

APPENDIX 7

Fleet Consultation Statement on Neighbourhood Plan

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1. COMPLIANCE WITH REGULATION 15 (Neighbourhood Plan Regulations 2012)

1.1 Fleet Town Council submits its Neighbourhood Plan for Fleet to Hart District Council in October 2018 for independent examination.

1.2 This Consultation Statement complies with requirements of Regulation 15 of the Neighbourhood Plan Regulations and provides the response to Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Plan Regulations (pre-submission statutory consultation). It has been prepared by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) to fulfil the legal obligations of Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 as amended.

1.3 Section 15(2) of Part 5 of the Regulations requires that a Consultation Statement should:

- i) Contain details of the persons and bodies who were consulted about the proposed Neighbourhood Development Plan;
- ii) Explain how they were consulted;
- iii) Summarise the main issues and concerns raised by the persons consulted;
- iv) Describe how these issues and concerns have been considered and, where relevant, addressed in the proposed Neighbourhood Development Plan.

1.4 This Consultation Statement summarises all statutory and non-statutory consultation undertaken with the community and other relevant statutory bodies and stakeholders in developing the NP. In particular, it describes how concerns have been addressed and what changes have been made to the final NP as a result of statutory pre-submission consultation.

1.5 Changes are included in the NP submitted to the Local Planning Authority which can be cross-referenced to comments received as part of statutory consultation.

1.6 A Consultation Evidence File providing a record of all consultation exercises, comments and feedback accompanies this Consultation Statement in the appendices.

1.7 Enquiries regarding this Statement should be made to: Alan Oliver, Chairman Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group e-mail: alan.oliver@Fleet-tc.gov.uk

2. Background to Consultation

2.1 We have a strong history of consulting Fleet people about their priorities for the town: we are not starting our consultation process from 'scratch'. Rather, we are building on the findings from earlier research by the Fleet and Church Crookham Society (Fleet and Church Crookham Town Healthcheck) from 2007-10, Fleet Town Council in 2011 and by a local group of volunteers called Fleet Future in 2013/4.

2.2 People in Fleet have been asked for their views on what improvements they want to see many times in the recent past. Our Neighbourhood Plan deals with those elements of these reviews that fall under the remit of neighbourhood planning.

Public Meeting on the Fleet Town Plan

2.3 In November 2012 (P12 FTP) a Public Meeting was held at the Harlington. Over 600 attended. People were asked to contribute to a 'dream wall' giving them an opportunity to say what the Fleet of their dreams would look like. There were 157 responses. The majority of contributions suggested town centre improvements (38%) and the redevelopment of the Harlington (27%), while transport and better pedestrian and cycle access came in third and fourth place with 10% and 7% respectively.

2.4 When asked what they would change in Fleet the most common changes were parking (21%), shops (13%), vacant buildings (13%), traffic issues (10%), environment (10%), and the town centre (7%).

2.5 Using the findings of the public meetings, and setting up a voluntary group of local residents called Fleet Future, task groups were established to work on the key issues. In the following summer of 2013, Fleet Future developed a town plan and consulted on its recommendations. There were 1335 responses. The Fleet Neighbourhood Plan is seen as being a way of progressing the priorities that have a physical spatial element that fall under the remit of Neighbourhood Planning Legislation.

2.6 The Town Plan (p27) deals with the land centred on the civic centre, the Harlington, Library and Gurkha Square. This is very relevant, and the Neighbourhood planning process is the ideal way of progressing this recommendation which was 'the land centred on the Civic Offices, The Harlington, library and Gurkha Square should be redeveloped for mixed use which might include residential, commercial, community entertainment and cultural activities while preserving a town square and links to The Views'

2.7 This recommendation in the Town Plan by Fleet Future received an overall majority in favour but with a narrower margin than the others. 56% supported the recommendation, 39% disagreed and 9% responded “don’t know or don’t have an opinion”. 80 respondents submitted comments on this recommendation. When analysing the results in greater detail, it becomes apparent that respondents under the age of 65 years voted more than 2:1 in favour. On the other hand those over 65 years tended to vote against the recommendation. Much of this has been taken forward in the town centre section of the Fleet Neighbourhood Plan.

2.8 Cycle routes were seen as most important under the heading of ‘transport’ in the Town Plan, which echoed the importance of safe designated cycle routes going back to the Fleet and Church Crookham Town Healthcheck, and also supported in the more up to date FTAP (first use – needs to be referenced in full – Fleet Town Access Plan) recommendations. This neighbourhood plan addresses these issues in the green policy section.

