

Ashford Hill with Headley Neighbourhood Plan

2021-2029

Consultation Statement

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1. Introduction and Summary

- 1.1 This consultation statement has been prepared to meet the legal obligations of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 in respect of the Ashford Hill with Headley Neighbourhood Plan (the NP). The legal basis of this Statement is provided by Section 15(2) of Part 5 of the 2012 Neighbourhood Planning Regulations which require that a Consultation Statement should:
- Contain details of the persons and bodies that were consulted about the proposed NP;
 - Explain how they were consulted;
 - Summarise the main issues and concerns raised by the persons consulted; and
 - Describe how those issues and concerns have been considered and, where relevant, addressed in the proposed NP.
- 1.2 This Consultation Statement summarises all statutory and non-statutory consultations undertaken within the local community and with other relevant bodies and stakeholders in developing the proposed NP.
- 1.3 Consultation was led by the Ashford Hill with Headley NP Steering Group (SG). The SG set out to ensure that the process was as accessible as possible to all interested parties. The SG attended various events and set up a dedicated website and email address. The minutes of the SG meetings were published on the website. Progress was communicated at Parish Council meetings, on the website and through articles in each monthly Parish magazine.
- 1.4 Other consultations took place at various stages:
- i. Presentations at the Parish Council meetings in November and December 2016 including a request for local residents to help to produce the Plan.
 - ii. A stand at the Parish fete on May 25 2019.
 - iii. Questionnaire sent to all residents with the Parish magazine in June 2019.
 - iv. Drop in sessions in Headley and Ashford Hill in July 2019 where the process of preparing the Plan was explained and residents were invited to ask questions to give them the knowledge and background to complete and return the questionnaire.
 - v. Questionnaire sent to local businesses in September 2019.
 - vi. The statutory consultation in accordance with Regulation 14.
- 1.5 Community engagement was carried out to ensure that views from the community were sought and taken into account and that the community was kept informed of progress.

2 Developing the Neighbourhood Plan

2.1 Background

- i. The Parish has a Village Design Statement published in 2004 which sets out parameters for any development in the Parish based on residents' views at that time. At a meeting of the whole Parish Council with B&DBC on 19 May 2016 Councillors were told that the Village Design Statement carried little weight under current planning legislation. The Parish Council therefore decided that preparing a Neighbourhood Plan was the best way to have a greater say in the style, type and location of any future development in the Parish.
- ii. Councillors attended the Annual NP Meeting hosted by B&DBC in June 2016 to learn more about the process from those who were already preparing their Neighbourhood Plans. Councillors then researched the matter further and met on 11 October 2016 to discuss whether to move forward with a Plan. Councillors agreed to propose the idea to the Parish.
- iii. Presentations were given at the Parish Council meetings in November and December 2016 by Parish Councillors and a local planning expert. These were advertised on the parish group email service in October 2016 and mentioned informally by Parish councillors to members of the Parish. Local B&DBC councillors were encouraged to attend to help deal with questions raised. At the meetings, residents were asked if they were interested in helping to prepare the Plan. Several names were put forward.
- iv. At their meeting in April 2017, the Parish Council approved the decision to move forward with a Neighbourhood Plan, subject to sufficient interest from parishioners to help form a Steering Group.

2.2 Neighbourhood Plan Designation Area

- 2.2.1 In September 2017 a formal application was made to B&DBC to prepare a NP based on the whole Parish as the designated area.
- 2.2.2 On 1 December 2017, B&DBC issued a letter confirming that a NP for the whole Parish as the designated Neighbourhood Area could be prepared.

2.3 Steering group formation

- 2.3.1 In the summer of 2017, the Parish Council invited members of the community to volunteer to work with Caroline Hellings on the development of the plan. Sufficient members of the community put their names forward to form a team and so the Parish Council agreed to proceed with the preparation of a plan.

2.3.2 The first meeting of those who expressed an interest was scheduled for 4 September 2017. It was also advertised in the Parish Magazine and in various locations in the Parish to ensure that we reached everyone who might be interested in helping out.

2.3.3 Following the meeting the Steering Group team was formed. Its members changed over the period of preparing the plan but the majority of team members remained constant throughout. The team has consistently included two members of the Parish Council, all other members being volunteers from the Parish. The members of the Steering Group are listed in Appendix 1 to the Plan.

2.3.4 The Terms of Reference for the Steering Group were approved by the Parish Council at their meeting on 8 April 2019.

2.3.5 Steering group meetings were held to provide direction, coordinate efforts, eliminate duplication and ensure coherence in developing the plan. These meetings, some of which had to be held electronically due to Covid restrictions, allowed for discussion, debate and feedback. They were held monthly, or as required, and the minutes were published on the Neighbourhood Plan website.

3 Identifying Good Practice

3.1 To help guide the development of the plan, discussions were held with:

- B&DBC
- Locality
- Kingsclere Parish Council
- Burghclere Parish Council
- Sherfield on Loddon Parish Council

3.2 Steering group members attended various events in respect of neighbourhood planning organised by B&DBC, HALC and Locality.

