

HOUGH ON THE HILL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

CONSULTATION WORKSHOP 25th JANUARY 2014

33 people attended

The Workshop was focussed on the key issues identified so far as relevant to a Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish, including some of the ideas and proposals emerging from analysis of the 'evidence' gathered to support the Plan, the Landscape Character Assessment, and issues identified from previous consultation.

After a short presentation from the Chair of the Neighbourhood Planning Project Team, participants divided into three discussion groups, broadly tasked to focus on:

- Access & Amenity
- Enhancing Enjoyment of the Countryside
- Development & Design

Their deliberations, and the views people expressed, are summarised below:

GROUP ONE: Access & Amenity

Two sets of notes were kept, as follows:

Notes Set One:

The subject that most people regarded as top of their priority list was road safety, with speeding lorries using the roads as through routes being the aspect most people were upset about. Potholes in the sides of the road have cost us all money in tyre replacements, and the verges are being cut up by cars and lorries avoiding each other.

Road widening was vehemently opposed by all, and reducing speed limits was generally approved of, but with some doubts that motorists would take any notice.

Footpaths etc were discussed. TL explained the concepts of field margins, public footpaths and permissive access. There was no call for more footpaths to be made available, but there were several complaints that the marking of existing footpaths has gaps in the signage, which makes it difficult for walkers to follow the paths. (From what I have seen locally, I would agree). That may or may not be connected to TL's problems with ramblers and dog walkers roaming all over the farmland with no apparent attempt to use public footpaths.

"Affordable" housing was discussed, but due to there being no bus service, shops or school for the village it did not seem a suitable location for affordable housing.

There was support for development of a small number of owner occupier starter houses, to accommodate the children of local families, but that was thought to clash with CC policy. Nevertheless, there was agreement that some means of accommodating younger people was needed to prevent the village population contracting further. The practice of knocking two semi-det houses into one larger house was discussed, and TL pointed out that the population had reduced from about 640 to about 440 over the years.

Renewable energy was discussed. Wind turbines, and obtrusive roof mounted solar panels were objected to. Land based solar panels were preferred. Although a community solar scheme was looked upon favourably, no location could be suggested.

Notes Set Two:

1. Road safety

Concerns about the condition and speed of traffic on the roads in the parish. A consensus that no-one wanted to see the roads widened, but would like to see speed limits introduced. Particularly along the C001. Some people were in favour of introducing flashing lights at the worst spots on the C001 to indicate the speed a car was travelling. Improvements to the edges of the roads, particularly addressing the pothole problem. There was some support for introducing passing points on certain roads. I know this is more a Parish Council and Highways issue....but there was some very strong views!

2. Footpaths

The key issue here seemed to be education and signage. Many people were unclear of where the footpaths were, with some people avoiding taking the signposted route because it took them across ploughed/planted fields. This made it both difficult under foot and many had concerns about damage to the crop. Many footpaths go diagonally across farmland and were not always well maintained by the farmer. A question was raised as to why footpaths

were not routed around the edge of fields – TL explained that if that were the case they would be the responsibility of SKDC rather than the landowner, so unlikely to happen. It would be good to work with local landowners to improve awareness and accessibility of footpaths.

3. **Loveden Hill**

Discussion about the designation (BOAT) of the track around Loveden Hill. All the group wanted to see this returned to a footpath and bridleway only. The 4X4's and motorbikes have damaged the track and made it unusable for walkers and horse riders. And in most cases it is being used by motor clubs and vehicles from outside the county.

4. **Renewable Energy**

Nothing to add to Roger's comments. Although I think a small community based project would have a lot of interest locally if a site could be identified (Temple Hill????). Most within the group disliked the roof top solar panels, based on the visual impact. There was a discussion about encouraging other types of domestic renewable energy, such as ground source and biomass

5. **Affordable housing**

All within the group wanted to see some small scale development of 'affordable housing' within the parish. Not large estates, but one or two houses in each village to attract young couples to the parish. There were concerns expressed that all 3 villages had few low cost houses and that it was difficult to attract young families to the area, meaning an increasingly aging population and absence of young children. No potential sites were identified. Nor was there any view about whether development should be within the current village boundaries or beyond. The fact that we are not on a bus route was mentioned as a reason for the lack of development...perhaps this should be re-visited?

6. **Local Amenities**

Seemed limited support for a hard surface play area in Hough....particularly as there is a declining number of children in the parish. Some in the group liked the idea of a communal tennis court, but felt the money could be better used elsewhere

7. **Protected areas**

Residents in Gelston wanted to see the green protected. No building/structures on the green and the pinfold and cross protected.