2.9 The Fleet Neighbourhood plan address several of these issues including – the town centre, cycling routes, environmental issues including Fleet Pond and Basingstoke Canal.

Fleet Town Council’s decision to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan

2.10 In March 2015, Fleet Town Council resolved to proceed with a Fleet Neighbourhood Plan to pull all the elements together that are best addressed through a formal plan, running broadly in tandem with Hart’s emerging Local Plan. Accordingly, the FTC began the process of seeking volunteers to form a steering group to start work on preparing a neighbourhood development plan. Initially FTC proposed three tangible areas of focus for the NP, and invited their new team of volunteers to expand further on these. They were:

- How the town centre should be improved to meet the needs of the growing population of Fleet and surrounding areas
- What could be done to preserve Fleet’s green and leafy character
- What design principles should be incorporated in a neighbourhood plan

2.11 That said, it was made clear to the public from the outset that nothing was set in stone by way of objectives, vision or detail regarding land use. It was for the community to shape the NP by having their say and making the NPSG aware of their views at each stage in the process.

Professional guidance

2.12 Throughout this process, the NPSG has been guided by comprehensive documentation available from bodies such as the Department for Communities and Local Government, Locality and Planning Aid England.

2.13 In addition, in September 2015, Planning Consultants, rCOH were appointed to provide technical support to the Steering Group. rCOH is a firm with proven experience of helping deliver neighbourhood plans including in parishes where there is no approved Local Plan. (The firm was later renamed to O'NeillHomer).

2.14 Following a tailored workshop with the Steering Group, rCOH were instrumental in helping to analyse feedback and make recommendations on plan content.

2.15 Tight-Five Ltd provided project management support to the Steering Group to help bring the plan to fruition.

2.16 As well as providing the NPSG with regular guidance by email and telephone, O'NeillHomer later helped analyse pre-submission feedback from statutory consultees and landowners/agents in Summer 2018 and advised on necessary changes to the draft NP before submission to Hart District Council.

3. AIMS OF ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

3.1 The aims of the consultation process for the Fleet Neighbourhood Plan have been:

- **TO CONSULT MANY** To involve as many of the community as possible throughout all consultation stages of Plan development so that it was shaped by the views of local people and other stakeholders from the outset;
- **TO CONSULT WIDELY** To engage with and listen to as wide a range of people as possible
- **TO CONSULT AT THE RIGHT TIME** To schedule consultation at critical points in the process when important decisions needed to be taken;
- **TO CONSULT WELL** To ensure that all events and communications were of high quality, were imaginative and well organised;
- **TO KEEP INFORMED** To keep the community informed of progress and the results of consultation throughout the process.

The next section describes what we have done to address these points.

4. OVERVIEW OF ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION METHODS

4.1 Consultation specifically relating to the Fleet Neighbourhood Plan began with raising awareness of FTC's intention to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan and its purpose. FTC prepared articles for all its publications, press releases and used social media to promote the initiative and encouraged local residents to ask questions and get involved (see Appendix 1 - Newsletters)

Involving Business in the Neighbourhood Plan

4.2 Steering Group members have been consulting informally on the Fleet Neighbourhood Plan throughout its development. In August 2017 the town centre elements of the Neighbourhood Plan were discussed by the Fleet Business Improvement District (BID) Board. A brief introduction to the Draft Fleet Neighbourhood Plan, as it relates to the BID area, was given. It was explained that a full consultation period would shortly be taking place to enable all residents and businesses to give their comments. The town centre area that has been identified as providing the major opportunity for change was shown and discussed. Information was given about the two areas of the town defined as the shopping areas. Some members of the BID Board felt the use of the terms "primary" and "secondary" were not ideal. It was also felt that support should be given to retain the current level of retail premises within these areas. Two of the policies were amended as a result of these discussions.

Presentation about the Neighbourhood Plan at Annual Residents Meeting

4.3 In March 2018, the chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group gave a presentation on the Neighbourhood Plan along with other issues. There were no matters of concern about the plan.

Fleet Town Council

4.4 The Final Draft Plan was discussed by Fleet Town Council in March 2018 and the Council with some minor amendments resolved it should go out to public consultation.

Consulting on the Pre-Submission Fleet Neighbourhood Plan, 4 May – 15 June 2018

4.5 The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group considered several consultation techniques for consulting on the Neighbourhood Plan and opted for a range of consultation methods to ensure that as many people as possible would respond to the consultation.

