

The Hartest Neighbourhood Plan Working Group

Report for Annual Parish Meeting 30 April 2014

The purpose of a Neighbourhood Plan is to provide an approved, legally recognized planning document, which will describe how Hartest might develop as a sustainable community over the next 30 years. The Parish Plan of 2006 identified a range of issues that were important to the community, and a Neighbourhood Plan provides the opportunity to encourage real progress in these areas.

Across Suffolk there has been widespread activity regarding Neighbourhood Plans. A Plan has been formally accepted in Melton, and plans are being developed in Leiston, Saxmundham, Rendlelsham, Debenham, Framlingham and notably Lavenham,

Hartest Parish Council has delegated the development of the plan to a working group consisting of Parish Councillors and residents. The Hartest Neighbourhood Plan Working Group has met on a monthly basis through the year. Details of meetings and the terms of reference will be available on the Hartest website and the Group is open to all residents.

We have been working closely with Peter Freer, the Council Officer appointed to work with communities, to prepare and submit an application for a Neighbourhood plan. Hartest has now formally applied to prepare plan.

The Group was advised by Babergh to limit the Neighbourhood Plan area to the Hartest Parish boundary, providing the most logical and understandable boundary for local residents. Boxted Community Council was informed of the advice and the decision was made to proceed with the Hartest Parish boundary.

Babergh is now ready to start a 6 week Neighbourhood Plan Area Consultation period. Application documents will be made available to the village through the website, Contact magazine and village notice boards.

A Supporting Statement has been produced as part of the application process, which provides further background on the plan and its objectives. The Statement will be available with this report.

The survey questionnaires of May 2013 have been collated and analyzed, and a Summary of Responses is due to be approved by the Parish Council shortly. The Summary of Responses will be communicated to all residents via the village website and a printed copy circulated via Contact magazine.

The findings of the questionnaire along with the Parish Plan of 2006 will provide the basis of identifying community needs, however, continual consultation with the local community will be central to formulating the Plan.

We are about to start promoting 'exploring the village' walks to involve the community in taking a fresh and focused look at the physical characteristics of the landscape and the buildings within the village.

We have involved the younger age range in the community by setting up a competition at Hartest School, asking the children to give their views on Hartest now and in the future. We hope this will indirectly engage their whole families in the discussion.

The group is proposing events in conjunction with the village Farmer's Market, and has recently launched a Facebook page www.facebook.com/hartestplan. We continue to look at ways of engaging the community and to specifically identify groups that may not have been able to contribute.

We are also undertaking an historical review of the village, to identify some of the demographic changes over the last 30 years. We hope this will provide a context, which may help inform the proposals moving forward.

We aim to have the fact-finding phase completed by the late autumn of 2014. We then need to start summarising the findings and draw conclusions which will form the basis of the proposed recommendations.

It is important to maintain momentum, and we are aiming to draw up the Plan in 2015, however, the task of drawing up a statutory document with the clear backing of the community is complex with considerable formalities.

We would like to invite anyone in the parish who would like to join Working Group to get in contact through the Hartest website, The Parish Council or by email to scilla.turner14@gmail.com

<http://hartest.onesuffolk.net/neighbourhood-plan/>