

The Hartest Neighbourhood Plan Working Group

Report for the Hartest Annual Parish Meeting 26 April 2017

Since the report in 2016, the working group has spent much of the year completing various environmental assessments and developing the draft Neighbourhood Plan. The draft plan, its policies and community actions were created under the guidance of the working group's professional planning advisor Ian Poole, with further input from Rachel Hogger on behalf of Babergh District Council.

The first full draft of the plan was sent to officers at Babergh in December, who confirmed at a meeting on 17 January that, in their opinion, the draft plan was compliant with local and national policies, and provided an acceptable approach.

On 1 March the Parish Council agreed that the draft plan could go forward to a PreSubmission Consultation. This is a statutory 6 week consultation of Hartest residents, land owners and business owners, and was launched at an event in the Hartest & Boxted Institute on 3 March.

Unfortunately, due to a technical issue, the on-line survey used to collect responses was not working correctly until 16 March, and as a consequence the consultation has been extended until 20 May, and residents and stakeholders have been informed of the issue.

On completion of the consultation, the working group is required to produce a report detailing the comments received, the issues raised and how the plan will be modified in response. While the consultation is ongoing, I can say that a number of concerns have been raised in relation to the 'Cluster' policies, and the working group has already agreed these will need to be carefully reviewed.

I should mention a recent statement confirming that Babergh no longer has a 5-year housing supply. This has significant implications, as the local plan is now deemed out of date, and for villages without an adopted Neighbourhood Plan there will be a presumption in favour of development. We are seeking clarity from officers at Babergh, but this certainly adds an element of urgency to the process.

The next stage, once the plan has been updated from the consultation, will be the submission for external examination, when residents will have a further opportunity to comment if required. If the submission is successful, the plan will be put to a local referendum, where it must be supported by at least 50% of those who vote.

In previous years, I have also reported on the related issues of a Community Shop and Highways. Unfortunately, despite pursuing several options, no progress has been made in finding a suitable site for a community shop. Thankfully, some progress has been made in relation to Highways. There is a new line layout along the Row, and Suffolk County Council are due to install some buff surfacing to further highlight the narrowest section. Furthermore, officers at Suffolk County Council have provisionally supported the extension of the 30mph zone up Hartest Hill.

Once again, I would like to thank Ian Poole, Rachel Hogger and in particular the members of the Hartest Neighbourhood Plan working group for the enormous amount of work that has gone into producing the draft plan to date.

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind everyone that the consultation on the draft plan is still open, and I encourage all residents to submit comments, good or bad, to ensure the plan continues to improve.

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