

THUNDRIDGE



PARISH COUNCIL

THUNDRIDGE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Submission Version

2018 – 2033

Consultation Statement



THUNDRIDGE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN CONSULTATION STATEMENT

1. Background

1.1 Thundridge Parish Council recognised the benefits of having a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) for the parish and committed to the process in May 2016. The parish council engaged the services of neighbourhood planning consultants Jacqueline Veater and Jed Griffiths to provide technical advice and assist in the management of the project. It was decided that a separate Thundridge Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (TNPSG) would be formed, supported by and reporting to the parish council.

1.2 The parish council publicised an initial meeting throughout the parish to gather volunteers to form the TNPSG. Some of the group who attended were parish councillors, but the majority were residents of the parish keen to help guide the future of their community. Over the course of the preparation of the Plan, various members of the group joined and left, but the purpose and direction remained constant.

1.3 The initial meeting was held on 8th August 2016 at Standon Green End Farm, at which an Advisory Committee was set up to oversee the preparation of the Plan on behalf of the parish council. A constitution was agreed and a project plan formalised and topics and issues which the Neighbourhood Plan might need to cover were discussed. During that meeting the following sub groups were formed:

- Housing
- Environment
- Facilities and Services
- Infrastructure
- Communications.

Subsequently the Infrastructure sub group was merged with Facilities and Services.

2 Consultation Process

2.1 Community engagement and involvement was identified by the Advisory Committee as a key element in the preparation of the Plan. A small Communications Group was formed, with the purpose of informing the public and arranging consultation events. Throughout the process, extensive use was made of the popular parish magazine - Village Life. To ensure maximum coverage, the issue in which the initial article about the NP appeared was partly sponsored by the parish council so that it was delivered to every household in the parish.

See Appendix 1 for copies of articles that appeared in Village Life.

Updates and information on the plan were also published on the parish council's website <https://www.thundridgeparishcouncil.org.uk>

2.2 A separate website domain (tpndp.org) was also registered - this was used to create simple URLs for publicity, which were then redirected to the relevant page on the parish

council website (see examples of this in the content of Appendix 1). An email address was made available for enquiries, and a dedicated mobile phone number was set up. Local Facebook groups were also used to publicise events and key milestones.

2.3 To further publicise meetings and other key events, fliers were delivered by hand to every household. Posters were put up in key locations around the parish, as well as several large banners (for examples of publicity see Appendix 2). Meetings of the TNPSG were publicised around the parish and were open to the public, with an agenda item specifically to allow public discussion.

2.4 At any public meetings that were held, when signing in, parishioners were encouraged to give their email address along with their permission to use their addresses in connection with Neighbourhood Planning matters. Email addresses were also gathered during the survey. These email addresses were added to a mailing list which was used to further publicise the NP.

3 Timeline

Public Open Events - 22nd & 25th Feb 2017

3.1 Once the TNPSG was formed, the first key event was an initial public meeting to communicate with parishioners and encourage involvement in the NP. Two events were held early in 2017 - one in High Cross Village Hall on Wednesday 22nd February, the second in Thundridge Village Hall on Saturday 25th February. Members of the TNPSG and the parish council were present at both events to talk with parishioners, explain more about what the NP could offer the parish and set it in an historical perspective. Local people were informed about the Neighbourhood Plan process and their opportunities to comment. They were also asked to give their opinions on the planning issues which were of most concern to them and asked to respond to the survey which was launched at the events.

Survey - March 2017

3.2 The initial public meeting was also used to prepare residents for the Survey that followed shortly afterwards. As soon as the TNPSG subgroups were formed, work began on research and design of the survey questions. The questions went through several stages of internal review, then were also reviewed by the parish council until a final version was produced (see Appendix 3).

3.3 The comprehensive survey form was set out as a series of structured questions relating to the main issues which had emerged from the initial work of the topic groups. These concerned housing, business and employment, the environment, facilities and services along with transport and parking. Respondents were also invited to contribute their general views about the parish and matters relating to its planning.



