

COMMENTS ON THE HAVERSHAM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

10/01/23

By Rob Coles,

Haversham resident

1. INITIAL COMMENTS/THOUGHTS

I have commented before and these are identified as Respondent 14. I have no intention of re iterating those points here, but still feel they are essentially still valid.

With the benefit of time passed I think I would still say that the plan seems to lack a strong vision of how the community of Haversham could be enhanced into the future, the aims and suggestions still seem quite downplayed. There is no analysis included into the character of the villages, so very little guidance emerges as to what could be permitted. I'm afraid that what is written about design parameters is so shallow as to be almost meaningless. In developing the plan over the years, it is unfortunate that it has focused on small areas of potential development, and not pursued the widely known opportunities for far more significant development, and in far more sustainable locations.

I have to say upfront that I do live opposite the chosen development site, and I'm sure these comments will be therefore seen as a case of NIMBY ism. However, it isn't. I've been in the development and design industry for 40 years, it's been my career, so I am not opposing development now. Most of us around site 11 I believe accept that development is very likely here, but my concern is the policies being put in place to guide it, and any other areas.

1. COMMENTS ON THE CURRENT PLAN.

Introduction and background section, para 1.1 ff

In para 1.3 the question is asked, does the plan provide principles for sustainable development, and does it comply with European law? In para 1.4 it asks has it engaged with the local community?

In response to the first of these questions the overall policy seems to promote sustainable design in terms of zero carbon emissions, policy HLL 4, 8, 12 etc, but in relation to specific site 11, the principles do not appear to apply. There is at this location no drainage, no bus stop, no easy access to school ,and community facilities, no easy access to open space and play, whereas these facilities are all available in the main village, where in addition it is only a 10-15 minute walk to the railway station. This is not a theoretical point, but one which has been raised by the planning authority in response to various applications on properties on the High Street.

With reference to the law, I cannot comment and am not qualified to speak. However, it had been noted at this stage by several people locally that O'Neill Homer, whilst employed by the Parish Council to assess the various sites' potential earlier in this process are also acting for one of the site owners themselves, which turns out to be site 11, chosen for development. I am aware of the practice of building 'Chinese walls' to cope with this type of situation within a company, and it may well be that sturdy protocols have been put in place, but it does seem to represent a potential conflict of interest, and certainly has raised eyebrows locally.

Finally, in response to the question of engagement, I think the parish council has done all it can in the difficult period of Covid restrictions. However, in relation to the chosen development site, there has been no specific contact with those affected as a group of villagers. I think this would have been good practice, and good manners given that the plan suggests all proposed development in this one location.

2. COMMENTS ON SPECIFIC POLICIES.

Policy HLL2.

16 units seems unrealistically high, given the requirement for flood protection, sewage treatment, maintaining the existing tree and landscape, footpaths, horse paths and existing wildlife on the site! The plan also encourages a linear street frontage with views through to the country. All of which seems to make 16 units unworkable. The paras iii, v, vii, viii, ix, x, xi, xiii, and xvi refer to the requirements to fit onto site 11.

Para 5.9, I am not convinced that an 'on demand' bus is really the answer on a regular basis, given that we intend this site for those in affordable homes, who may be elderly or with young families. (I have used the on demand service, but I'm able bodied, with no particular time deadline to meet and reasonably IT savvy!)

There is no design guidance given to guide suitable development. It would be normal to include atleast suggested heights, materials, layout priorities, key frontages, privacy for existing dwellings, garden sizes, open space/play etc etc. In this case the impact of the adjacent listed buildings and their outbuildings would be very important, as was considered recently in comments from the planning authority on the proposed redevelopment of 'Steadgate', opposite site 11.

Policy HLL4. A good policy for sustainable low energy homes. Good to reference to HLL2

Policy HLL5. Regrettably it is possible to imagine almost any development meeting this policy. It needs substantially strengthening in order to impact what could be built here.

Policies HHL 8,10, 12, Are all good and could be referenced from HHL 2 to make the points more strongly.

3. SUGGESTED ACTIONS.

Priorities

1. Omit reference to a specific number of units on site 11
2. Produce a diagrammatic design plan for all development sites seriously under consideration indicating key constraints and opportunities.

Suggested

3. Add some work on village character and use it to establish stronger guidance for any site within HLL. Add to this guidance some thoughts how the wider requirements of the plan like views to the countryside and links to paths should be accommodated onto development sites
4. Make design quality guidance more Haversham specific and more robust. HHL 5.
5. Checkout the robustness of the site selection process to avoid future problems.

Ideally

6. Atleast approach again significant landowners within New Haversham to discuss the likelihood of major developments and advise that design guidance be applied to these areas as well.
7. Review wider vision for HLL. For example, measures which could encourage local businesses and employment opportunities, ways to make better use of open space, ways to connect better to the City of Milton Keynes in terms of pedestrian and cycle links and the green spaces, parks and ecological corridors. Ways to connect better the old and new villages of Haversham, and increase pedestrian safety and wellbeing.

