

Sutton on the Forest Parish Council

Response on consultation on Hambleton Local Plan

The parish council previously submitted their views on the further development of the village as part of the first stage of consultation on the replacement local plan. In brief we considered that the key elements for a successful development of the village which preserved its character whilst realistically meeting the demands of a changing world would be:

1. To preserve the character and appearance of the village, its conservation area, village green, Sutton Park parkland and woodlands, and the Moorend Nature reserve (The Common);
2. To preserve the spatial integrity of the linear village and avoid development which would lead towards coalescence with Huby, preserving the rural character of the village cemetery and maintaining the open rural approach to the village from the south along York Road and Carr Lane;
3. To support well designed infill development and possibly modest backland development north of Main Street where that could be achieved without additional road access directly into the Conservation Area.

The parish council expanded on these key elements at the HDC consultation for parish councillors on the initial results of the call for potential development sites. We are pleased to see that generally our views on the suitability of sites has been taken on board in the analysis of sites accompanying this stage of consultation.

The parish council have also held a village meeting to discuss all aspects of the current consultation on the replacement plan and the views expressed at that meeting are incorporated into our detailed comments below. Our comments on the plan are related to how it furthers each of the three key elements for the successful development of the village noted above.

Preserving the character of the village

The parish council welcomes the continued strong approach to conservation policy but considers that there should be a greater emphasis on enhancing existing conservation areas by working towards a clearer strategy for establishing, together with the local community, an enhancement programme for the conservation area.

It is important that the policy thrust to support green spaces and to encourage biodiversity is carried through into development control and that proposals which threaten for example the Sutton on the Forest nature reserve are strongly discouraged.

Spatial development of the village

The traditional form of the village is important to its character, as is its spatial integrity. With other villages nearby, particularly Huby, it becomes imperative that these are not simply encouraged to merge into one another. Huby has a very different and distinctive character which does not relate to the very traditional form and development of Sutton on the Forest with its village Green, ancient church and manor house right at the heart of the village. In particular, the parish council feel that it is important to maintain the rural approaches to the village and to protect them from speculative development. The area around the village cemetery should remain undeveloped to maintain both separation between the villages and to retain the open countryside which ensures its peaceful rural quality.

The southern approaches to the village along York Road and Carr Lane also need protection from speculative development to prevent a coalescence of the village with the employment areas and caravan parks to the south. Similarly, green spaces within the village, whether the village green area, the playing field and children's playground, or the grounds of Sutton Park and its surrounding woodland, should be clearly identified either by policy or site allocation to protect them from development speculation. In this context the parish council does not agree that an abandonment of the concept of a defined development boundary, and its replacement with a more flexible policy approach to largely consider development in the countryside solely on its merits, protects these sensitive open areas from speculative development either for housing or as recently experienced in the village proposals for quasi-housing luxury 'buy to let' lodge developments.

In this context the identification of a single housing site to the east of Carr Lane (E/144/001, also noted as E/144/008) is welcomed. We also welcome the rejection of the proposed housing sites E/144/005, E/144/007 & E/144/010. E/144/005 lies in open country and with the exception of the Home Farm itself is simply a collection of redundant farm buildings and an open barn. The farm buildings, if proved to be redundant, could be converted under existing policies without a specific housing site allocation. Any wider development of the site as a residential suburb would seriously impinge on the rural approach to the village, would be disconnected from the main structure of the village and an incongruous eyesore on the edge of the Sutton Park estate and woodlands.

Site E/144/007 is a landlocked open field, again disconnected from the village street network. It would extend the village into open countryside with a seriously detrimental impact on the southerly aspect of the village where at present a continuous belt of cultivated fields abuts the Sutton Park woodlands. E/144/010 is also a completely landlocked site with no possible road access without creating an extended cul-de-sac either from the entrance to Sutton Park, or through the protected garden spaces of houses in the Main Street conservation area, or from Harland Close through the children's play area and village playing fields. These are ill conceived proposals which would not get the support of the parish council.

The parish council similarly welcomes the rejection of sites E/144/004 and E/144/009 proposed as caravan parks as they would be a further intrusion into the countryside. The sites are adjacent to an existing caravan park at Goose Wood and across the road from an established travellers site and the existing caravan park at the Pondersosa. Not only would the sites be difficult to landscape being simply large flat fields but it would significantly increase the already substantial concentration of mobile homes in the area. This would have a detrimental impact on the landscape and the character of the rural area.

Proposal E/144/006 is for low density tourist accommodation. There is little or no detail of the type of use envisaged or the proportion of the current Sutton Park Estate envisaged to be covered by these luxury tourist lodges. The parish council whilst not necessarily opposed to a modest utilisation of part of this area for enhanced tourist development, and mindful of the existing touring caravan facility cannot support the allocation of the entire home park of Sutton Park for this use. We therefore support the rejection of this site and agree with the district council's reasons for doing so.

Infill developments

The parish council has noted its conditional support for some additional housing in the village. As a secondary village, albeit one without a shop, it does have a lively local community, church, local pub and primary school. Some new housing is essential to maintain the life of the village by introducing

some additional family accommodation, some affordable housing and some smaller houses suitable for the relocation of elderly residents who wish to downsize from their former substantial family houses but want to remain part of the local community. Although certainly still viable the primary school roll is falling. In this context we support the allocation of site E/144/001 and 010 though would question the limit of 10 houses considered appropriate for the site. This implies large family houses which although welcome given the limited suggested allocation for the site would preclude the smaller affordable or later life adapted houses referred to above.

Site E/144/003 to the north of Main Street has been rejected in its entirety due to the loss of open green space, the impact on the northern approach to the village along Stillington Road and the impact on the conservation area. Whilst the parish council does not disagree in principle with the need to have regard to all of these elements we consider that parts of this land may well have potential to accommodate some future housing, particularly where that met the need for smaller or affordable housing. It could be connected by footpath easily to the heart of the village and the primary school with vehicle access from Stillington Road. Whilst part of the conservation area, it is detached from the Main Street frontage. There is some potential to enhance rather than simply detract from the key features of that conservation area. We appreciate that perhaps there is not the requirement to develop this land at this time to meet anticipated housing demand over the plan period. We consider however that of all the suggested additional housing sites it has perhaps the greatest potential for limited infill which would complement rather than detract from the character of the village.

Other matters

At the village meeting to discuss this proposed local plan a number of other key points of relevance to the preparation of the plan were raised by local people. In particular, there was a consensus that new houses were necessary and that there remained potential for both infill housing and new building on the appropriate sites noted above. There was concern that land development should be focussed by the plan not just to the sites needed but to the types of houses needed. There was concern that housing market analysis seemed to be orientated to the Hambleton boundary when Sutton clearly formed part of a York housing market area and a York travel to work area. This it was felt may be distorting a realistic picture of housing demand.

Many residents remembered taking part in a neighbourhood plan a few years back and wanted to know what had happened to it and what part it had played in the development of the current proposals for the village.

Conclusion

The parish council, and those villagers who took part in our consultation meeting generally were in favour of the policies and proposals outlined in the plan subject to the detailed comments noted above. Individuals in the village and attending the meeting have been encouraged by the parish council to make their own personal representation through the council's web site. We earnestly hope that they have taken advantage of this opportunity and ask further that detailed consideration is given to our response to inform the next stage of the plan preparation.

Don Rankin
For Sutton on the Forest Parish Council
12 December 2016