

Response to letter received from 61 residents

The Neighbourhood Plan was put out for consultation under Regulation 14 of the National Planning Framework. An overwhelming majority of respondents to the consultation responded in a positive and constructive way, expressing support for the plan. None of the statutory consultees identified 'serious omissions and failures'. The only negative responses have come from a small number of parishioners.

The Swinford Neighbourhood Plan is still at draft stage. At our March NPAC meeting we agreed to revise the housing numbers for the Lutterworth Road site. **The section of the plan dealing with the housing proposals for the village is being re-examined and revised and that work is already well underway before the letter was received.**

In response to the specific points made in the letter:

1. *'The NPAC failed to consider or comment on the planning application for 9 houses on a site south of, and excluding most of, the original SHLAA site at "The Berries".'*

The NPAC was not asked to consider the application for 'The Berries' and had no remit to do so. The planning application was submitted before there was a draft plan, the Parish Council was consulted and commented on the proposals. Planning permission for part of the site has existed and been renewed over a number of years. There is no history of objections being raised by parishioners.

2. *'No account has been taken of the possible contribution that "The Berries" original SHLAA site and other infill sites can contribute to Swinford's housing allocation.'*

This is plainly incorrect. Account has been taken of 'The Berries' site and the nine houses that it will provide are part of the 48 proposed target that we had been working to. This meant that we had to find land for a further 39 homes. We have been advised by Harborough District Council that the National Planning Framework will not allow us to include any further possible 'windfall' sites as part of the calculation, these must be in addition to the total. This change occurred during the process.

3. *'The allocation of 48 houses has no explanation as to how this was arrived at. In two consultations in the village about 1/3 of responses did not want any more houses and about 1/3 wanted no more than 30, i.e. , the minimum of the range of options, if the village had to have any development. The proposed 48 is contrary to this view.'*

In recognition of the responses to the original questionnaire the NPAC have consistently worked for the lowest possible number of additional houses and certainly no more than indicated by parishioners in the questionnaire. Early on in the process HDC confirmed to us that the views of the village regarding no more than 30 houses would be viewed as sentiment and not as evidence that would justify a lower target. Advice was taken from HDC and the consultants that we have been working with, and we considered the options that HDC outlined in its draft Local Plan of 2015. HDC initially outline 9 options in 2015, and over the years have reduced this to 4. The targets related to each of these options has changed many times, although these changes were not in the public domain. As we have already explained at our meetings, in January 2017 we were provided with the latest draft allocation for all HDC districts which indicated that the target would be at least 48 for Swinford under any option – we therefore used this in the draft Neighbourhood Plan. **It should be noted that HDC will publish the final allocations by 10 June 2017 and we will then address this number in the final plan.**

4. *'In addition a majority of responses wanted a number of smaller developments, not one large one. The NPAC has opted for one large site to meet the remaining requirement of 39 dwellings (excluding the planning permission for 9 houses at The Berries) which is the opposite of the wishes of the village.'*

We have always recognised (as anyone who has attended our meetings will attest to) that the village did not want a big housing estate. However, there were only a certain number of sites available to us. Simple maths indicated that we must allocate at least one larger site to achieve the target. We are pleased to note that a further three sites, on Shawell Lane, Kilworth Road and Rugby Road, have been identified and are being assessed. This will change the options available to us.

5. *'HDC has confirmed that they are still examining 4 options for housing allocations and the final figures will be released in June. None of these allocate 48 houses to Swinford, and the preferred option of the HDC LP Task Panel would only allocate 36 houses to Swinford. If the "The Berries" planning permission is deducted this leaves a residual of 27 – not much more than 50% of the current NP proposal if potential infill is allowed for.'*

This is based on out of date information produced in 2015 by HDC. We have much more up to date information from HDC which is not yet in the public domain, and which has formed the basis of our proposals to date. It should be noted that in the email to Hayward Underhill from HDC (which includes all the options, including the one allocating 36) it is stated: **'The consideration of preferred options is still ongoing'**. Unfortunately, this has been ignored by the [unnamed] author of the letter for some reason.

6. *'The majority of respondents also quoted a lack of a shop and bus service as the reason for not wanting any, or only limited development. They also said that if we had to have more development it was important to have these facilities. The draft NP does not address these issues and is silent on any S.106 contribution to village services and affordable housing.'*

It is not the remit of a neighbourhood planning committee to provide for bus services or village shops, we have been informed that the Plan would be rejected if we made provision of these services a planning condition for the chosen sites. If these services are to exist then there has to be a commercial, business case for them. If the village had a bus service and a shop then its target housing numbers would be much higher (as is the case in North Kilworth which has these services, they will have to provide sites for a greater number).

7. *'In the supporting documents there is no reference or record of which landowners were met by the NPAC, no Agendas, and no minutes. We request copies of these under the FOI Act.'*

All of the landowners of the SHLAA (Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment) sites and the additional sites that came forward during the process were invited to meet with members of the housing group of the NPAC to discuss the independent sustainability assessments carried out on those sites. Two of the landowners accepted the invitation. The outcomes of the meeting were reported to NPAC and the Parish Council. One of the landowners requested that minutes were not published due to the sensitive nature of the discussions and we have acceded to that request.

8. *'There is no evidence that the NPAC examined or considered housing sites other than the original SHLAA sites. There are a number of other infill or "rounding off" sites that are arguably less damaging to the form of the village than the one proposed.'*

There is plenty of evidence demonstrating that NPAC has considered other sites, including two new non SHLAA sites that came forward for consideration. Landowners have had many

opportunities to put their land forward for residential use. This started with the formal SHLAA process led by HDC, but during the Neighbourhood Plan process they have, as statutory consultees, been appraised of all meetings, open events, sustainability reviews on their land, and invited to comment on the draft Plan itself. During the process one of the local owners came forward with additional sites even though it was not in the SHLAA process. We are pleased to tell you that a further three sites, on Shawell Lane, Kilworth Road and Rugby Road, have been identified and are being assessed. This will change the options available to us.

9. *'The Housing proposals have no credibility because the area and capacity of the Lutterworth Road site is wrong. The NPAC appear to have relied entirely on HDC information and have not checked it themselves. It should be fundamental for the NPAC, or its paid Consultant to ensure accuracy in the Plan as this will ultimately be a legally binding Document...It is no good blaming HDC, it is not their Plan and they are not producing it.'*

The measurements of the site on Lutterworth Road were wrong. This was due to a mistake made by HDC which was not recognised until a neighbour of the site raised a query. The housing group did question the capacity of the site on several occasions but the mistake was not confirmed until statutory consultation stage. We are all willing volunteers working on behalf of the village and in the best interests of the village, we hope that it is recognised that we have also got a lot right in this plan.

We are working in collaboration with HDC because Swinford's plan, if accepted will become part of the District Council's Local Plan. The District Council must work within the framework provide by Central Government and the Parishes must work within the National Framework and the District Local Plan. It is Swinford's plan and it will become part of HDC's plan.

If the plan fails, either because it is rejected by Harborough District Council (because it fails to comply with the National Framework or the Local Plan) or it is rejected by Parishioners at referendum stage there will be no second chance. We cannot submit a revised version. The Parish would then be open for developers to build wherever landowners were willing to sell and the District Council will permit. The village would have no say.