

Much Hadham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Constitution

Preamble

Much Hadham Parish Council (“MHPC”) is a Qualifying Body for the purposes of s38A (12) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the of the Localism Act 2011. Under its umbrella, MHPC has established the Much Hadham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (“the Steering Group”), which will be responsible for leading the process of developing a Neighbourhood Plan (“the Plan”).

The Steering Group is a committee of MHPC, formed under its standing orders. MHPC has granted delegated authority in exercise of all relevant Plan-making functions to the Steering Group. Subject to ratification by MHPC, the Steering Group agrees to be bound by the Terms of Reference attached.

1. Tasks

The Steering Group shall support MHPC by carrying out the following tasks:

- 1.1. Identify priorities and timescale for task stages in a Project Plan
- 1.2. Identify ways of involving the whole community and gather the views and opinions of as many relevant individuals, groups and organisations in the community as necessary
- 1.3. Determine the types of survey and information gathering to be used, be responsible for the analysis of the survey and maintain an evidence base
- 1.4. Liaise with relevant authorities and organisations to make the Plan as effective as possible.
- 1.5. Prepare a vision, objectives and policies for the Plan, based on the evidence collected
- 1.6. Scope for need for an environmental assessment
- 1.7. Carry out a sustainability appraisal if appropriate.
- 1.8. Prepare and distribute draft(s) and final versions of the Plan
- 1.9. Take responsibility for planning, budgeting and monitoring expenditure on the Plan and report back to MHPC on these matters
- 1.10. Regularly report back to MHPC on progress, issues arising and outcomes from the exercise.

2. Roles and Governance

- 2.1. The following management roles will be appointed:

Chair

Secretary (who shall normally be the parish clerk)

Finance Officer

Communication Co-ordinator

- 2.2. Members shall be elected to management roles by a majority of votes of the Steering Group at a quorate meeting, except for the first appointments which will be made by MHPC following nominations from a public meeting
- 2.3. The Steering Group should not permanently have fewer than 8 members and should not exceed 16 members. Two members shall be current parish councillors, nominated by MHPC if the Steering Group does not already have two parish councillors in its membership

- 2.4. The Steering Group may co-opt members to it and wherever possible all members should have a specific role, to be agreed by the Steering Group. Policy Working Group leaders (see below) will automatically be members of the Steering Group
- 2.5. Membership shall be drawn from different parts of the parish and different sections of the community as far as possible, and equality and diversity shall be promoted and encouraged. No more than 2 members of the Steering Group can be non-residents of Much Hadham parish. No more than 2 members can be current councillors of MHPC
- 2.6. A person shall cease to be a member of the Steering Group having notified the Chair or Secretary in writing of their wish to resign
- 2.7. The Steering Group and Policy Working Groups may recruit such additional volunteers as are necessary to further the Tasks
- 2.8. It is expected that all Steering Group members abide by the principles and practice of the Parish Council Code of Conduct, including declarations of interest
- 2.9. Members may be excluded from the Steering Group or Policy Working Group where there is a conflict of interest; for conduct and behaviour that is disruptive and/or which does not promote the Core Purpose or Aims; or if they fail to attend three consecutive Steering Group or Policy Working Group meetings
- 2.10. The Steering Group shall not be affiliated to any political party, but will welcome the involvement of the local district councillor and / or county councillor as community representatives
- 2.11. Under the terms of the Localism Act 2011, all members of the Steering Group must declare any pecuniary or other personal interest that may be perceived as being relevant to a decision of the group. This may include membership of an organisation, ownership of land or a business, or any other matter that may be considered to be relevant. Such declarations shall be recorded and be publicly available

3. Meetings

- 3.1. The Steering Group shall normally meet monthly or as may be required
- 3.2. At least 3 clear days' notice of meetings shall be sent to members via the communication method agreed with, and appropriate to, each individual member
- 3.3. Notices of meetings should include an agenda
- 3.4. Every matter shall be determined by a majority of votes of the Steering Group present. In the case of equality of votes the Chair of the meeting shall have an additional, casting, vote. The quorum necessary to transact business shall be not less than 51% of the number of members of the Steering Group at that time or 4, whichever is the greater
- 3.5. The Secretary shall keep a record of meetings, and circulate notes to Steering Group members and MHPC in a timely fashion. The Steering Group will publicise the minutes (including in draft form) and other material via appropriate methods to ensure effective, efficient communication with the public
- 3.6. It is recommended that an annual rolling schedule of meetings is set in place, preferably at the first meeting of the Steering Group and made available to the public via notice boards/websites
- 3.7. All meetings of the Steering Group should be held in public and be open to the public
- 3.8. Any person wishing to observe meetings may do so provided that the business of the meeting is not disrupted. Each committee meeting shall include an opportunity for

observers to speak. The maximum speaking time for an individual observer shall be three minutes and the total time for all observers to speak shall not exceed 12 minutes in total

