



Harrold NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Consultation Statement



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared by the Harrold Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to accompany its submission to the local planning authority (Bedford Borough Council) of the Harrold Neighbourhood Development Plan (“Harrold NDP”) under Part 5, regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (“the Regulations”) to explain and support the Harrold Neighbourhood Development Plan (Harrold NDP).
- 1.4 In accordance with guidance, the aims of the Neighbourhood Plan consultation process was to -
- i. ensure that all stakeholders and residents were aware of and had a say into the process;*
 - ii. ensure that the views of residents would be taken into consideration and that they (the residents) feel that the process has been open and transparent;*
 - iii. engage with a broad cross section of the community (including hard to reach and marginalised groups) and make use of a variety of methods of consultation to enable as many people as possible to give their opinions;*
 - iv. ensure initial consultation results were used to inform wider consultations at subsequent stages of the neighbourhood planning process;*
- 1.2 The policies contained in the Harrold Neighbourhood Development Plan reflect the views and responses following the variety of consultation exercises at key stages with the residents of the parish and other key consultees and stakeholders. The plan’s Vision, Objectives and Sub-Objectives are the result of these consultations and provide a comprehensive evidence base for the policies set out in the Harrold Neighbourhood Development Plan.
- 1.3 This Statement provides an overview of the consultations undertaken during the various stages of the plan, to whom they were addressed, publicity undertaken, consultation methods used and summaries of the findings of each consultation stage.

2. Background

- 2.1 In May 2016, Harrold Parish Council applied for the designation of the whole of the Harrold Parish as a Neighbourhood Area. The Parish of Harrold was formally designated as a Neighbourhood Area through an application made by Parish Council under Part 2, Section 5 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The Neighbourhood Plan area was officially approved by Bedford Borough Council on 26 July 2016, following a 6 week period of public consultation as required within Part 2, Section 6 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.
- 2.2 At the outset, a Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group was set up comprising Parish Councillors and interested local residents to take forward the development of the Plan and the Steering Group has been committed to effective community engagement at all stages of the process. The steering group prepared a Community Engagement Strategy to help

guide and structure the consultation and engagement activities as part of the plan. Consultation events were organised to promote local awareness about the Neighbourhood Plan and to find out what the community thinks about the local area, what residents thought was good, what should be changed, what could be improved. This community engagement sought to ensure that a Neighbourhood Plan was developed in tune with local needs and aspirations. A copy of the Community Engagement Strategy can be found at Appendix B and <https://harroldparishcouncil.com/np.html>

- 2.3 It was recognised that, without the benefit of local knowledge, key issues may be missed, or even worse, proposals could be developed that are at odds with local needs or priorities, leading to conflict and delay in getting the Neighbourhood Plan adopted. Harrold Parish Council therefore, used front-loaded consultation to find out what the local community thought and identified as important local issues and opportunities. Consultations and events were undertaken by Harrold Parish Council with the support of independent organisations and professionals including Regeneration Positive, Beds Rural Communities Charity, Mato Design independent town planning consultants and Bodsey Ecology Limited (habitat ecologist).
- 2.5 The consultation exercises completed set out chronologically below and are summarized in table 1 at Appendix A.
- 2.6 Residents were kept informed throughout the process with updates on feedback from the various consultation events and the returned questionnaires available on the Neighbourhood Plan page on the Harrold Parish Council website at <https://harroldparishcouncil.com/np.html>
- 2.7 The steering group met as and when necessary to discuss and to plan key stages of the neighbourhood plan. The steering group reported to the main parish council to present suggestions and recommendations. These minutes of these meetings were published on the Harrold Parish Council noticeboard and are available on the Parish Council website at - <https://harroldparishcouncil.com/index.html#council>

3. Details of consultations and events

2016 – launch event

- 3.1. On Friday 11 and Saturday 12 November a Stakeholder Consultation event was held at United Reform Church in Harrold. This represented the beginning of the neighbourhood planning process. It was organised with the aim of achieving an event that was open and accessible to all members of the local community. The launch consultation event provided details of what a Neighbourhood Plan is and the stages and timeline to take the initiative forward.
- 3.2 The event was advertised by delivering flyers door to door to each property in the Parish and posters placed at strategic places around the village. Invitees included-
 - representatives of community groups
 - *local businesses*

