

Haversham-cum-Little Linford Neighbourhood Plan Reg 16 consultation responses

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I strongly support the concept of a Neighbourhood Plan and associated community consultations as an enabler of development & evolution of the local built-environment. However, I am equally keen that such consultations are approached in a way that maximises the opportunity for consensus to arise, rather than as has more usually happened in the case of HcLL where naturally arising good-will has been repeatedly & comprehensively damaged, often by what appeared to be clumsiness and/or ineptitude.

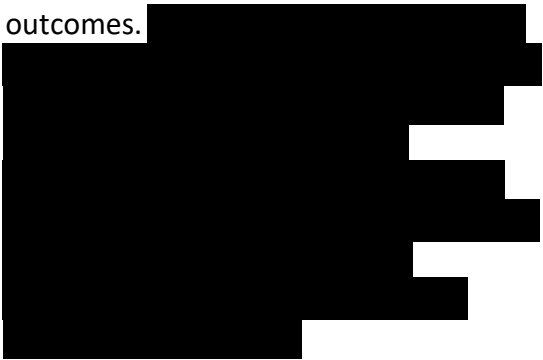
From an early stage, I would have like much stronger, crisper “policy intents” relating to important topics within the consultation – such as eg floodwater drainage/ drainage maintenance, biodiversity, active traffic-calming, maintaining agricultural viability, litter removal, POSITIVE amenity development, preferential considerations (for resulting homes) and other important aspects that are dear to villagers’ hearts. By being so “out-of-tune” with what is important to many parishioners (esp. in the old village), as indicated through such glaring omissions, my overall impression was that the 2020 process was a missed opportunity that undermines the validity of this & future consultations.

Please see below correspondence directly with Ms Pam Williams (Chair - Haversham-Cum-Little Linford Parish Council) and attached word document with regard to the Neighbourhood Plan consultation process arising in Dec 2020. Within this correspondence, I voiced a number of concerns about prospective development, esp. in the old village, as well as how the process was being implemented.

I notice that – despite the assurance I received otherwise (see below), NONE of my submission is present in the online [Consultation Statement](#). I therefore hope I can rely on you to ensure my original submissions are included along with this one, which I would offer below.

Consultation 2020



“Foreword” to Submission Plan (by the Chair)	Failure / inadequacy
<p>1) Haversham-cum-Little Linford is a small, rural parish within the Borough of Milton Keynes, separated from urban Milton Keynes by the River Great Ouse and situated some 5 miles (8kms) to the north of central Milton Keynes. The parish has three distinct areas of population, Little Linford, Old Haversham and New Haversham.</p>	<p>The repeatedly arising concern - expressed by many - is that the consultation process failed to recognise / acknowledge the starkly contrasting characters & population sizes of the three different, quite separate communities that make up the parish. When questioned about their prior experience of such cases, the advising consultants frequently evaded questions & brushed off concerns by asserting they had previously assisted consultations in “hundreds” of other instances (and therefore “knew best” – about everything) but, when asked, were unable to identify a single previous example of a consultation relating to a parish with similar separation & diversity of character. For many, this absence in itself will forever undermine the validity of the resulting outcome especially amongst those who live in the Old Haversham community.</p>
<p>2) Neighbourhood planning was introduced through the Localism Act of 2011 to ensure that local communities are involved in the planning decisions that affect them</p>	<p>By the time the community became “involved” in any meaningful way, many options & possible directions had already been discounted & closed-off – often for reasons that seemed to be based on ill-informed supposition, and sometimes for reasons that were never disclosed. Perhaps because of this, the process appeared to be being driven by an intention to reach predetermined outcomes.</p> 
<p>3) As is legally required, this Neighbourhood Plan complies with national and Milton Keynes Planning Policies. Once the plan has been examined by an independent planning</p>	<p>This assertion (3) might be true if it could be demonstrated that an open process has been followed. The consistently poor & extremely protracted approaches that were adopted render the outcomes very</p>