GROUP TWO: Enhancing Enjoyment of the Countryside

1. Loveden Hill(LH) and Local Green Space(LGS):

AW: Landowner around LH. He was annoyed about the article in the Grantham Journal which he felt gave the impression that he didn't look after the area. He has managed the area for 35 years, maintained the hedges, loves it, owns it; has allowed permissive access and is also interested in the archaeology. He wanted to know why the situation needs to be formalised and what advantages would come from designation as a LGS which he felt would be a waste of public money when local informal arrangements should suffice. JH supports AW.

SM: Asked what the ramifications LGS designation would be.

MT: A letter was sent to landowners of LH prior to this consultation and AW confirmed he had received that letter. The NP team wish to consult with the landowners and letters and phone calls had already been received from other parties.

The 2011 Localism Act enables communities to identify a special place and previous consultation revealed that people recommended LH. It doesn't affect owner's rights to farm the land and bestows no access rights to the public.

It is therefore appropriate to protect the space as it is what people want and ensure that the planning system recognises it as stewardship might change in the future. The issue, within the NP, will go to a vote and if the proposal goes forward there are several more stages of consultation via the Parish Council and the Local Authority. Landowners can have a say at any time.

RK: Apologised for any offence the journalists in the newspaper article caused and it was agreed that the NP team would meet with the landowners to sort out any problems. RK would send AW documents about what had been done to date.

2. Open Spaces in Villages

JW – keep green fields in villages and protect against housing/development.

RK and SM – Gelston Green has been protected since 1970's

SM - EN6 was a SKDC policy to protect 'open spaces' eg The Wilderness and a similar policy needs to be continued and reappraised in the NP.

SM wondered if The Wilderness could be a brownfield site as cottages may have been there in the past but have long disappeared. Similarly PS mentioned the field in Gelston opposite the Green where he was refused permission to build a house for his daughter. LW said it was one of the most beautiful open areas in Gelston.

RK wondered if people wanted to keep for example a green field in Brandon where sheep graze as 'open space'

SL felt 'open space' should be balanced by designating land that could be approved for development to grow the village, even if it was in the future.

3. Affordable Housing

SL - Hough was dying and there is a need to encourage jobs/businesses.

MC wondered where would be suitable for affordable housing.

RK said that no facilities will return and there could be no new development except justifiable affordable housing on brownfield sites. *

SL agreed Caythorpe was the village with facilities and would therefore be a more sensible place for affordable housing development. In the past there has been great opposition in Hough for any housing development. AW said that we need cheaper housing spread out around the area and not all in big estates in towns and bigger villages..

MT – SKDC will only allow housing that is ‘affordable in perpetuity’ and would require a housing need assessment. For example, if a SKDC need was identified the Parish Council could take on the role promoting a Community Land Trust where land is donated and income generated from ground rent goes into a community fund.

SL wondered what the views of the Parish Council were and felt it needed to be less reactive and more pro-active

AW asked where do we as a parish want houses.

RK - people and landowners need to give ideas and a plan created with regard to services that could be put to SKDC.

RK invited landowners and people to the Parish Council meetings and to meet the NP team.

4. Footpaths

RK introduced the issues of condition and need for circular routes. The NP creates an opportunity for villagers and landowners to get together to create a sensible permissive system which could also stop people walking where they shouldn't.

SL/AW In 2016 the government's environmental payments for field verges and permissive access stops and landowners could pull out.

SL – need some give and take. Close some paths if open others up.

SL/PS Footpaths across fields and corner to corner are nonsensical and might be better routed around the edge. SL has 5 miles of footpaths in Hough parish.

RK raised the question of signs, eg ‘dogs on leads’, ‘avoid young crops’. The general view was that signs get vandalised or blown away and nobody takes any notice.

AW felt changing footpaths was a nightmare of bureaucracy and would only cooperate if LGS removed.

JS felt a compromise is needed and the legislative route is too involved.

SM thought there would be a cost to such changes as they are formally recognised, on OS maps etc

Others felt that as the footpaths were hundred of years old some changes to modern needs seemed sensible.

RK said there was a desire from for the Parish Council to improve the situation.

5. Unclassified Road from Gelston around LH

Concern was expressed at the speed and use of the track by 4x4's and motorcyclists most of whom were from outside the area.

SM There are few green lanes left so the activity is concentrated.

JS The track is being carved up and is now dangerous for other users – horse riders and walkers – as well as for PS whose farm machinery gets damaged. No-one wants the track tarmaced as that would encourage other traffic to cut through.

