

3 LOCAL CONSULTATION TO FORMULATE THE PLAN

How Have Local People been Involved in Preparing the Plan?

50 Local residents, landowners and businesses within the Parish have been consulted on their views throughout the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan. Full details of all the activities undertaken are contained within the separate 'Statement of Consultation' submitted alongside this Plan. The main findings, and the key issues identified, are summarised as follows.

Initial Consultation (June 2013)

51 At the start of the process for compiling a Neighbourhood Plan every household and business premises in the Parish was sent a questionnaire (in June 2013) asking for initial views. A total of 28 questionnaires was returned which, whilst a small percentage of the population, provided a helpful steer on some of the main issues, as summarised below:

a) Landscape and Local Character

It was clear that people's main focus was on the importance of the landscape, its tranquillity and unspoilt character.

b) Housing and New Development

It was clear that those who responded did not want any change to the size of the villages, or to their look or feel. There was support for heritage and conservation measures, and for tighter controls of new build and conversion designs. Concern about wind farm development featured highly, and also dislike of motorsport noise, and generally people indicated that they did not want any large, industrial or noisy developments.

c) Road Safety

There were quite a few comments relating to roads and transport. The physical condition of the roads and road safety issues in particular figure quite highly, along with concerns about through traffic and speeds.

d) Facilities

There were several responses relating to community facilities, especially sports provision.

e) Other Issues

The most consistently raised issue was the need for improved Broadband provision.

Issues Consultation (January 2014)

52 In January 2014 a four-sided leaflet was delivered to every business and household in the Parish providing an overview of the emerging issues and identifying areas of concern about which further opinions and views were sought. The leaflet contained a Questionnaire, and also advertised a Consultation Workshop open to all to attend. The Workshop took place on 25th January in All Saints Church, Hough on the Hill and was attended by 33 residents (including some of the local landowning farmers).

53 The table below summarises both the Questionnaire and Workshop outcomes and shows an emerging consensus on most issues apart from **new housing development** where opinion was almost equally divided. There was also less consensus on two other issues: whether the Parish should create a ‘**local list**’ of positive buildings and structures in the villages; and whether the Parish should be doing more to promote small-scale **renewable energy**. Both of these issues achieved approximately two-thirds support in the Questionnaire responses, with one third opposing.

Issue	Commentary
1 Design Guidance	Almost universal support for this from the Questionnaire responses (33 in favour and only 2 against). From the Workshop discussions, people would seem to favour a positive approach rather than just listing what’s not permitted, and an approach that does not rule out modern design. Hedgerows were also raised as important at the Workshop.
2 Valued unlisted structures	Majority support for this proposal in the Questionnaire responses, although quite a few against it (20 in favour and 10 against). Much of what people have suggested is in fact already listed, or identified within the SKDC Conservation Area 2014 Draft Review.
3 Recreational hard-surface facilities on the Playing Field	Majority support for this proposal in the Questionnaire responses (23 in favour and 6 against) However, one of the discussion groups at the Workshop were not supportive of the proposal. Some people didn’t support it because they felt it wouldn’t be used, or they wouldn’t themselves use it. Suggestions for other areas for recreational facilities not put forward.
4 Improved Access to the Countryside	Very strongly supported by the majority of respondents to the Questionnaire (30 in favour and 3 against) and the issue featured strongly in the Workshop discussions with widespread support. However, the challenges currently faced by our local farmers because of walkers and others not adhering to footpaths was also raised. Improved signage was suggested as a helpful approach for walkers and farmers alike. Several people have also strongly objected to the current status of the Loveden Hill track (which is a Byway Open to All Traffic), asking if this could be changed so that it is open to walkers and horse riders only.
5 Local Green Space	Almost universal support for the designation of Loveden Hill as a Local Green Space in the Questionnaire responses (32 in favour and 2 against). Several other areas also suggested, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the old Priory field in Hough on the Hill - the Wilderness in Hough on the Hill - Bosom Hill - Fox Wood - old quarry workings to the east of Hough - Brandon village green adjacent to the church - Protection Wood
6 Affordable Housing Development	Views on this issue are almost evenly divided (16 in favour and 17 against). Most of the people who support the provision of more affordable housing do so because they want a balanced community. Those against do not believe the villages are appropriate locations because of lack of public transport and other facilities. (NB it is apparent that the term ‘affordable’ was not fully explained, and some people think it means lowcost homes for sale.) One of the discussion groups did favour allowing one or two owner occupier starter houses to be built, affordable to young couples, in each of the villages. Inevitably some people also raised previous planning applications they have made for development that have been refused.
7 Renewable Energy Provision	There is majority support in the Questionnaire returns for small-scale renewables, but only if they are not visually intrusive (21 in favour and 12 against). Some people also remain opposed to energy schemes that are unviable without subsidy. Community-energy schemes were seen as favourable at the Workshop and at the Workshop it was commented that the need for farmers to be ‘carbon neutral suppliers’ means they are finding it necessary to install renewable energy in the form of solar panels and turbines to meet this demand.
8 Roads & Transport	Quite a lot of support at the Workshop for trying to get speed limits (and weight limits) down on the COO1, or some more electronic warning signs. Also support for continuing to do press for action on potholes and verges – but absolutely no support for road widening. There is some support for the creation of passing lanes on verges.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AIMS, OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGY

54 The aims and objectives of the Neighbourhood Plan have been formulated in response to the consultation findings as summarised above, flowing directly from the key issues and concerns identified:

The Aim of the Plan:

55 The primary purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan will be to set out a vision for the evolution and longterm sustainability of the Parish's historic and built environment, protecting its rural landscape character and guiding appropriate and sensitive future development.

Objectives:

- Promoting sensitive development which protects and enriches the landscape and built setting of the Parish
- Prioritising local distinctiveness in every element of change and growth
- Protecting jobs, supporting sustainable economic development and local businesses
- Protecting greenspace, and supporting nature conservation and biodiversity
- Encouraging energy efficiency and, where appropriate, energy production from renewable and low carbon sources
- Improving recreational opportunities for residents and visitors of all ages to enjoy
- Seeking improvements to transport, utility infrastructure and digital connectivity
- Involving local people in an ongoing process of plan-making, monitoring and delivery

The Plan will cover the time period **2014 to 2026**.

56 Taking the core issues arising from consultation, and including the findings and recommendations of the Hough on the Hill Landscape Character Assessment, the Neighbourhood Plan will focus on the following approaches:

- The rural setting and landscape character of the Parish will be sustained and enhanced through policies designed to protect views and key features, promoting economic and recreational value and protecting heritage and conservation.
- Design guidance will promote sensitive change and enhancement to existing buildings and inform appropriate small scale development on brownfield sites.
- The importance of Loveden Hill, both historically and as a key feature in the landscape, will be highlighted and protected through its designation as a Local Green Space.
- New leisure and recreational facilities will be supported for appropriate locations.
- Local renewable/low carbon energy schemes and community-led initiatives to generate energy, save energy and/or reduce energy costs will be encouraged, providing there is no visual intrusion into the area's historic or landscape character.