4. The Consultation Process – Time line of events

4.1 Councillors attended the Annual NP Meeting hosted by B&DBC in June 2016 to learn more about the process from those who were already preparing their Neighbourhood Plans. Councillors then researched the matter further and met on 11 October 2016 to discuss whether to move forward with a Plan. Councillors agreed to propose the idea to the Parish.

4.2 Presentations were given at the Parish Council meetings in November and December 2016 by Parish Councillors and a local planning expert. These were advertised on the parish

group email service in October 2016 and mentioned informally by Parish councillors to members of the Parish. Local B&DBC councillors attended to help deal with questions raised. At the meetings, residents were asked if they were interested in helping to prepare the Plan. Several names were put forward.

4.3 At their meeting in April 2017, the Parish Council approved the decision to move forward with a Neighbourhood Plan, subject to sufficient interest from parishioners to help form a Steering Group.

4.4 The first meeting of those who expressed an interest was scheduled for 4 September 2017. It was also advertised in the Parish Magazine and in various locations in the Parish to ensure that we reached everyone who might be interested in helping out.

4.5 Following this meeting the Steering Group was formed. A separate website and email address was created for the NP. A link to this site was added to the Parish Council website.

4.6 In September 2017 the Parish Council agreed that the NP should cover the entire parish and a formal application was made to B&DBC to prepare a plan based on the whole parish as the designated area.

4.7 On 1 December 2017, B&DBC issued a letter confirming that a NP for the whole parish as the designated area could be prepared.

4.8 The Parish Council approved the Terms of Reference for the Steering Group at their meeting on 8 April 2019.

4.9 The Steering Group had a stand at the Parish fete on May 25 2019. This had a selection of literature and maps on display and was manned by members of the Group who explained the process, why we were creating a Plan and answered questions raised by the public.

4.10 A questionnaire was sent to all residents with the Parish magazine for June 2019. Spare copies were also available in the Village Shop in Headley. Residents were asked to complete and return their questionnaire by the end of July 2019. Post boxes were placed in the Village Shop in Headley and in Butlers in Ashford Hill for completed questionnaires. Completed questionnaires could also be posted or hand-delivered to Caroline Hellings' personal address.

4.11 Notices asking people to complete and return their questionnaire and advertising the arranged drop in sessions were posted in various locations around the Parish at the end of June 2019.

4.12 Drop in sessions were organised for afternoon and evening in Ashford Hill on 15 July 2019 and in Headley on 22 July 2019.

4.13 Notices reminding residents about the drop in sessions were posted in various locations around the Parish in early July 2019.

4.14 Notices reminding residents to complete their questionnaire were posted at various locations around the Parish in the middle of July 2019.

4.15 The drop in sessions were held as planned and a number of residents came to find out more and to ask questions. On display were several maps showing the Parish, the green spaces and examples of other parishes' Neighbourhood Plans.

4.16 Many questionnaires were submitted in July 2019 as requested. However, mindful of the fact that we were doing this in the peak holiday period, the Steering Group decided to extend the deadline to the end of August 2019. This resulted in several more questionnaires being returned.

4.17 In September 2019, with the help of B&DBC and our own local knowledge, we identified as many as possible of the businesses in the Parish. These were all sent a separate questionnaire, by post or by hand, asking for their views on planning issues and the provision of facilities within the Parish. Replies were requested by 15 October 2019 either to the box in the Village Shop in Headley or by post to Caroline Hellings' personal address. A number of responses were received.

4.18 In August and September 2019, the Steering Group approached five firms of consultants asking if they were prepared to support us in our work. Following correspondence, telephone calls and interviews, Bell Cornwell were appointed by the Parish Council at their meeting on 13 October 2019.

4.18 On 23 June 2021, the statutory consultation in accordance with Regulation 14 was launched.

5 Communications

5.1 The Steering Group has had a clear aim to keep the local community informed, involved and engaged. This was carried out in a number of ways:

- Parish Council meetings. As an agenda item at every Parish Council meeting from May 2017 to date.
- Parish magazine. An article was published in each issue of the magazine from May 2019 to date, save for those months when there was nothing to report.
- Website. All minutes of Steering Group meetings and Parish magazine articles were published on the NP website
<https://ashfordhillheadley.wixsite.com/neighbourhoodplan>
- Newsletters were sent to those who signed up on the website to receive them.

6 Engagement and Consultation

6.1 Public and Stakeholder Consultations

6.1.1 The Steering Group organised and manned a stand at the Parish fete on 25 May 2019.

6.1.2 All residents of the Parish were sent a questionnaire in June 2019 and local businesses were sent a questionnaire in September 2019.

6.1.3 All residents and other interested parties were invited to attend drop in sessions in Ashford Hill and Headley in July 2019 to find out more about the process and to ask questions.

6.2 The Stand at the Parish fete 25 May 2019

6.2.1 This had maps of the Parish showing the Parish boundary, the green spaces and the Ashford Hill settlement boundary. On display were also copies of the B&DBC Local Plan and examples of other parishes' Neighbourhood Plans. A number of residents visited the stand to find out more about Neighbourhood Planning and to ask questions.