- The Pre-Submission Plan was published and an invitation to comment was published as per Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 Part 5(a) through local channels and to the list of organisations as per Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012 Part 5 (b), see Appendix 2 – Organisations consulted on the pre-submission plan
- An invitation to comment on the Pre-Submission Plan was sent to the Local Planning Authority (Hart District Council) as per Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 Part 5 (c).
- A survey monkey questionnaire was designed focusing on the policies contained in the plan and people were encouraged to fill it in on line (see Appendix 3 – Pre-submission consultation questionnaire using Survey Monkey)
- A copy of the draft Neighbourhood Plan was uploaded to the Fleet Town Council website and people were directed to the survey or asked to make comments by email and letter
- Hard copies of the questionnaire were printed and made available at the Harlington Centre, the shopping centre and made available from the Town Council offices
- A special public meeting was held to offer people a chance to ask questions and give answers to the issues they raised.
- A press release about the consultation exercise was sent to the local media (Appendix 4 – Press release for pre-submission plan)
- The questionnaire was publicised on social media (Appendix – social media notification for pre-submission plan)
- The consultation exercise was given prominence in an issue of the Town Talk news sheet that goes out to every household (see appendix 1 – Fleet Town Council Newsletters)
- An email was sent to statutory consultees providing them with a link to the Neighbourhood Plan and the questionnaire and asking for comments by letter or email if they preferred to use that method

5. Pre-Submission Consultation Feedback

5.1 The main vehicle for collecting feedback on the Pre-Submission Plan was the survey monkey questionnaire. Some people chose to fill in the questionnaire by hand and these results were added to the computer generated responses.

5.2 A number of emails and letters were received. The comments were fed into the analysis process.

5.3 Ten representations were received from statutory consultees, landowners or their agents. These were reviewed by neighbourhood planning consultants O'NeillHomer (formerly rCOH) as well as the NPSG. These representations raised a series of issues that were not unexpected for a neighbourhood plan and comments on these are included in Regulation 14 report.

5.4 Copies of the Pre-Submission Plan comments from statutory organisations were uploaded to a shared Drop-box folder and a Regulation 14 report was prepared by O'NeillHomer (Appendix 8).

5.5 Over 500 responses were from individual residents, including many positive comments showing their appreciation. Members of the NPSG took the lead on carefully reviewing and assessing comments from residents. Most comments were supportive of the NP overall; all the proposed policies received majority support in all cases – and to be expected, some had bigger majorities than others. Some made specific comments for or against individual proposals. Residents' comments generally showed they cared a great deal about the town, were well informed and engaged with the process, and demonstrated that they had been able to make a contribution to the development of the plan. The age profile of respondents shows that older people were the majority respondents. There were only 69 responses (13.48%) from people under the age of 35 while 150 (29.7%) were received from people between the age of 65-74 and 96(19%) from people over 75 years of age. The Steering Group thinks it is important to recognise the age demographic in the responses as there were instances where there appears to be a significant difference depending on the age of the respondents. Where relevant, these have been highlighted (Appendix 6 – pre-submission consultation analysis).

5.6 As might be expected, feedback from residents was not without some criticism and occasional misunderstanding. Indeed, it has sometimes been challenging to reconcile the disappointment of a minority with the will of the majority. Equally to be expected, as it comes to fruition through the consultation process, is that any neighbourhood plan is unlikely to achieve unanimous agreement. As such, each relevant comment amounting to a concern has been noted and considered carefully against NPPF guidelines. Every comment has been recorded and a response prepared by steering group members, who shared the task between them. Appendix 7 shows how relevant concerns have been addressed appropriately resulting in a number of detailed recommendations from the Steering Group to Fleet Town Council.

5.7 Fleet Town Council discussed the findings at its meeting in August 2018 and supported the recommendations of the Fleet Neighbourhood Steering Group as outlined in Appendix 7 – Steering Group recommendations to Town Council.

6 What has changed in the Fleet Neighbourhood Plan as a result of the feedback

6.1 A number of changes were made as a result of the Pre-Submission Consultation. The detailed reasoning for the changes are set out in Appendix 7. In summary the changes are as follows:

Policy 1 – Fleet Civic Quarter (Zone 1)

Policy 13 of the Neighbourhood Plan defines the whole area of the Views as Local Green Space. As this conflicts with the inclusion of the upper part of the Views in the area defined within Policy 1, the recommendation is that the steering group asks Fleet Town Council to remove this section of land from within Policy 1.