MC wondered if a sleeping policeman at the Gelston end would stop the 4x4's shooting out at speed which is dangerous to any children playing there. Others thought it might present an off roading 'challenge' and use it to 'jump'.

RK maybe Lincolnshire County Council could be approached to change the use to a bridleway with a barrier to prevent motorised vehicles.

There was consensus agreeing the proposal.

6. Nature

RK Do we require seating at some viewpoints or boards explaining the wildlife?

SM – would be on someone's land or highway verge and permission would be needed.

SL– the sentiment right but seats need managing, problems with litter are created

LW – is hedge cutting done to minimise damage to nesting birds.

PS – Yes, except where dangerous on the roadside.

RK Is signage required to prevent trespass?

PS Signs have no effect and get snapped off.

AW there are enough signs, they get knocked down, need to minimise signs.

NOTE: Temple Hill Restricted Byway denies use by mechanically propelled vehicles.

GROUP THREE: Development & Design

JH led the group and briefly outlined the types of issues that the subject covered. There was discussion that confirmed where the conservation area in Hough is and fact that both Gelston & Brandon are not covered by this conservation area.

Comments that came from the discussion are as follows: (not necessarily in any cohesive order)

Affordable housing is a barmy idea.

Towns are dying, it is Grantham that needs housing and investment and its those areas that should be encouraged.

Villages need young people – some housing would encourage new people in

Average age is lower now than its ever been

Pretty villages encourage people so must not be spoilt so a design code is important which keeps the integrity of villages.

There is no transport/road structure so housing is unlikely because of transport issues

Most people don't want affordable housing

You can't stop people coming to these areas and protect everything change has to be allowed.

People don't move into Mayfair if they can't afford it.

Would be good to protect things like the chimney pots on Carlton Road, Hough

Some structures have already been suggested ie Hough Grange, Brandon Lodge, there are groups of buildings which have a long history so the NP could include a positive building listing.

There were no other suggestions from the group.

It was suggested that perhaps design codes should be put in terms of what people don't want. ie not exclude contemporary design but encourage design that "fits" into the landscape.

As long as its fit to live in does anyone care?

"I don't want someone to demolish a nice house & put up a 3 storey house.

Plan could encourage guidelines in respect of hedgerows to encourage people not to rip out hedges in favour of other boundaries such as fencing. Planting of native species should be encouraged and native species should not be taken out.

Character changes should be limited. New housing should not be "plonked" in the middle of older houses otherwise villages end up looking like new estates with old houses "plonked" in the middle of them.

Solar panels/satellite dishes look awful on some properties in Gelston

The problem with trying to preserve villages as they are is that the way we live today is totally different. We don't have toilets down the garden anymore. I can't see how you can keep it the way it is. You've got to allow change to allow families in.

It hasn't been suggested that we don't change, just that we make suggestions to encourage people to make that change in a positive way that fits with the current landscape.

In Hough in 21 years every house has been massively extended, mostly in positive terms and good practice has been shown, look at the property on the way to Caythorpe (the Kennels) it has been completely rebuilt and looks brilliant.

Some villages are using land they own to build small amounts of affordable housing and the parish works with housing associations so that they take an income from ground rent and the housing remains affordable in perpetuity. This can be seen as a good thing.

Playing field is underused due to a lack of young people in the village.

Views are disappearing because of the height of trees and hedges. The views are wonderful and should be preserved as much as possible.

Tracks should be improved for cycling and running.

Signage of permissive rights of way should be much more evident. Also if the wildlife corridors had signs people would be aware that they shouldn't walk on those areas.

It is not obvious where the Viking way is – it is not signposted.

Plan should include maps of wildlife reserves, ponds & other key sites that can be joined together by footpaths, byways.

Passing lanes on verges could be encouraged.

Roads should not be widened as that encourages traffic.

Every house should have solar panels but only the ones that look like tiles and not the ones that people are installing now.

All renewable energy is totally uneconomic. Wind farms don't work unless they are subsidised.

Wind farms are difficult to position in our landscape.

Solar panels can be put on agricultural buildings such as grain stores. There is no need to use arable land for solar farms.

It is difficult for farmers as the people they supply want carbon neutral suppliers. Therefore farmers are finding it necessary to install renewable energy in the form of solar panels and turbines to meet this demand.

We must keep away from Industrial wind turbines.

Don't want anymore Pylons, they look awful. Most LCA's state that the cables should be sunk underground we could encourage that.

We need renewable energy that is not subsidised.