6.3 Drop – in sessions in July 2019

6.3.1 The Steering Group hosted drop in sessions in Ashford Hill Village Hall on Monday 15 July 2019 from 2pm to 5pm and from 6pm to 8pm and in the Community Shop in Headley on Monday 22 July from 2pm to 5pm and from 6pm to 8pm.

6.3.2 Information and maps were displayed on boards and copies of neighbouring parishes' Plans were available to read. Members of the Steering Group were on hand to engage with parishioners and to answer questions.

6.3.3 The purpose of the drop in sessions was to inform the community about the process, to answer their questions and to encourage them to complete and return their questionnaires. Those who attended the sessions were interested to understand the process; in particular what could be included in a neighbourhood plan and what could not.

6.3.4 Frequently asked questions included why a Neighbourhood Plan was needed when we had our Village Design Statement and how we could use the Plan to protect our Green Spaces.

6.4 Questionnaires

6.4.1 Questionnaires were distributed to all households in the Parish in the Parish magazine for June 2019 asking for them to be returned by the end of July 2019. This deadline was subsequently extended which resulted in several more questionnaires being returned. Questionnaires could be returned to boxes placed in the Community Shop in Headley and in Butlers in Ashford Hill. Completed questionnaires could also be sent by mail or by hand to Caroline Helling's personal address.

6.4.2 Questionnaires were also delivered to identified businesses in the Parish with similar return suggestions.

6.4.3 The results from the questionnaires were reviewed and summarised by the Steering Group and used as the basis for the draft Plan.

7 How the Regulation 14 Pre-Submission Consultation was undertaken

7.1 The principal purpose of the consultation was to seek the views of the statutory and non-statutory consultees within the local community and with other relevant bodies and stakeholders in developing the proposed Plan.

7.2 B&DBC kindly provided us with a list of the statutory consultees.

7.3 The Steering Group launched the Regulation 14 Consultation on 23 June 2021 with the required 6 week consultation period.

7.4 The bodies on the list of statutory and other consultees provided to us by B&DBC were all emailed a covering letter and a link to the Regulation 14 Draft Plan on the website on 23 June 2021 or a few days later when the initial email address provided proved inaccurate. B&DBC were advised of the incorrect email addresses. The formal Regulation 14 Pre-submission consultation list, provided by B&DBC, is shown in Appendix 10 as per Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 Part 5 (B) together with a note of who responded and when.

7.5 The Steering Group obtained the distribution list for the Parish magazine and hand delivered a flyer to each address on 24 or 25 June 2021 which explained that the Regulation 14 consultation had commenced, giving an overview of the key points in the draft Plan and explaining how residents could obtain a copy of the draft Plan. The draft Plan was available on the NP website <https://ashfordhillheadley.wixsite.com/neighbourhoodplan>, on the Parish Council website <https://www.ashfordhillwithheadleypc.org> or residents could request a copy by emailing ashfordhillheadley.Nplan@gmail.com. A comments sheet was

uploaded to the NP website to enable residents and others the opportunity to send their comments either electronically or to download it and complete it by hand. Again, boxes were placed in the Community Shop in Headley and in Butlers in Ashford Hill where comments could be returned.

7.6 For those who needed a hard copy, the flyer explained that they were available from Caroline Hellings, by email or by phone or available in the Community Shop in Headley or in Butlers in Ashford Hill.

7.7 The local businesses that we had identified from our own knowledge and from information provided by B&DBC were all sent a flyer, specific to businesses, by post, by hand or by email on 25 June 2021.

7.8 Using the local knowledge of the Steering Group, other long-term residents and searches at the Land Registry, we identified as far as possible owners of land in the Parish who were not necessarily covered by the efforts in 7.5 and 7.7 above. These were sent a specific flyer by post or by email on 12 or 15 July 2021.

7.9 We also asked the Newbury Weekly News to publish details of the consultation and this appeared in the paper dated 8 July 2021.

7.10 As we had hoped, the Government relaxed the Covid restrictions in July 2021 and internal gatherings were permitted.

7.11 The Steering Group therefore hosted drop in sessions from 2pm to 8pm on Monday 19 July 2021 in Ashford Hill and from 2pm to 8pm on Tuesday 20 July 2021 in the Community Room at the Shop in Headley. These sessions were widely publicised around the Parish. At these sessions copies of the Regulation 14 Draft were available, a supply of comment sheets and a handout which answered some of the most frequently asked questions. Members of the Steering Group were available to answer questions and to explain the process.

8 Regulation 14 Pre-Submission Feedback Summary

8.1 The analysis is presented in two parts. The first is the feedback from B&DBC and the second is the feedback from statutory and non-statutory consultees, residents, businesses and landowners.

8.2 In each case the response of the Steering Group to the comment is shown. The Steering Group found the responses and suggestions to be helpful and, as a result, made several changes to the Plan. The most significant changes were revisions to the existing Housing and Development Policies, to be more specific, and the addition of Policy HD4 requested by the water and waste water companies.

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