Policy 2 - Land between Victoria Road & Gurkha Square (Zone 1b)

- To confirm agreement to HDC's comment to add an additional statement to the Policy that "This policy supports suitable town centre uses"
- Add the wording to para. 2.35 "The rear areas of these properties are mainly given over to parking and services uses which may detract from the creation of the new Civic Quarter as set out in Policy 1. It is anticipated, however, that the regeneration set out in Policy 1 will provide a commercial incentive for the redevelopment of these service areas, providing that suitable service arrangements are provided"

Policy 3 - Land on the corner of Reading Road North & Fleet Road (Zone 1c)

Policy 3 ii be amended to read:

- Uses are compatible with Policy 1 and include retail at ground level (predominantly A1 and A2) with residential or commercial above

Policy 3 iii be amended to read:

Amend to state that "The Policy supports a layout that improves pedestrian access and connections to a Town Square and the town centre, with consideration given to traffic flow and safe pedestrian crossings at road junctions."

Policy 4 - Land off Harlington Way (Zone 1d)

Policy to be amended to incorporate residential as well as business use as follows:

"Uses that are compatible with Policy 1 and include retail at ground floor level (predominantly A1 and A2) with residential or commercial above will be supported."

Policy 5 - Leisure and Night Time Economy - Fleet Road between Upper Street & the Oatsheaf crossroads (Zone 2)

The final sentence was changed, in line with emerging Local Plan Policy ED5 to read "Proposals for change of use to Use Class A3, A4 and A5 will be supported. Any change of use from Use Class A1 – 5 to other categories, except D1 and D2 which support the Civic Quarter proposals, will not be supported. Residential use may be appropriate above retail units provided that the active frontage is not compromised and that satisfactory residential amenity can be achieved."

Policy 6 – The Core Shopping Zone – from 151 Fleet Road on the South East side of Fleet Road and 78 Fleet Road on the North West side of Fleet Road and extending to the junction of Fleet Road with Upper Street & Victoria Road- (Zone 3)

The changes agreed as a result of consultation were that :

- Paragraph 2.55 of Policy 6 be amended to read:
2.55 Whilst recognising the importance to the vibrancy and sustainability of the area of promoting retail use (class A1 – A5) over non-retail use, the policy supports a balance of class

A1 – A5 within the Core Shopping Zone in order to avoid the proliferation of class A5 outlets (takeaways), which could be detrimental to both public health and town centre vitality”.

- A map be added to show the location of the vacant land
- The policy be renamed the Core Shopping Zone

Policy 7 - Fleet Road between No. 151 Fleet Road and Kings Road Junction (Zone 4)

No change

Policy 8 – Land at Albert Street (Zone 5)

No change to policy, but correct mapping errors as recommended by HDC and add a sentence in the text about better traffic management such as a formal shared space traffic scheme that would slow traffic and allow pedestrians to cross the road more safely along its length.

Policy 9 – Fleet Road Public Realm policy (Zone 6)

The policy to remain unchanged except that phrasing recommended by HDC is adopted in section iv as follows:

iv) Green Fleet Road by the addition of street trees and soft landscaping ‘as well as SUDS where possible.’

Policy 10 – General Design Management Policy

Taking account of the proposed amendments from HDC endorsed by O'Neill Homer the following amendments were made to sections v) and ix) and now read as follows :

v) Development shall seek to retain existing mature hedging and established trees and to enhance landscaping including providing SUDS where appropriate to provide for biodiversity. Where loss of significant amenity trees or hedging is justified, compensation planting must be provided to mitigate their loss.

ix) Development which affects any heritage asset shall preserve or enhance the heritage asset and its setting and shall demonstrate how local distinctiveness is reinforced;

HDC and O'NeillHomer 's recommendation that the whole of the character area characteristics from Appendix 3 be incorporated in the main Neighbourhood Plan has been adopted.

Policy 11- Safeguarding building stock for people of limited mobility including people with disabilities and older residents

The heading of the policy was changed to include people with disabilities and now reads: ‘Safeguarding building stock for people of limited mobility including people with disabilities and older residents’ . The final sub clause (iv) was amended to say:

‘The development of new bungalows through the amalgamation of plots to increase the built density in low density single storey development areas to make more efficient use of the land and create local sustainable communities will be supported.’