3.4 The Neighbourhood Plan Survey was printed and hand delivered by volunteers to every household in the parish, with a closing date of 3rd April 2017. An online version of the survey was also created using <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk>. Parishioners were encouraged to complete the survey online, but to ensure maximum response levels, survey posting boxes were also placed at key locations in the parish. Articles in Village Life were published to promote the survey and remind parishioners to return their completed responses.

3.5 Completed surveys were collected regularly to keep tabs on response level. Part way through the survey period, reminder posters were put up throughout the parish. The result of this sustained publicity was an excellent response of 215 - equivalent to more than 32%. A separate modified survey was also sent out to local businesses.

Survey Analysis

3.6 Once the survey responses had all been gathered, they were transcribed onto the online tool to allow analysis. Data was supplied to the subgroups and used to form the evidence base for the emerging NP.

3.7 A clear message was provided, both from the survey and the open events, about residents' concerns. The main issues mentioned were as follows:

- General views about keeping Thundridge, Wadesmill, and High Cross as distinctive communities, set in peaceful countryside
- A resistance to more housing, but support for specific types of units for local needs
- A concern about design quality in housing
- Protection and enhancement of the rural environment, including green spaces, cherished views, wildlife, and the River Rib
- A need to improve public transport
- Support for local business
- A need to upgrade broadband and mobile phone networks.

3.8 A workshop session was held in May 2017 to agree outcomes and next steps based on the survey evidence (Appendix 3a).

Vision Statement

3.9 Discussion on a vision statement for the NP was held at an early stage, but it was felt that the statement should reflect the views of the parishioners and thus could not be written at that point. The survey responses were therefore key in producing the final vision statement for the NP.

3.10 A workshop was arranged for all members of the Advisory Committee at the "Feathers" Hotel, Wadesmill, on Monday 15th May 2017 during which they discussed and agreed a draft vision for the Neighbourhood Plan.

3.11 The finalised vision statement reads:

"The Thundridge Neighbourhood Plan will guide the future development and evolution of the villages and hamlets of our rural parish over the next 15 years and retain its separation from the town of Ware. It will conserve the traditional and tranquil character of the parish, and be inspirational in planning its future and so ensuring an attractive, safe, sociable and sustainable community in which to live and work."

3.12 The vision statement was used on publicity materials and displayed prominently at all consultation events and received much positive feedback and agreement from parishioners.

Consultation Event 11th November 2017

3.13 Using the survey results and other evidence gathered by the sub groups, the NP began to take shape. A consultation event was arranged at the Thundridge Village Hall on Saturday 11th November 2017 to appraise parishioners of the progress and to gather valuable feedback on the direction the Plan was taking. The consultation event was publicised via Village Life, as well as with posters and banners throughout the parish. Offers of transport for those with restricted mobility were given, and the display materials at the event were also made available on the parish council website after the event for those unable to attend with an invitation to respond by the 28th November 2017. To focus engagement, two scheduled Q&A sessions were advertised, which worked very well to maximise numbers.

3.14 Attendees were invited to comment on the draft vision and objectives, and to express their views on various policy options. Of particular interest was the assessment by the Housing Group of potential housing sites in the parish. This was focused mainly on sites previously evaluated by East Herts Council in the formulation of the District Plan but included other sites which had been proposed by local landowners. There was also considerable interest in the local environment, and many suggestions were made for the protection of open spaces, public viewpoints, and assets of community value.

3.15 A combination of feedback forms, post-it notes and sticky dots were used to gather feedback, which was all then transcribed and fed back to the sub groups. A report of the event in the following Village Life gave an excellent "third party" view on the event and served to help keep parishioners informed and updated. See [Appendix 4] for the materials displayed at the event, [Appendix 4a] for photos taken at the event and of the materials on display showing feedback gathering, [Appendix 4b] for the transcribed feedback, [Appendix 4c] and for feedback on Housing Allocations.