<p>inspector and accepted by parish referendum, it will become part of the Development Plan for Milton Keynes, Plan:MK. The policies contained within it will be used by Milton Keynes Council to determine planning applications within our parish and should offer protection against speculative planning applications in the parish</p>	<p>out-of-tune with most of the views of villager's, especially in the older part of the village. Also, a widespread fear is that, as a result of the lack of veracity in the way the process was handled, I suspect any speculative developer "would be able to drive a coach-and-horses" through MKC's planning policies relating to the parish.</p>
<p>4) The Haversham-cum-Little Linford Neighbourhood Plan has been developed to define how the community wants the parish to evolve over the next ten years. Key issues such as housing development, building design, important buildings and community facilities to be protected as well as biodiversity and the green and blue infrastructure of the parish have been researched and examined as the plan has been put together.</p>	<p>If the Neighbourhood Plan is to be accepted as having been genuinely developed to define how the community wants the parish to evolve over the next ten years, it would need to recognise & accommodate the contrasting aspects of the very divergent characteristics of the different communities. Surely it's obvious that consultation outcomes / policies / development goals that are perfect for a post-WWII, 350-dwelling estate community are going to be hopelessly wrong for a 1000year old, <50-dwelling strip development located a mile away. (and vice-versa)</p>
<p>5) Importantly, the Steering Group have worked hard to gauge the feelings and aspirations of residents, even with the challenges of the pandemic, with in-person and online meetings, questionnaires, a housing needs survey and a consultation document, in addition to all the statutorily required consultation.</p>	<p>I've known most members of the steering group for more than 3 decades and was acutely made aware at the time that many of these were expressing serious reservations & concerns that were being ignored These related to both the process administration as well as decisions that were being made that were leading to outcomes that would be (and were) substantially out-of-kilter with previous consultations, whose outcomes were now being completely ignored, but these concerns were being summarily dismissed & dissenters often vilified for daring to speak-out.</p>
<p>6) While it is recognised that there is unlikely to be full agreement on all aspects of any Neighbourhood Plan, what has been developed by the Steering Group meets the stated aspirations of the majority of residents, supporting a small amount of housing development to enable</p>	<p>The "majority of residents" – [REDACTED] – live a fairly long distance away from the area that is now being most affected (Old Haversham village) and this bland & misleading assertion runs to the knob of the problem. The old village is a linear / strip development in an agricultural and the</p>

<p>downsizing and provide affordable housing, while most importantly protecting the rural character of the parish and the things that are precious to us all.</p>	<p>type of development that the (false / misleading & glib) conclusions of the consultations render the prospect of development that would not be “in keeping” with it’s immediate environment at all, but in this assertion (6), this seems to be rendered as acceptable because it would only affect one of the two smaller communities where only a minority of villagers live & would be affected. Put simply, the consultation outcomes & conclusions do NOT meet the aspirations of the residents within the affected community in the old village.</p>
<p>7) The preparation of this Neighbourhood Plan has been undertaken by volunteers on behalf of the Parish Council. Advice and much needed technical support has been provided by Neighbourhood Planning Consultants, oneill homer who have been largely funded by government grant. I would like to extend my thanks to the Steering Group who have given up a great many hours of their time to work on this Neighbourhood Plan, and to our consultants, Leani Haim and Neil Homer for their patience, encouragement and expertise.</p>	<p>As mentioned, members of the steering group tried to reflect the concerns of people living in the old village community, but such opinions have been either suppressed and/ or brusquely dismissed [REDACTED] It is now a shocking discovery that the consultants – oneill homer - are now representing the landowners of the parcel of land south of Nr 27 High Street (known locally as The Triangle) which we are all dismayed to learn is up for a development in a way that completely cuts across the opinions & aspirations of most people who live Old Haversham.</p> <p>NB Although (again) it was completely disregarded by the PC at the time, the evidence for this was obtained from an informal survey that was circulated in Dec 2020 in Old Haversham.</p>

Haversham Village Plan

Feedback to Consultation - Dec 2020

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1. **Concerns about development in the lower village:** Affordable homes are strongly supported by Haversham residents AND most needed. Affordable homes seem more achievable from development in the upper village, rather than in the lower village. Threats to affordability by development within the lower village include (not in order of importance):

- **Local infrastructure & services:** Town gas & mains drainage are key requirements of affordable homes.

There is currently no town gas or mains drainage in the lower village.