Policy 12 - Buildings of Heritage and Townscape Value

The Policy remains essentially unchanged except that the criteria are moved from the Policy itself into the supporting paragraphs. The reference to the Historic England Advice Note 7 has been updated. The supporting paragraphs also reflect that All Saints Church is Grade II* listed, and that the War Memorial in Ghurkha Square was listed by Historic England as Grade II on 24 July 2018.

There have been minor changes to the Appendix to include the postcodes of the buildings so that they may be found more easily; to provide two better photographs, to include an additional building; and to credit the photographers.

Policy 13 – Local Green Space

Following comments from the public, HDC and O'Neill/Homer the policy has been reworded to say:

'The locations identified on the proposals map below (sites 1 to 13 and C) are defined as areas of Local Green Space-where proposals for housing or other inappropriate developments will not be supported other than in very special circumstances or if development is essential to meet necessary utility infrastructure needs and no alternative feasible site is available.'

Policy 14 - Basingstoke Canal Conservation Area

iii) to include "native evergreen hedging like yew and holly"

iv) amended to say "All planting near to the canal should be regularly maintained to improve its leisure and amenity uses"

Policy 15 - Residential Gardens

Sections iii) and iv) were amended, and now read:

iii) Permanent storage of waste bins and containers in front gardens are appropriately screened and contained within a slatted timber bin store or equivalent ;

iv) Where the loss of significant amenity trees is adequately justified, compensation planting must be provided to mitigate their loss

An additional sentence was agreed:

The use of vehicle entrance gates, brick walls and timber fences over 1m high to front garden boundaries which are out of character with the surrounding area will not be supported.

Policy 16 - North Fleet Conservation Area

The Policy remained essentially unchanged except that:

1. A map of the NFCA was added;
2. To avoid confusion, the definition of the housing density areas within the NFCA is referenced to Hart's Saved Policy URB 18 and the mapping associated therewith;
3. Changes have been made to the reference to the Article 4 Direction to reflect that it applies only to boundary treatments;

4. Changes have been made to the wording on the preservation of trees so that replacement applies only to trees felled by exception or felled illegally. Encouragement to maintain the sylvan nature of the Conservation Area is retained, but cannot be mandated;
5. Changes have been made to the wording on avoiding on-street parking to focus on the resulting impact, e.g. on highway safety. The preference for the provision of parking on-site is retained.
6. The reference to Conservation Area Consent as a pre-requirement for demolition has been removed in light of the Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act 2013.

Policy 17 - Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area Mitigation

The HDC recommendation was accepted and the words Suitable Alternate Natural Green Space (SANG) were included to explain what a SANG is.

Policy 18 - Cycling Network

Two additional points were added following comments from HDC and Hampshire County Council. These are:

- Contributions will be sought from new developments to fully fund the design and delivery of the cycle network.
- Where appropriate, development proposals will provide safe cycle access linkages to the Town Centre and the identified community assets. Proposals will have particular regard to ways that they can reinforce existing cycle links to the town centre and react positively to any opportunity to broaden local cycle networks within Fleet, where such schemes have satisfactory engineering assessments at feasibility and detail design stages. Where appropriate, contributions will be sought from new developments to fully fund the design and delivery of the network.

Policy 19 – Residential Parking

This policy has been restricted to Residential Parking as the provision and control of on and off street parking is the responsibility of Hampshire CC and Hart DC

7. CONCLUSION

In accordance with Section 15(2) Part 5 of Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012, this Consultation Statement details who was consulted and how. It summarises the main issues and concerns raised, as evidenced in the appendices; and describes how they have been considered and, where appropriate, addressed in the resulting plan.

Importantly, Fleet TC has defined a plan that has been shaped by the views of the majority of the community which have crystallised during considerable public engagement and consultation.

Following examination by Hart District Council, another 6-week consultation period and then scrutiny by an independent Examiner, FTC anticipates that there will be a significant majority voting 'yes' to adopt the plan at referendum.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 - Fleet Town Council Newsletters & Minutes
- Appendix 2 - Organisations consulted on pre-submission plan
- Appendix 3 - Pre-submission consultation questionnaire
- Appendix 4 - Press Release for pre-submission plan
- Appendix 5 – Social Media notification for pre-submission plan
- Appendix 6 – Pre-submission consultation analysis
- Appendix 7 - Steering Group recommendations to Town Council
- Appendix 8 - Regulation 14 report
- Appendix 9 – Basic Conditions Statement