- *Harrold Centre*
 - *Harrold Playing Field Trustees*
 - *parents and governors of Harrold Lower School*
 - *all residents of the Parish.*
- 3.3 Over 200 people attended the launch event and shared their views and thoughts on what challenges the parish faced and how these should shape its future.
- 3.4 The event consisted of a number of posters providing details of what a Neighbourhood Plan is and the stages and timelines involved, and key questions were posed such as-
- *What do we need to retain a viable community in Harrold?*
 - *How can we make Harrold an even better place to live?*
 - *What do we value and what do we want to preserve?*
 - *What is missing in Harrold?*
 - *What do you think should be changed or improved?*
- 3.5 Details of the posters can be found at - <https://harroldparishcouncil.com/np.html>
- 3.6 Members of the Parish Council and steering group were in attendance to answer any questions, and attendees were encouraged to share their ideas and comments using 'post- it' notes which were later collated and used to help formulate the plan and inform the content of further consultation with the residents. A summary of the feedback from the event can be found in Appendix C and <https://harroldparishcouncil.com/np.html>

2017 - Initial Questionnaire

- 3.7 Taking the findings from the Launch Event the steering group compiled a number of questions. Further consultation, via a Neighbourhood Questionnaire, was undertaken during June and July 2017. The questionnaire sought views on a variety of themes –
- *Housing and the built environment*
 - *Infrastructure and access*
 - *Environment and countryside*
 - *Community facilities*
 - *The local economy.*
- 3.8 This traditional form of questionnaire enabled statistics to be produced and ideas for options, policies and proposals to be gleaned. There were 378 questionnaires completed either online or as hard copies (more than half of households). 99% of respondents identified Harrold Parish as their main residence, whilst 4% also had a work connection and 4% had a business connection with the Parish.
- 3.9 Of particular interest was the extent and location of possible new housing development in the parish and sites that had been submitted in 2014 to Bedford Borough Council for consideration as part of their initial "call for sites" process as part of their then emerging local plan created significant interest. The questionnaire helped clarify the community's views on the various topic areas. Most significantly it clarified both the preferred location

for new housing and that between 25 and 30 new homes in Harrold should be provided over the plan period (a view supported by nearly 40% of respondents). A summary of the responses received that helped formulate the plan can be found at Appendix D.

- 3.10 A further 'call for sites' process was undertaken in September 2017 by Bedford Borough in preparation of their then emerging new local plan. This resulted in a further site being presented at Town Farm in addition to the 11 considered previously in 2014. This additional site was assessed by independent planning consultants and the previously published site assessment report was revised. It did not however alter the key findings from the previous report. The report forms part of the evidence base and a copy is included on the parish council's neighbourhood plan on their website - <https://harroldparishcouncil.com/np.html>

2019 - Issues and Options

- 3.11 An issues and options questionnaire was delivered to each property in the village in July 2019. The consultation took place over an extended period of 6 weeks ending on 30 June 2019 to give all residents and interested parties a reasonable opportunity to respond. In line with the adopted Community Engagement Strategy all sections of the community were encouraged to get involved - this included personal contact with authorised representatives of the Parish Council in an effort to involve some of the "hard to reach" groups (in particular the elderly). The questionnaire could be completed and returned in either paper or electronic (email) format to encourage good levels of feedback, with general comments also invited by e-mail directly to the parish council via the clerk.
- 3.12 A number of issues were raised that were used to determine options that have been subject to consultation and which have helped shape the content of the draft Neighbourhood Plan with general support for the overarching objectives in relation to the topic areas shown previously identified in 2017 (see 3.7 above). A summary of responses can be found at Appendix E.
- 3.13 Between the 2017 consultation process and the 2019 Issues and Options consultation the Borough Council altered the time period for their emerging local plan from 2035 to 2030. This subsequently altered the housing allocation for the parish which stood at between 50 and 150 houses under the 2035 plan to between 25 and 50 additional dwellings for 2030 plan. *Policy 4S – Amount and distribution of housing development* of the adopted local plan now refers.

2020 - Regulation 14 Pre-submission consultation

- 3.14 The formal six week consultation on the draft Neighbourhood Plan took place between 18 September and 30 October 2020. This consisted of a survey consultation (paper and electronic) containing 24 questions with the opportunity to make general comments also. A public exhibition and drop-in sessions were also due to be held in the Harrold Centre to explain the draft neighbourhood plan on Friday 18 and Saturday 19 September. However, due to restrictions and safety concerns about public meetings during Covid 19 pandemic the exhibition was cancelled. Instead, the parish council offered phone and video calls to

those interested in talking to the steering group about the plan. All the exhibition material was made available on the parish council's website and local residents were alerted via Facebook. The parish council was open to inquiries by telephone and email.