Introducing these services has been overwhelmingly opposed in previous consultations and, in any case, also ruled-out by technical impracticalities.

The alternatives of oil tanks & septic tanks respectively represent sources of significantly increased building costs (elaboration can be provided), as well as above-average running costs that are also at-odds with maximising affordability.

- **Local amenities:** Ease of access to local amenities should be maximised.

The sites in the lower village are situated in least proximity to important amenities (Shops, Buses, School & Social Centre) and, as such, are self-evidently less in tune with needs of people that would seek the social/affordable housing approved of by residents in previous consultations. Any development in the lower village would result in residents – especially children – who need to walk to amenities having to go further and climb the poorly lit, very steep (and dangerous) connecting road between the two parts of the village.

- **Character of lower village:** Maintaining an “in keeping” requirement in the lower village.

Most existing properties in the lower village are constructed from stone. To be in keeping with the existing character of the lower village, developments involving more than 1 or 2 properties would need to be similarly & sympathetically constructed, so costlier to build (elaboration can be provided) and consequently less affordable. Also, the lower village has been a linear settlement for many centuries. Development on the sites that are situated behind existing properties (sites 5, 10 & 11) would represent a radical & negative departure from the existing character of the village. Such would also have an adverse effect on the outlook - and the market value - of the existing properties and access connections raise safety concerns from the ensuing additional traffic.

- **Risk of drainage floodwater:** Requirements for countermeasures and need to be robustly stipulated.

Unless substantial countermeasures are adopted, development at eg site 10 (especially – but possibly at other sites, as well) could exacerbate the already high risk of drainage floodwater running off from the higher elevations to the North-West of this site. (see [Learn more about this area's flood risk - GOV.UK \(flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/guidance/learn-more-about-this-area-s-flood-risk)) Countermeasures relevant to this hazard aren't stipulated in "Policy Intent 1" so, to the extent these may be adopted, they would instead be decided by the developers and risk being scrimped upon. To be effective, the countermeasures required would significantly increase building costs (elaboration can be provided) and further detract from affordability.

Irrespective of any focus on development, it seems to me that the lack of focus & matching policy intent by the parish & municipal authorities on the general topic of flood risks in Haversham is an astonishing and potentially calamitous omission. I would strongly urge that the village plan is significantly and urgently revised to address this far more tangible issue that is currently threatening Haversham's residents & community assets.

2. Concerns about the process:

Because of the Covid pandemic, the consultation process has of necessity been truncated and, despite the best efforts by the villagers involved in the steering group, the process so far has resulted in a lack of sufficient transparency, objectivity & fairness which creates a likelihood of a flawed, potentially unrepresentative outcome:

- **Current constraints:**

A village meeting could not be convened so representative opinions / acceptance of what is fair & reasonable to residents appear to have only had a very limited influence on how the process has been conducted (so far). In consequence, many people say they find the information & explanations provided (about the process) are unclear & confusing. Others will provide detailed submissions that elaborate on these concerns.

- **Prospective development sites:**

According to the consultation booklet, 11 sites were originally considered for prospective development but, the specific reasons for eliminating each of the 6 excluded sites are undisclosed so the justifications for the outcome aren't clear. This lack of transparency has undermined trust and the prospect of developing a ready consensus.

- **Location of sites:**

Upper Haversham has (approx.) 300 households but only 1 nominated site has been carried forward. Lower Haversham has (approx..) 50 households and 4 nominated sites have been carried forward. Development on one (or more) of the 4 nominated sites the lower village will have a disproportionate impact on its population. This approach seems to be a very skewed and unfair way of proceeding.

- **Survey:**

The voting method of 1-5 being used is flawed because it doesn't anticipate / cater for showing the strong disapproval many have for individual site. Sieve 2 needs to be a lot more open & transparent, especially about why individual sites are being accepted / rejected.

The absence of an opportunity for dialog – even accepting the pandemic restrictions – is a huge flaw that risks leaving the consultation process wide open to subsequently being challenged and/ or disregarded, especially by developers. Instead, an opportunity for dialog could be provided (to a reasonable degree) through - say - a 10-session program of online meetings involving up to 40 people/ session over 2 weeks. These and/ or other measures could feed into an online FAQ library for those unable/ disinclined to participate.