

Discussion I

An Environmental led or Housing led neighbourhood plan?

OPTION:

A) Focus on delivering more homes to increase the population of Hartest without having regard to the local natural and historic environment

or

B) Allow the historic and natural environment to guide the amount and location of new homes in Hartest

What we know:

- There is a national shortage of new homes
- Our surveys have told us that people already living in the village want to move to homes more suited to their needs
- There is a general acceptance that new homes will be needed in the future
- The number of children attending the primary school is set to fall over the next few years
- The proportion of the village population aged between 16 and 44 is significantly lower than the Babergh average
- Hartest is designated as a “Hinterland Village” in the Babergh Local Plan and is not currently expected to take a high level of growth
- The neighbourhood Plan must make provision for at least some housing growth
- 11 new homes were built in the village between 2007 and 2015
- The centre of the village is a Conservation Area and there are many listed buildings throughout the village
- The views in and out of the village play an important role in providing a setting for the historic village centre
- The southern part of the parish is in a Special Landscape Area
- The nature of the roads and landscape around the village make it difficult to identify sites for housing that will not have an adverse impact

Which option would you prefer?

Discussion 2

Objective 1 - Conserve and enhance the landscape, biodiversity and natural habitats

What we know:

- The only statutory landscape and habitat designations in the parish are Frithy and Chadacre Woods on the eastern edge of the parish. This ancient, semi-natural woodland is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest.
- The current local plan identifies a Special Landscape Area across the district that passes through Hartest. It is based on the landscape of the upper Stour valley and its tributaries.
- The Working Group has identified a number of important views in and around the village
- The stream running through the centre of the village is locally important as a corridor for a diversity of species, but it has no formal protection
- As well as the central part of the village around The Green, there are a number of smaller groupings of houses around the parish that are separate and distinctive from the main centre.
- The trees, hedgerows, open spaces and views have been identified by residents as important features that should be protected

Option No	Option	Commentary
Option L1	Review Special Landscape Area boundary to match field boundaries	<i>The current boundary was defined in the 1980's in the Suffolk County Structure Plan. It does not follow defined field boundaries and so is difficult to follow on the ground. A review could overcome these anomalies although there is no guarantee at the moment that the SLA will continue to be designated in the emerging local plan.</i>
Option L2	Define Important views that need to be protected from development.	<i>The definition of important views into and out of the village can make a useful contribution to determining where development can or cannot take place. A number of NPs define important views.</i>
Option L3	Ensure that distinct built up areas of the villages remain separate particularly the gap between Cross Green and the main part of the village	<i>A key characteristic of the village is the historic village centre set largely around The Green and the smaller distinct groups of homes around the parish. The allowance of development along the roads between the historic centre and the small groups could result in the loss of this distinct characteristic.</i>
Option L4	Identify important open areas in the NP that should be protected from development	<i>There are locations and sites around the village where development would not be appropriate due to the characteristics of the site and its contribution to the overall shape and form of the village. Their open nature provides a setting for the village and/or a break between groups of houses.</i>
Aspiration L5	Promote projects around the parish that increase the amount of natural habitat.	<i>Surveys have identified some support for enlarging Hartest Wood and for increasing the number of features to encourage wildlife</i>
Aspiration L6	Promote additional tree planting	<i>The village is rich in woodland but without additional planting there could be long term change as existing trees die.</i>

Discussion 3

OBJECTIVE 2 - Protect and enhance the historic environment

What we know:

- A large conservation area is designated to cover not just the main built up area, but also the small groups of homes located away from the centre; and many of the fields and slopes that provide a setting for the built-up area.
- There are a large number of listed buildings and important green spaces.
- Although the conservation area status provides protection to trees within it, a number of trees are also protected by Tree Preservation Orders.
- A Conservation Area Appraisal was prepared by the District Council in 2012, but there is no associated Management Plan.
- The appraisal noted :
 - *Modern infill development.....has brought in non-traditional forms and modern materials that are less appropriate as part of a traditional Suffolk village.*
 - *Busy traffic passing through the village on the main road is also at odds with some of the traditional buildings there.*
 - *A better solution is needed to discourage random ill-considered parking and thus prevent the occasional damage to buildings very close to the road edge.*
 - *Parts of the conservation area, including around the Green, suffer from excessive overhead wiring.*
 - *The Green itself has historically been bisected by the lines of desire of tracks to various buildings around it. Care needs to be taken to ensure that the motor car does not cut it up any further.*

