

## **Pirton Steering Group Note: (4/10/2015)**

### **Neighbourhood Plan - Hot topics and issues:**

- Early Adoption of our Pirton Neighbourhood Plan:
- Housing Numbers:
- Boundary Changes:
- Sites
- Current Planning Applications

### **Neighbourhood Plan - Hot topics and issues**

These are issues which, like it or not, the Pirton Neighbourhood Plan (PNP) Steering Group (SG) and the community of Pirton must consider how to approach and deal with:

#### **Early Adoption of our Pirton Neighbourhood Plan:**

Local authorities such as North Herts District Council (NHDC) have obligations to provide new houses. They also have a requirement to identify and initial 5-year supply, which they have failed to do.

These are some of the related matters that need to be understood by the community of Pirton:

1. The NHDC's failure to identify a 5-year housing supply leaves Pirton, and many other North Hertfordshire locations, exposed to presumption in favour of developer led proposals.
2. The adoption of a positive Pirton Neighbourhood Plan may offer protection against developer led proposals and would certainly influence them.
3. There are perhaps risks to an early submission and adoption of our Neighbourhood Plan, these include:
  - a. The risk that we do not include everything that the community might wish.
  - b. That it will not generally conform to a subsequently adopted NHDC Local plan (a fundamental requirement) – *this is dealt in more detail below.*

#### **Housing Numbers:**

The community consultation ([link to the NP Questionnaire Analysis](#)) clearly identified that Pirton believes that 48 houses between now and 2031 is sustainable and the desired number for Pirton. The NHDC Preferred Options\*<sup>1</sup> ([background information](#)), identifies the NHDC number to be 142 for the same period and as we all know there are planning applications submitted which increase that number further.

These are some of the related matters that need to be considered by the Steering Group and the community of Pirton:

4. Can we proceed and have a Pirton Neighbourhood Plan based on 48 houses? - *this is likely to require competent professional legal/planning advice because NHDC may object to a number less than their proposal of 142. The SG is seeking this advice.*
5. Is it wise to proceed on this basis? – *If the Pirton Neighbourhood Plan was adopted based on 48 houses then it may offer some protection against what the community perceive to be too much development, but if subsequently the adopted NHDC Local Plan allocates 142 houses (or any other number), this would supersede that part, and any other related parts of the Pirton Neighbourhood Plan. This is likely to necessitate the re-drafting of our Pirton Neighbourhood Plan and another referendum – something that we may not be able to fund.*

#### **Boundary Changes:**

NHDC included boundary changes to Pirton (and other villages) which were not clearly identified within the Preferred Options\*<sup>1</sup> consultation documents.

These are some of the related matters that need to be considered by the Steering Group and the community of Pirton:

6. There is an inferred principle that sustainable development will be permitted within the village boundary. This means that if the change is adopted by the NHDC Local Plan it is likely that additional planning applications will be forthcoming that add to the total numbers of new houses in Pirton.
7. We(\*2) must decide whether to positively and specifically deal with this issue within the proposed Neighbourhood Plan?
8. Alternatively we must could decide to propose our own, different, boundary change – *this risks a similar outcome to item 5 above - again this is likely to require competent professional legal/planning advice, which the SG is currently seeking.*

#### **Sites:**

Most of the community of Pirton will be aware that the NHDC Preferred Options\*<sup>1</sup> identified two sites for development ([link to background information](#)) and that at least two planning applications have been made that increase significantly the numbers identified in the a NHDC Preferred Options\*<sup>1</sup> for these sites. In addition there are also other applications for much smaller numbers (2 or 3 dwellings) which have either been granted permission or are out for public consultation.

These are some of the related matters that need to be understood by the Steering Group and the community of Pirton:

9. The numbers identified by NHDC are not necessarily definitive. The result of the public consultation have not yet been fully considered so any potential impact on numbers is not yet apparent. Even when the number is decided that does not preclude developers and land owners from making planning applications for consideration now or in the future – *it is likely that our Neighbourhood Plan will provide the most effective way of influencing the success or otherwise of these. – See early adoption of the PNP above*
10. The suggestion of any new site does not mean that another would not be developed or that the number of new houses proposed for another site would be reduced, we are not in and ‘either / or’ situation.
11. Proposals to develop land:
  - a. Outside the existing boundary is currently only dealt with by NHDC Local Plan Saved Policies(\*<sup>3</sup>) and current planning law.
  - b. Outside of any new village boundary may be dealt with by the new NHDC Local Plan (when adopted), but may be better dealt with by our Neighbourhood Plan, which is more likely to relate directly to the wishes of the community of Pirton.
  - c. Inside the existing boundary is currently only dealt with only by NHDC planning considerations and current planning law.
  - d. Inside any new boundary may be dealt with by the NHDC Local Plan (when adopted), but may be better dealt with by our Neighbourhood Plan, which is more likely to relate directly to the wishes of the community of Pirton.

#### **Current Planning Applications:**

There are current outline planning applications with NHDC for consultation / consideration. These total 77 houses on land commonly known as Priors Hill (which is **site PT1**) (an additional 11 have already been built) and 90 houses (recently amended to 82) on land commonly known as Holwell Turn (**site PT2** plus additional land). There was a further application (land behind The Coach House, Shillington Road) for 2 houses (Permission has been granted) and another application for land behind Royal Oak Lane for 3 houses. This totals 175 houses against the NHDC proposal for 142 and the communities wishes for 48. The major difference numbers is explain by the proposal for 90 houses (now 82) on Holwell Turn against a NHDC suggested 44 on a smaller area.

It should be noted that there are also likely to be large discrepancies in the rate of growth between what the community of Pirton have said is sustainable (13 built every 5-years) and the developer led proposals, i.e. Holwell Turn alone suggest 90 (now 82) in only 3-years.

#### **Conclusion:**

Whatever we as individuals and as the community of Pirton think about the matters identified above, we must all surely accept that a Pirton Neighbourhood Plan adopted as the earliest possible time, commensurate with due consideration of consultation quality, completeness and formal procedure, is the best option available for Pirton.

Jonty Wild

– On behalf of the Pirton Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Deputy Chair

[www.pirtonneighbourhoodplan.org.uk](http://www.pirtonneighbourhoodplan.org.uk)

*\*1 The Preferred Options is a document produced for consultation purposes and is not the Local Plan, albeit that once the results of the consultation have been considered for inclusion would lead directly to the Local Plan.*

*\*2 We throughout means the community of Pirton*

*\*3 This usage refers to the policies saved from the previous local Development Plan.*