3.16 The feedback gathered at this event was used to amend the developing policies, housing site allocations and green space designations. The work was largely completed by March 2018, but this coincided with the consultation on the East Herts District Plan Main Modifications.

3.17 In view of the uncertainty surrounding the Main Modifications and the issue of the final report by the Examination Inspector, Thundridge Parish Council resolved to postpone consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan policies. In early April, two special meetings were arranged between members of the Advisory Committee and the parish council. At these meetings, there was a presentation of the emerging draft policies, and a detailed discussion of the wording. Following these sessions, further work was done, particularly on the housing and environment topic areas, to complete the policies for public consultation.

Consultation Event 15th July 2018

3.18 The next public event, held at High Cross Village Hall on Sunday 15th July 2018, was a consultation on the draft policies; local green space designations and housing site allocations; and protected views. Details of the draft objectives and policies were displayed for public viewing and comment. A short survey form was also issued at the event and made available on the website. To ensure maximum engagement, a flier was printed, and hand delivered to every household in the parish. An excellent turnout was again recorded, with more than 80 visitors to the event. Feedback was gathered, reviewed and again fed back into the draft policies.

3.19 See [Appendix 5] for the materials displayed at the event, [Appendix 5a] for photos taken at the event and of the materials on display showing feedback gathering and [Appendix 5b] for the transcribed feedback.

4 Engagement with other Stakeholders

4.1 A selection of TNPSP members arranged to visit Puller Memorial School and ran some successful workshops with the pupils - gaining valuable insights into what the younger generation would like to see in the future of the parish.

4.2 The evidence base for the Plan comprises all outputs from the engagement process outlined above plus:

The evidence base for East Herts District Plan

Hertfordshire County Council

NOMIS: 2011 Census Statistics

Herts and Middlesex Wildlife Trust/ Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre

The Environment Agency

Historic England

Natural England

Local Businesses.

5 Pre-submission Consultation

5.1 The Neighbourhood Plan Pre-submission Consultation ran from 11th February 2019 until midnight on 5th April 2019. A summary document was produced and distributed to every household in the Neighbourhood Plan Area. This document contained the response form and instructions on how to respond see [Appendix 6]. The closing date on the published document was 31st March 2019 but this date was publicly advertised as being extended until 5th April to take account of a small delay in distribution of the summary.

5.2 Notification of the consultation was sent to a wide selection of consultees and stakeholders. See [Appendix 7] for letter providing the notification and the spreadsheet of consultees.

5.3 A spreadsheet containing consultation replies and the action taken in response to the replies by the TNPSG and ratified by Thundridge Parish Council and led to a number of amendments to the Pre-submission Draft Thundridge Neighbourhood Plan see [Appendix 8].

5.4 A submission draft of the Thundridge Neighbourhood Plan was produced and approved by Thundridge Parish Council on Monday 3rd June 2019 see an extract of the minutes of the meeting [Appendix 9].

6 APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Village Life Articles

Appendix 2: Publicity

Appendix 3: The Survey

Appendix 3a: Workshop slides May 2017

Appendix 4: Consultation Event November 2017 Display Material

Appendix 4a: Consultation Event November 2017 Photos and Evidence

Appendix 4b: Consultation Event November 2017 Comments and Feedback (Except Housing)

Appendix 4c: Consultation Event November 2017 Comments and Feedback (Housing)

Appendix 5: Consultation Event July 2018 Display Material

Appendix 5a: Consultation Event July 2018 Photos

Appendix 5b: Consultation Event July 2018 Feedback

Appendix 6: Pre-submission Summary Document

Appendix 7: Notification of Pre-submission Consultation and Consultees spreadsheet

Appendix 8: Spreadsheet of Pre-submission Consultation Replies

Appendix 9: Extract of Thundridge Parish Council Minutes of Monday 3rd June 2019