Option No	Option	Commentary
Option HE1	Identify non-designated areas and features within the conservation area that should be protected due to their contribution to the setting of listed buildings and the historic environment.	<i>This will provide a strong framework to resist inappropriate development in the village. However, by designating such important sites it could rightly be assumed that sites without such a designation are suitable for development.</i>
Option HE2	In addition to the landscape views, identify views that are important to the setting of the conservation area that should be protected from inappropriate development.	<i>The approach would help resist proposals on the edge of the built-up area and define areas that might be suitable for development.</i>
Option HE3	Identify additional features, such as walls, hedges and trees that are important to the character and appearance of the village and seek their protection.	<i>As with Option HE1 this provides a strong framework for the consideration of potential impact of proposals on the character of the village. However, anything missed would be presumed to be unimportant when considering development proposals</i>
Option HE4	Do not define areas or features for protection and consider the impact on character and features at the time of any application.	<i>Provides a more ad-hoc approach but avoids the risk of missing important features.</i>
Aspiration HE5	Get overhead wires on the Green put underground.	<i>This is not a quick or cheap goal but would have significant visual improvements in the village.</i>

Discussion 4

OBJECTIVE 3 - Manage the provision of housing, including affordable housing, to meet identified needs

What we know:

- The household surveys have not identified a significant unmet housing need in the village, but there is some need;
- Current policies identify Hartest as a “Hinterland” village where housing growth should be for local need;
- A high proportion of existing homes have 4 or more bedrooms when compared with other villages;
- Two thirds of residents live in 1 or 2 person households;
- One third of the population are aged over 60;
- 11 new homes were built in the village between 2007 and 2015;
- We can’t plan for less house building than the recent trend;
- House prices in the village are much higher than in nearby villages;
- The September 2015 consultation suggests that most people want 1 or 2 bedroom homes to be built;
- In the same consultation, most felt that continuing house building at the same rate as in the past is best for the village.

Housing Growth

Option No	Option	Commentary
Option HG1	Don't identify the minimum number of new homes that should be built in the village in the plan period but rely on the Babergh Core Strategy to guide the amount of development	<i>The Babergh Core Strategy provides a framework for housing growth across the district but does not specify how much will be built in each settlement but does make provision for 1050 homes across the core and hinterland villages. There is no requirement for the NP to identify the amount of growth and it could rely on policies that set down criteria for where development can and can't take place.</i>
Option HG2	Plan for a minimum number of new homes that should be built in the village in the plan period, based on the village designation of a Hinterland Village in the Babergh Core Strategy.	<i>Numbers in development plans have to be expressed as a minimum and the NP would need to set out the reasoned justification for the number that it's planning for. The Housing Needs Survey has not identified a significant unmet demand. Neither does it identify a demand for a standalone affordable housing development. Based on a continuation of the previous delivery of new homes, a figure of at least 22 new homes to 2031 has been suggested.</i>
Option HG3	Plan for an increased level of housing growth than has been experienced in recent years	<i>Taking the suggestion of 22 new homes as a base, the NP could propose an increase of this number. However, there is little support for an increase from the consultation undertaken so far in the village There appears to be little demand for development as we believe there are no house builders proposing sites in the new local plan.</i>