- 3.9. Technical experts and promoters of development schemes, including developers, agents, local authority officers, and representatives of other organisations, may attend Steering Group meetings at the behest of the Chair. Attendance will be for the purposes of exchanging information, giving evidence, or discussion of options for action. Such experts and promoters cannot engage in the formal decisions of the Steering Group

4. Policy Working Groups

- 4.1. The Steering Group may establish such Policy Working Groups as it considers necessary to carry out the functions specified by the Steering Group
- 4.2. Each Policy Working Group should have a lead person, who will be appointed to the Steering Group if not already a member of it (subject to meeting the requirements for membership above)
- 4.3. Policy Working Groups will carry out duties specified by the full Steering Group, which may include:
- Data Gathering
 - Consultations
 - Making recommendations
- 4.4. The make-up and purpose of Policy Working Groups will be regularly reviewed by the full Steering Group

5. Finance

- 5.1. Notification of all planned expenditure will be given to the parish clerk of MHPC before actual costs are incurred
- 5.2. The Finance Officer shall keep a clear record of expenditure supported by receipted invoices and will regularly review and update the budget in liaison with the parish clerk
- 5.3. The Finance Officer in partnership with the parish clerk, will draw up and agree with the Steering Group procedures for volunteers who wish to claim expenses
- 5.4. The Finance Officer will report to the Steering Group and MHPC on planned and actual expenditure for the project at regular intervals and as requested
- 5.5. Invoices will be made out in the name of MHPC who will pay them at their next scheduled parish council meeting
- 5.6. Members of the community who are involved as volunteers with any of the working groups may claim back any previously agreed expenditure that was necessarily incurred during the process of producing the Neighbourhood Plan. This could include postage and stationery, telephone calls, travel costs etc

6. Confidentiality

The nature of the Neighbourhood Plan process will involve discussions about land that may potentially be made available for development. Discussions between landowners and other interested parties (and others such as their agents) with any members of the Steering Group may provide certain information from these sources that is, and must be kept, confidential. To ensure the

protection of such information (which may or may not be pertinent to the Neighbourhood Plan) and to preserve any necessary confidentiality:

- 6.1 the recipient(s) of such information shall limit disclosure of confidential information to members of the Steering Group who have a need to know i.e. those who have a designated role with responsibilities that include the subject of the information. Members will not disclose the confidential information obtained unless required to do so by law;
- 6.2 clause 6.1 imposes no obligation upon a recipient with respect to any information (a) that was in the recipient's possession before it was disclosed by the source; (b) is or becomes a matter of public knowledge through no fault of the recipient; (c) is received by the recipient from a third party not owing a duty of confidentiality to the source; (d) is disclosed without a duty of confidentiality to a third party by, or with the authorisation of, the source; or (e) is independently derived by the recipient. However, members of the Steering Group should always act professionally with regard to sensitive information they receive from whatever source and ensure that the subject's right to privacy is respected;
- 6.3 for the avoidance of doubt, discussions with a landowner (or an agent authorised by the landowner) about the possibility of a site in the ownership of the landowner being selected for inclusion in the Neighbourhood Plan are to be treated as confidential – not only the content of the discussion but the fact that there has been a discussion. Once the landowner (or authorised agent) has given written permission for the specific site to be the subject of a formal site assessment by the Steering Group, then the obligations under clause 6.1, insofar as they relate to information pertinent to the Neighbourhood Plan, no longer apply;
- 6.4 if the recipient of confidential information is uncertain as to which other members of the Steering Group are permitted to share in it or is unclear as to whether information received should be treated as confidential, the Chair and Secretary shall jointly make that decision.

7. Alteration to the Constitution

This constitution may be altered and additional clauses may be added with the consent of two thirds (and not less than 4 members) of the Steering Group present, provided that any such alterations are not incompatible with the Terms of Reference in the opinion of MHPC. END