential of a range of community amenities, depending on the desires of the local community. This could include a community orchard, allotments, play/skate park, nursery etc. It could provide the benefit of safer pedestrian routes and improved access for the whole village onto the A5. They would propose a design code to do something 'a little bit better than the national code'.

What would prevent a housing developer from changing your outline plans?

PoS highlighted that by submitting a Parameters Application issues like numbers, type & design of housing would be conditions set by the outline application so builders then contracted would have to deliver to that plan. He acknowledged, however, that once outline planning had been achieved a housing developer could submit a new application to change elements of the outline plan.

KC thanked both PoS and PC for meeting with the WDNP steering group and stated they had given us plenty to think about.

PoS thanked the WPNDP steering group for giving them the opportunity to share their approach. He finished by saying that to continue to thrive villages needed to grow to maintain the services, schools, pubs and the other amenities that communities want. He believed that planned growth, like the proposal offered by O'Neill's land, can deliver the benefits of incremental growth. He concluded by making a number of closing remarks, restating a number of points he had previously made including: the pressure on the Council to identify housing sites; their willingness to work with the local community; that any improvements to the A5 will need a reasonable scale of housing development to make it viable; and finally that it was his belief that, to remain in control of our future, the Parish should be looking to exceed current housing targets.

He left us with a booklet titled "Kennel Lane Witherley: Neighbourhood Planning Vision Statement", which set out some of these issues.

HSL then left the meeting.

The steering group discussed some of the issues raised. The key conclusions were that:

- There had been no evidence or support from our community for this scale of development
- Given the rural nature of our Parish we were not convinced by their assertion that our Parish would be subject to the level of housing targets in the future that would necessitate this level of development.
- We were not convinced that the A5 issues were so easily solved given the constraints of the site, including archeological issues. There was also a real suspicion that any solution would require a development of significantly more than 60 houses to deliver it, and still give a level of financial return expected by the landowner
- We would send a copy of the proposal to Your Locale for their assessment & for discussion at housing theme group.

- We awaited the other responses we would get from the Parish Council's call for sites and then the Housing group would complete an assessment, including the Kennel Lane site, on all of them to identify those with the most potential.

5. Any other business

Noted the upcoming meeting with the Hunt Kennels owners on 23 July BC & KC to find out about the future of the kennels.

Update from Environmental group:

- We noted and welcomed the recruitment of two additional volunteers as nature walkers
- Barry Smith (Chair of Housing) and DW to do work on photographing vistas and views.
- Ecological survey – HB done some further amendments and will recirculate. Can only do the detailed ecological survey where there is access and so where there are footpaths to ensure there is legal access. Unfortunately, that means we can't do a detailed analysis of a number of the SHLAA sites
- Wildlife sheets to go to households to track species etc. Each village to circulate at upcoming events, gatherings and groups. LD to put onto Facebook.
- Footpaths: 24 paths in the Parish recognised by ONS. 2 gone because of MIRA development leaving 22. HB walked them and the footpaths are in good condition. HB and environmental group are looking at a circular walk. Parish Council considering undertaking a project on footpaths to look at improving and adopting routes to ensure disabled access. Leicestershire Local Access Forum meeting on 4 September about developing a rights of way improvement plan. HB to make contact to understand what the scope of the session on 4 September is and so how we can best engage, what funding might be available etc. This could then result in a community action in the WNDP to be taken forward formally by Parish Council.

BC reported on the issue of Area of Separation that the housing group is considering to create a corridor between Atherstone & Witherley

6. Next meeting

Tuesday 13 August, 7.30 in **Witherley Church**.