New Homes Location

Option No	Option	Commentary
Option NH1	Allow new homes to come forward within the context of existing local plan policies CS11 and CS15	<p><i>Policy CS11 of the Babergh Core Strategy sets out criteria by which sites for new homes will be considered. A supplementary Planning Document (SPD) has been adopted by Babergh District Council to expand on the policy and provide guidance on how the policy should be interpreted.</i></p> <p><i>The NP could rely on this policy and the SPD to guide where development could take place.</i></p> <p><i>Policy CS15 provides the principle for sustainable development in Babergh. While much of the policy addresses the detail of development proposals, it does require:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • respect of the landscape, landscape features, streetscape / townscape, heritage assets, important spaces and historic views; • development to make a positive contribution to the local character, shape and scale of the area; • protection or creation of jobs and sites • an appropriate level of services, facilities and infrastructure being available • retention, protection or enhancement of local services and facilities; • consideration of the aspirations and level and range of support required to address deprivation, access to services, and the wider needs of an aging population and also those of smaller rural communities; • protection and enhancement of biodiversity,..... efficient use of greenfield land and scarce resources;
Option NH2	Provide a new policy framework for the location of new homes in the village based on environmental capacity	<p><i>Considerable work has been carried out in the village to identify important areas, views and features that are cherished by residents and make a significant contribution to the character and distinctiveness of Hartest. This work, combined with the framework of the existing policies (CS11 and CS15 in particular) could provide a planning framework for where development could take place without actually identifying specific sites.</i></p> <p><i>This approach has been taken by Lavenham in their draft NP where sites have not been identified, although they do not have a plan to accompany the NP that identifies important sites, views or features that should be protected.</i></p>
Option NH3	Identify sufficient sites to deliver the planned housing need (at least 22 new homes)	<p><i>While this provides a positive approach to the NP, it brings with it a need to demonstrate to the examiner that the sites proposed are deliverable during the NP period (ie to 2031). It would require a “call for sites” and a predetermination by the village about the size, nature and criteria for the selection of sites. Policy CS11 provides the criteria in terms of site selection, but there is no agreement within the village as to the preferred size of site (eg small groups or perhaps one large site). This approach could delay the production of the plan as the NP group would need to identify what land is available for development through a call for sites.</i></p>
Option NH4	Review and extend the area covered by the Built-up Area Boundary	<p><i>The Babergh Local Plan identifies a “built-up area boundary” for the village concentrated around the main historic centre of the village. There is a presumption in favour of new homes being built within the built-up area.</i></p> <p><i>The preparation of the NP provides an opportunity to review that boundary and perhaps consider whether other groups of homes in the village are large enough to have their own built up area boundary.</i></p> <p><i>This approach would require early discussion and negotiation with Babergh planning officers to gauge their level of support.</i></p>

House Types

Option No	Option	Commentary
Option HT1	Provide policies to manage the size and type of new houses	<i>The background evidence identifies that Hartest has an above average number of homes with 4 or more bedrooms. It also identifies that the proportion of residents aged 16-44 is very low and that this might reflect the potential decrease in primary school children. This option could restrict new house building to smaller family homes (maximum of 3 bedrooms) in order to try and redress the imbalance. Could there be exceptions to the policy for proven local need? What should that local need be?</i>
Option HT2	Do not include housing policies within the Neighbourhood Plan, leaving market forces to decide types and sizes assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework and the Babergh Local Plan	<i>Planning policies are already in place to require a mix of house types and there is no guarantee that placing a restriction on house sizes would deliver new homes if house builders thought they would not be able to sell them</i>

Housing Delivery

Option No	Option	Commentary
Option HD1	Identify sites where a Community Land Trust housing development would be the only type of housing that could be built	<i>This is a potential approach for the delivery of new homes to meet the needs of local residents that want to remain in the village, perhaps through first-time homes or down-sizing but staying within the village. The success of the project relies on funding and land being available. The land availability requires a willing landowner to make a site available at a below market price. We are not aware of such sites at the moment, but any site must first conform to the site selection criteria for the NP discussed above.</i>
Option HD2	Allow the market to bring forward sites that accord with the wider policies of the NP	<i>The adoption of the approach in Option HN2 would be a prerequisite for this option. It would provide a positive framework for the delivery of new homes without identifying particular sites and therefore raising expectations of landowners.</i>
Option HD3	Allocate specific sites where the landowner is willing to bring forward sites and include a site framework to guide the nature and form of the development	<i>This is a not uncommon approach to site delivery and helps to provide certainty for the local community and prospective developers as to the nature and form of development. However, the option does require sites to be identified as part of the neighbourhood plan process.</i>

Discussion 5

OBJECTIVE 4 - Preserve existing and promote an increase in green spaces and provide better access to them

What we know:

- The Green provides an important and distinctive focal point of the village
- The existing local plan identifies open spaces that are important within the built-up area.
- Other green spaces around the village play an important role in providing informal and formal recreation opportunities

