

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Much Hadham Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group
held via Zoom on Tuesday 19th January 2021, at 7:30pm**

Present: Cllr Ian Hunt (Chair), Cllr Bill O'Neill, Martin Adams, Michael Byrne, Neil Clarke, Ken Howlett, Hugh Labram, Clive Thompson, Jacqueline Veater and Ruth Fleetwood.

In attendance: Fiona Forth, Clerk (Secretary) and 7 residents.

1. Apologies for absence

None.

2. Declarations of interest

Michael Byrne declared a disposable pecuniary interest in relation to Nimney House and submitted a request for a dispensation to take part in discussions but not to vote. The Chair highlighted that Nimney House was, effectively, on the agenda in two places: a specific agenda item (7) and within the draft Plan (8). He clarified that the request was to participate in discussions but not vote in respect of the specific agenda item but be able to participate in discussions and vote in relation to the draft Plan as Nimney House is a small part of the Plan. This was unanimously agreed.

3. Chairman's announcements

The Chair outlined that the primary purpose of this meeting was to decide whether the Plan could be recommended to the Parish Council for final submission to East Herts Council. Prior to that, a decision needed to be taken about whether the Plan should include the extension of the village boundary around Nimney House.

4. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes from the meeting held on the 16th December 2020 were approved without amendment and signed by the Chair.

5. Report on matters since the last meeting

An update on the following matters since the last meeting was provided:

i. Hopleys planning application (Chair)

Hopleys is one of the sites allocated in the Plan for housing. A planning application for 8 houses and a new commercial unit, intended for a café and shop, had been submitted and supported by the Parish Council. Although the draft Plan currently has very little official weight in these decisions, it was an opportunity to trial the assessment of a planning application for an allocated site against the full range of the draft Plan policies. The application fell short on a couple of measures compared to the site policies contained in the draft Plan, notably in not proposing a minimum of 9 dwellings, and there were some concerns from neighbouring residents about, for example, overlooking and surface water management. However, the application ticked most of the boxes and the Parish Council broadly supported it.

The draft Plan won't be changed as a result of this application as this application has not yet been approved by East Herts Council. Also, should the development not proceed, it may well be that any subsequent application would be assessed formally against an approved Plan and the policies in place for this site.

ii. Changes to draft Neighbourhood Plan (Jacqueline Veater)

Most changes had been made to the beginning of the Housing chapter following the recent response by East Herts Council to another Neighbourhood Plan in relation to the windfall allowance, namely that a windfall policy is required. The first Housing policy had been amended to provide more narrative as to how the Plan would deliver the minimum target of 54 homes, being clearer as to why the Plan could rely on a windfall allowance of 8 homes.

Other changes made related to improving the quality of the photos, additional cross referencing within the Plan, clearing errata identified and amendments to references to EU legislation.

iii Consultation statement updated (Ruth Fleetwood)

Two extra chapters had been included in the main section: pre-submission open day and pre-submission consultation. The latter includes details on how the consultation was run, the feedback from residents and how the Plan was amended as a result of that feedback.

Two additional appendices have been included: a list of all the statutory consultees in addition to the residents and all the pre-submission feedback (from both statutory consultees and residents).

6. Residents' comments

In relation to the inclusion of Hopleys in its current forms, residents raised concerns regarding the impact on neighbouring properties and the potential for overlooking, particularly for the heritage properties along the eastern boundary. The Chair noted the concerns and commented that the independent Strategic Environmental Assessment had concluded that the Plan did no harm to the environment.

The Parish Council Chair, in attendance as a resident, thanked the Steering Group for all their hard work and doggedness in response to difficulties faced over the past 5 years to reach this position. She was very grateful and hoped the villagers were as well.

A resident raised concerns regarding the development on the plot south of Culver, given that this land was now in the hands of a developer, not the original owner. A planning application has been approved for 2 houses but could this be changed to more? The Chair commented that he was aware of the change in ownership and that the Plan policies, which envisaged more than two houses, will apply once approved so it is possible.

In response to a resident's question regarding the next steps with the concerns raised, the Chair stated that there were no plans to change the draft unless the meeting's decision regarding Nimney House was not to support the extension of the boundary around it. The Plan had been written over a period of 5 years with a number of consultations. Once the draft Plan is approved, it will be submitted to the Parish Council for approval and subsequent submission to East Herts Council.

7. Nimney House

The Chair reminded those present that a paper had been circulated with the agenda outlining the reasons why the village boundary should be extended to include Nimney House, the last remaining house on the High Street that is outside the boundary.

The Chair also highlighted that it was known that the owner, a Parish Councillor, is working on proposals to add further housing to the site and Michael Byrne had disclosed his interest in that respect.

Following discussion, **RESOLVED to approve the inclusion of a policy to extend the village boundary around Nimney House.**

Note – Michael Byrne did not vote due to declared interest.

8. Review draft Neighbourhood Plan

The Chair invited final comments on the draft Plan which resulted in a small amendment to the policy MH H10 relating to the reserve site, the Barn School, namely the need to preserve the tranquillity of Oudle Lane.

The Chair then summarised why the draft Plan was ready for submission to the Parish Council:

“We have followed due process and met the statutory Basic Conditions; we have consulted widely and we have taken on board many suggestions that came out of the consultations; we have acted transparently and continuously reported our progress, slow as it has undoubtedly been; we have a Plan that meets most of the objectives that we had for it, not least of which is achieving the minimum target of 54 dwellings set by East Herts (albeit with reliance on a small windfall allowance and without a designated site for affordable housing).

We can also be satisfied that the policies for protecting our environment and heritage are each robust and practical. These policies are at least as important for the future of Much Hadham as the development policies. The Strategic Environmental Assessment by independent consultants concluded that the Plan takes a proportionate approach to delivering sustainable new development whilst protecting key aspects of the natural, historic and built environment.

All of these factors lead me to conclude that the Plan is complete and ready for consideration by the PC for submission to East Herts under Regulation 15.”

RESOLVED to recommend to the Parish Council that the Neighbourhood Plan be submitted to East Herts Council under Regulation 15.

9. Actions outstanding

Outstanding actions were noted as:

- updating the draft Plan for the amendment referred to above regarding Oudle Lane and identified typos; and
- a few changes were required to the Basic Conditions Statement.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The Chair concluded the meeting by thanking all residents who had attended the meeting as well as previous public meetings and consultations.

He also thanked each and every member of the Steering Group and the consultants from Govresources Ltd for their individual and collective hard work for over more than 5 years, noting that robust, constructive challenge had featured at each and every step of the process. Consequently, a Plan had been produced that the parish can be proud of.

Finally, the Chair reminded those present that, under the Terms of Reference, the Steering Group was not disbanded. The Steering Group would be required to manage any issues arising, on behalf of the Parish Council, right up until the referendum. That said, assuming that the Parish Council approved the Plan at its meeting on 2nd February, no further meetings of the Steering Group were currently envisaged.

The Chair thanked all attendees and the meeting closed at 8:24 pm

DRAFT