



Consultation Statement



Neighbourhood Plan referendum version

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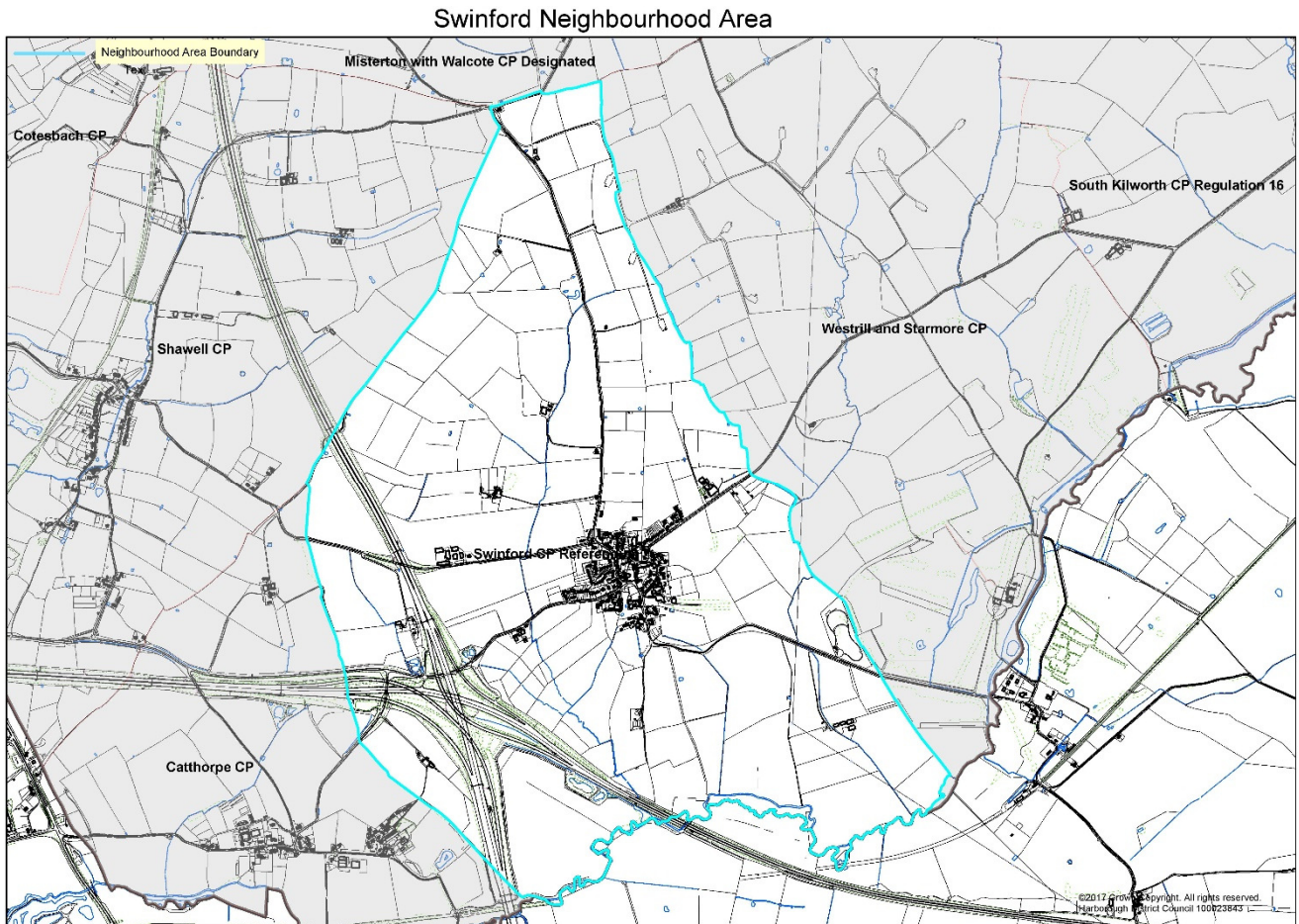
1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Consultation Statement has been prepared to fulfil the statutory requirements of Part 5, Section 15(2) of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012.
- 1.2 At the start of the neighbourhood planning process, members of the community were invited by Swinford Parish Council (SPC) to an open event in the Village Hall on 11th February 2015. The purpose was to share information about neighbourhood planning and to establish levels of support in the community. The event attracted over 70 people, those who attended overwhelmingly supported the development of a plan.
- 1.3 At its meeting on 3rd March 2015, Swinford Parish Council decided to proceed with the process of developing a Neighbourhood Plan (NP). This was followed by the creation of the Neighbourhood Plan Action Committee (NPAC), working as a sub-committee of the Parish Council, and the appointment of YourLocale as Neighbourhood Planning Consultants to support the NPAC.
- 1.4 Throughout the development of the NP the philosophy has been to seek to achieve the fullest possible consultation and engagement with the local community. The result has been a level of consultation and community involvement in excess of statutory requirements.
- 1.5 This document provides a detailed record of all aspects of the consultation and local engagement at the various stages of the development of the NP.

2. NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA AND DESIGNATION

2.1 In March 2015, SPC approached Harborough District Council (HDC) with an application for designation as a Neighbourhood Plan area. The Portfolio Holder for Planning Services approved the application on 6th May 2015. The area to be covered by the Neighbourhood Plan is delineated by the parish boundary shown on the map below.

Figure 1 – Designated Area
Swinford Neighbourhood Plan Designated Area



3. CONSULTATION

3.1 This section of the Consultation Statement provides details of the various means used to both inform and gain evidence from local people and stakeholders throughout the process.