Option No	Option	Commentary
Option GS1	Identify existing green spaces in the village and protect and enhance them	<p><i>The current local plan (2006) identifies “Public Open Space” and “Areas of Visual / Recreational Amenity” within the Built Up Area Boundary of the village. This is not especially helpful in the light of Core Strategy Policy CS1 I which makes provision for building outside the built up area. This option would review existing designations and determine whether additional areas are of sufficient importance to warrant designation.</i></p> <p><i>Areas of Visual Amenity do not have to be publicly accessible but do provide an important function in terms of visual setting.</i></p>
Option GS2	Require additional green spaces to be provided within any larger housing development	<p><i>The existing local plan contains standards for open space provision, but it may be appropriate IF sites are to be allocated, to require additional green space to be provided within them to mitigate impacts on the natural environment.</i></p>
Option GS3	Rely on existing local plan policies and NPPF to protect and deliver additional public open spaces	<p><i>This approach would be reliant on the local plan adopted standards to deliver green space. However, if all the sites were small groups or infill, there would not necessarily be sufficient space within any one site to deliver open space. While CIL might be collected, without a site that can deliver the public open space, it will not be realised.</i></p>

Discussion 6

OBJECTIVE 5 - Improve movement to, from and around the village

What we know:

- Speeding traffic through the village is perceived to be a problem
- Road infrastructure (signs etc) detract from the distinct character and views within the historic heart of the village
- There is a good network of public rights of way around the village
- It's difficult for those that don't have access to a car to travel out of the village for work, shopping or other necessary journeys.
- There is a good network of public rights of way around the village
- The footway network along roads is poor in some places

Option No	Option	Commentary
Aspiration M1	Implement measures that reduce traffic speeds through the village	<i>This and other traffic management proposals can only be aspirations as planning policies can generally not deliver them. Delivery of this aspiration will rely on the cooperation of the County Council.</i>
Aspiration M2	Reduce the impact of roads and associated signs and lines in the conservation area	<i>Given that the centre of the village is a conservation area of the highest quality, it would be appropriate to seek to introduce measures that reduce the impact of the traffic management measures, such as the size of signs and the removal of white lines. It will rely on the County Council to deliver this initiative, although it may be possible to receive grants to implement the initiative.</i>
Aspiration M3	Improve the footway network to link homes to services in the centre of the village	<i>Parts of the village have poor connections to the centre, often with no footways besides the road. This aspiration could, however, have an urbanisation effect on the village if additional footways were provided.</i>
Aspiration M4	Improve the public rights of way network in the parish	<i>There is a good network of public rights of way around the village. Some paths are heavily used and need some upkeep while there may be opportunities to seek additional paths to fill missing links.</i>
Aspiration M5	Improve transport services to nearby towns and villages	<i>Given the high proportion of elderly residents, there is likely to be an increasing demand for transport services as people become no longer able or willing to drive. There are a number of different means of rural transport services including the traditional public bus services. This would require investigating demand and talking to service providers to identify ways of meeting the demand.</i>

Discussion 7

OBJECTIVE 6 - Support and improve the provision of social, community, recreational and other leisure facilities

What we know:

- The village has a range of facilities and services
- The primary school has recently expanded and has a capacity of 105 pupils but the numbers of children attending is projected to fall over the next five years
- The doctor's surgery is part of the Glemsford practice
- The Institute and the Church provide an important meeting venue for residents of the village and wider area
- The private play equipment in The Crown field provides an important place for the village's children and parents to meet but it is not in public ownership.
- The village does not have any formal public playing pitches or allotments