- 3.15 A total of 105 responses were received from residents, 65 were sent electronically and 40 in paper form. A copy of the survey consultation and summary of the responses can be found at appendix F.

2020 – The withdrawal of the Priory Farm housing site

- 3.16 During the Regulation 14 consultation, the parish council were advised by the agent acting for the proposed housing site at Priory Farm (HNDP4) that the landowner wished to withdraw the site from consideration. This was due to them undergoing a number of changes to their overall farming business and they regrettably felt that they were unable to release the use of the land for housing purposes.
- 3.17 Based upon the feedback received during the consultations and the level of support that existed for some small-scale developments in the village to meet local need, the draft HNDP had proposed to allocate land for the delivery of 30 new homes on three sites over the plan period. The Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 required the parish to allocate housing between 25 and 50 units (adopted local plan policy 4S). The withdrawal of the Priory Farm site meant that the other two housing sites would deliver 17 new homes, 8 units short of the minimum required. The Parish Council found itself, at a late stage of the plans' development and midway through the Regulation 14 consultation, in a difficult position. Given that there was a requirement to have regard to the outcome of the Regulation 14 consultation and to amend where necessary the HNDP prior to formal submission the parish council decided that to satisfy the adopted Local Plan policy 4S – a minimum of 25 units in Harrold – the shortfall (8 units) should be reallocated to the other two housing sites. The total amount of housing at the Odell Road site (HNDP 2) has been amended with an uplift in units from 11 to 17 and Orchard Lane (HNDP 3) from 6 units to 8. This was considered to be in accordance with both local plan policy 4S and also the wider findings and feedback on the wider Harrold NDP consultation process.

4. List of consultees

- 4.1 Set out below is a list of all the local service providers, statutory consultees, councils, organisations and other interested parties who have been consulted during the various stages of the Harrold Neighbourhood Development Plan -

- Odell Parish Council
- Sharnbrook Parish Council
- Turvey Parish Council
- Bozeat Parish Council
- Carlton and Chellington Parish Council
- Podington Parish Council
- Lavendon Parish Council

- Borough Council of Wellingborough
- Milton Keynes Borough Council
- East Northamptonshire Borough Council
- Bedford Borough Council
- Coal Authority
- Homes and Community Agency
- Natural England
- Environment Agency
- Heritage England
- Highways Agency
- Marine Management Organisation
- BT Openreach
- Vodafone, O2,EE
- Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group
- Western Power UK
- Anglian Water Authority
- Franklyn Educational Trust
- Country Landowners Association
- NFU
- Bedfordshire Pilgrims Housing Association (bpha)

5. Comments received from 6 week consultation and Plan Changes Implemented

- 5.1 A total of 47 comments were received following the Regulation 14 consultation. These comments, the observations of the parish council and the subsequent changes to the plan can be found at Appendix G.

6. Topics covered across all Neighbourhood Plan Consultations

- 6.1 The following is a list of the topics covered and considered during the development of the Harrold NDP

- i. Traffic & transport*
- ii. Housing needs*
- iii. Sites put forward for development in connection with Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 (call for sites)*
- iv. Parish housing needs survey*
- v. Biodiversity*
- vi. Open spaces*
- vii. Conservation areas*
- viii. Limits to development*
- ix. Public footpaths*
- x. Flooding*
- xi. Facilities & Services*

- xii. *Energy & water*
- xiii. *Renewable energy*
- xiv. *Employment and the economy*
- xv. *Broadband*
- xvi. *Heritage assets*
- xvii. *Youth issues/ facilities*

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 This consultation statement demonstrates that the Harrold Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group as part of Harrold Parish Council has prepared the Harrold Neighbourhood Development Plan in accordance with the legal obligations as set out in the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012.
- 7.2 The foregoing statement and associated evidence demonstrates that the statutory requirements for the adoption of a neighbourhood plan as set out in the associated regulations have been met with particular regard to consultation and engagement. The Harrold NDP Steering Group as part of the parish council have made genuine and committed efforts to engage with interested parties particularly those who live, work or have a business interest in the parish and provided them with every opportunity to influence the content of the Harrold NDP throughout its preparation.
- 7.3 This consultation statement and appendices have been produced to document the engagement process undertaken through the development of the Neighbourhood Plan and is considered to comply with Part 5, Section 15 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012.