3.2 QUESTIONNAIRE

In January 2016, a questionnaire (Supporting Document 8) was distributed to the 233 households in the parish. In total, 168 copies of the questionnaire were completed and returned, representing a return from 72% of households. The data from the returned questionnaires was analysed (Supporting Documents 9,10 and 11) by the NPAC and used to determine the context and requirements of the project.

3.3 OPEN EVENT 1 (APRIL 2016)

An Open Consultation Event held on 14th April 2016 set out the context and stages of the project and asked those attending to give their thoughts about Swinford. Presentation slides from the event can be found in Supporting Document 12. Over 60 people attended. An analysis (Supporting Document 13) of the event is included in the evidence base. The views expressed by the residents were used to shape the strategy in preparing the NP.

3.4 NPAC AND THEME GROUPS

Following the Open Event in April 2016, a number of members of the community expressed interest in contributing to the huge task ahead and volunteered to become part of 'theme groups' to explore the detail of the NP; to build the evidence base and to lay the foundation for the draft NP. The following theme groups were established:

- Environmental
- Housing and the Built Environment
- Community Facilities, Transport and Employment

Each Theme Group comprised of a dedicated team of community volunteers to undertake the work required, this work continued until the end of 2016 with the Theme Groups meeting on a regular basis throughout this period. The Theme Groups proved to be an excellent resource as they allowed small groups to concentrate on specific areas and apply their expertise without becoming overwhelmed with the scope of the whole project. The NPAC also met regularly throughout this period to co-ordinate the outputs from the theme groups and to resolve any areas of overlap.

From the early stages the NPAC have recognised the importance of the consultation process and have been keen to incorporate community viewpoints into the NP wherever possible. All concerns, queries and comments received during any of the consultation exercises have been thoroughly reviewed and appropriate actions taken. Agendas and minutes from the NPAC meetings throughout the whole process can be found on the SPC website (Section 3.8).

3.5 OPEN EVENT 2 (January 2017)

A further Open Consultation Event took place on 20th and 21st January 2017, at which point the emerging policies were put to the community. SPC advertised the event in a Parish Council newsletter and every household received a leaflet in the week running up to the date encouraging parishioners to attend and offer their views. The event was held over a weekend on a Friday evening (4.00pm to 8.00pm) and a Saturday morning (10.00am to 12.00pm) in the village hall. At the event draft policies on housing, the environment, community facilities and amenities, transport, and employment were displayed. Over the two sessions a total of 71 people attended and approximately 25 submitted written comments. An analysis of the comments received (Supporting Document 10) is included in the evidence base. The comments were all reviewed at the NPAC meeting held on 30th January 2017 and decisions were made accordingly about how to reflect parishioner's views in the final draft plan.

3.6 REGULATION 14 STATUORY CONSULTATION (ROUND ONE)

The pre-submission consultation for statutory stakeholders began on 20th February 2017 and finished on 31st March 2017. A list of statutory stakeholders can be found in Supporting Document 15. All responses were collated onto a spreadsheet (Supporting Document 16). The spreadsheet shows how each of the responses was considered by the NPAC and the resulting actions.

During the consultation period, it was discovered that the measurements of the preferred housing development site had been incorrectly recorded in the SHLAA, the site was given as 2.4 hectares when it was in fact 2.4 acres. The revised measurement meant that the site would only accommodate approximately half the number of houses needed. The fact that the site size was not picked up in the site assessment led to a loss of confidence by some parishioners in the site assessments. To try and restore confidence the site assessments were all repeated, by this time two additional sites had also been proposed, these were also assessed.

After further meetings and consultations with landowners the housing policy was completely re-written, the new policy identified three preferred sites for development.

3.7 OPEN EVENT 3 (June 2017)

As a result of the re-write of the housing policy the SPC decided to hold a further consultation event on 22nd June 2017. Details of the event were circulated via a newsletter and a notice (Supporting Document 17) was posted on the parish council website and noticeboard. Presentation slides from the event can be found in Supporting Document 18. The meeting was attended by 49 parishioners. Parishioners were invited to ask questions and make comments during the presentation. They were also informed that updated drafts would be available on the SPC website so that further questions and comments could be submitted to the Clerk after the meeting. It was also explained that because of the significant changes to the policy SPC would conduct a further pre-submission consultation with dates to be announced.

3.8 REGULATION 14 STATUTORY CONSULTATION (ROUND TWO)

The second pre-submission consultation for statutory stakeholders was held from Friday 14th July to Friday 25th August 2017. A list of statutory stakeholders can be found in Supporting Document 15. A letter was sent to all statutory stakeholders (Supporting Document 19) and a leaflet was distributed to all households (Supporting Document 20). All responses were collated onto a spreadsheet (Supporting Document 21). The spreadsheet shows how each of the responses was considered by the NPAC and the resulting actions.

During this period a landowner who offered two sites, only one of which was identified as a preferred site, employed a planning consultant and challenged the site assessments, claiming that the assessments were flawed. The NPAC held informal meetings with the landowner and reviewed all the comments made by the landowner and their consultant, resulting in some revisions to the site assessments. The letter from the landowner and the NPAC response can be found in Supporting Document 22. The letter from the planning consultant, Armstrong Rigg and the NPAC response can be found in Support Document 23.

3.9 WEBSITE

All information and documents relating to the NP have been posted on a specific 'Swinford Neighbourhood Plan' page of the SPC website:

www.swinfordparishcouncil.gov.uk

The page has been regularly updated through the neighbourhood planning process.

4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 It is considered that the publicity, consultation and engagement have been fundamental in helping achieve a draft Plan which reflect the needs and aspirations of the local residents. The process has been open and transparent throughout and it is believed has been well in excess of statutory requirements.
- 4.2 This Consultation Statement will now form part of the documents to be submitted to HDC for the final six-week consultation, prior to submission to an Independent Examiner and subsequent local referendum.