Option No	Option	Commentary
Option FS1	Seek the retention of existing shops and services (including health and education) in the village	<i>Existing policies in the Local Plan and the NPPF already seek the retention of services. There would need to be careful consideration as to whether a policy is specifically required for Hartest to address matters that other policies don't currently cover.</i>
Option FS2	Identify site for new recreation ground to serve the village	<i>The delivery of this option is reliant on a landowner being willing to make suitable land available that is in the right place to serve the village. Identifying it within the NP will be a challenge.</i>
Option FS3	Protect site for school playing field provision	<i>The County Council is seeking to make provision a playing field at the rear of the school. The NP could identify the proposed site as a proposed school playing field.</i>
Option FS4	Allocate a site or sites for allotments and/or a community orchard	<i>There is some support for the provision of allotments but land is not available and would require the purchase of land or perhaps the provision as part of a housing development.</i>
Aspiration FS5	Seek to secure a village playing field for sport and recreation use	<i>Instead of Option FS2, the NP could have an aspiration to identify a site and secure funds for a playing/recreation field</i>
Aspiration FS6	Provide a local shop	<i>This has been an aspiration of the community for some time and is still sought after by residents. It is not something that the NP could deliver through policies but it is appropriate to include it as an aspiration.</i>
Aspiration FS7	Seek more use of primary school facilities for community groups and functions	<i>Dual and shared use of existing facilities ensures an efficient use of buildings that, in the case of schools, are used for only around 70% of the year.</i>
Aspiration FS8	Improve electronic communication infrastructure	<i>Mobile phone signals and broadband internet is deficient in the village. This aspiration would require lobbying and exploration of ideas to improve service provision.</i>

Discussion 8

OBJECTIVE 7 - Ensure that the level of services and infrastructure reasonably required to meet the day-to-day needs of the village are available

What we know:

- The Primary School has capacity and the future pupil numbers are expected to fall;
- The Doctor's Surgery is part of the Glemsford Practice
- There is some capacity in the sewage works, but the pipes may require some improvements
- Broadband and Mobile Phone signals are very poor

Option No	Option	Commentary
Option FS1	Seek the retention and expansion of services (including health and education) in the village	<i>This is not suggesting that the services are under threat, but it is important that, if for some reason they did close, replacement provision is available. Existing policies are already in place in the Babergh Local Plan (CR20) and so a decision would need to be made as to whether a bespoke policy is needed or whether sites are designated where the Babergh Local Plan would apply.</i>
Option FS2	Ensure that growth does not take place unless utility services have the capacity to accommodate it	<i>This is generally applicable to most development proposals and planning permissions will often have conditions to restrict development being occupied until capacity improvements are made. Anglian Water have advised that capacity exists in the works but that, depending upon location and the nature of the proposal, some pipe improvements may be required for both supply and disposal.</i>

Discussion 9

OBJECTIVE 8 - Increase opportunities for local economic investment and growth

What we know:

- There are only limited opportunities for employment within the village;
- The village attracts a number of tourists, but there are few opportunities for overnight stays;
- Supporting local businesses helps to retain and increase investment locally.

Option No	Option	Commentary
Option EC1	Provide positive policies for the provision of employment opportunities in the village	<i>Policies already exist in the Babergh Local Plan and the NPPFG for the provision of employment in rural areas. Consideration would need to be given as to the value of a bespoke policy for Hartest.</i>
Option EC2	Include a policy for the encouragement of tourism in the village	<i>There are mixed views as to whether tourism should be encouraged in the village. The Local Plan contains a policy (CR19) that identifies how the conversion of barns to holiday accommodation will be considered. Are there other aspirations for tourism in the village that could take the form of a policy in the NP?</i>
Option EC3	Rely on existing policies in adopted local plans and the NPPF	<i>As noted above, there are existing policies in the adopted local plan to positively enable employment and tourism in Hartest.</i>
Aspiration EC4	Encourage more opportunities for overnight stays in the village	<i>This approach would require existing homes to offer bed and breakfast, the Crown to potentially offer rooms and homes to be taken out of residential use to be converted to holiday homes for renting out. Planning policies cannot address such proposals.</i>
Aspiration EC5	Increase awareness of existing businesses and services available in the village	<i>There are a number of businesses and services run from the village but it may not be generally well known amongst residents. Is there a case for a trade and service directory, perhaps on the village website?</i>

Discussion 10

OBJECTIVE 9 - Develop initiatives that enhance and increase community cohesion

What we know:

- There are a number of organised events in the village, including the Farmer's Market, Fete, Flower Show and "Harfest";
- The Village Newsletter and the village website are good sources of information;
- Residents support the forging of closer links with the Primary School;
- The village has an increasing proportion of older residents that may be in need of more support in future years

Option No	Option	Commentary
Aspiration CC1	Maintain village newsletter production and distribution	This relies on the continued contribution of articles and information and volunteers to produce and distribute it.
Aspiration CC2	Explore ways in which self-help can be extended in the village for the mutual benefit of residents	This was an aspiration in the Parish Plan and many residents think it is still relevant.