

Present: Mayor, Councillor Miss L Hillier
Deputy Mayor, Councillor J Brookes
Councillor M Akehurst
Councillor Ms S Abey
Councillor Miss H Chandler-Wilde
Councillor Miss S Evans
Councillor D Eggleton
Councillor S Gawrysiak
Councillor W Hamilton
Councillor Miss K Hinton
Councillor Miss S Miller
Councillor I Reissmann
Councillor Mrs J Smewing
Councillor S Smith
Councillor D Thomas

In Attendance: Mr M W Kennedy - Town Clerk
Ms C Adams - Minute Taker / Committee Administrator
Mr C Austin - Town Sergeant

22 members of the Public
1 member of the Press

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor D Nimmo Smith.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor S Gawrysiak stated that he has been employed by Gillotts School since January 2015 and had been advised by Simon Harper at SODC that there was no requirement to declare an expression of pecuniary interest. However, he wanted it minuted that he had a salaried interest with regard to the school for the next five weeks.

The Mayor invited Councillors K George and M Plews from Harpsden Parish Council and Mr M Kinghan from Nexus Planning to the table.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Mr M Dodds, Greys Road

Mr Dodds stated that Henley in Transition (HiT) had presented extensive and detailed feedback on the Joint Henley and Harpsden Neighbourhood Plan (JHHNP). The group were pleased that some of the points raised had been adopted, but disappointed that others had not. For example, the question as to what constituted affordable housing. He asked whether the plan would be flexible so that it can be adapted in future. HiT will aim to give feedback during the 6 week consultation period.

Mr T Howell, Blandy Road

Mr Howell asked why major changes had not been made following the consultation. He felt that Sport England's views had been taken into account, but not those of residents. There was no guarantee that Gillotts School would get planning permission for their new facilities and over 63% had voted against the inclusion of the Gillotts site. He stated that the more aware the public become of the issues with Gillotts, the more

endangered the site becomes. He requested a meeting of councillors to discuss alternative funding for the school.

Ms C Notaras, Elizabeth Road

Ms Notaras asked how the JHHNP will accommodate businesses who wish to stay in Henley. She asked what the timescale was regarding new businesses.

Ms Notaras also asked why more wasn't done to ratify the environmental aspects of the area within the plan, for example the AONB, footpaths and picnic areas, and why the environment group was stopped.

The Mayor invited Mr M Kinghan to respond to the questions from the public.

Response to Mr Dodds

Mr Kinghan stated that with regard to Mr Dodds' question on affordable housing, this was defined by the District Council. 40% of new housing must be affordable, unless a viability case shows otherwise. Of this 40%, 70% will be social housing and the remaining 30% intermediate, part rent, part buy property. This will only be available for specific groups, e.g. Teachers, nurses. The JHHNP follows this guidance.

The HiT comments had been incorporated where it was straightforward to do so.

Where the comments would require further consultation and reconsideration of the evidence base but wouldn't fundamentally change the plan, they had not been incorporated.

With regard to flexibility, the JHHNP was a flexible framework. Changes could be triggered in the future by significant changes in the SODC Local Plan or the delivery of large future housing sites.

Response to Mr Howell

Mr Kinghan stated that he had addressed points regarding the school consultation in his presentation. There are various and complicated issues surrounding the site, but the school's policy mirrors the national planning policy framework for development of school playing fields. The JHHNP does not say that the conditions will be met, but if the site fails to be delivered, then there are back up areas available. Keeping it in the JHHNP allows the school to move forward to meet their requirements.

There was marginal public opinion against the use of school grounds at 53%. Mr Kinghan understood that the councillors had taken public opinion into account. Inclusion in the plan gives a wider benefit to the school and meets the District Council's requirement to support the school's development needs. It also spreads development around the town and has an impact on distribution of housing sites if it is not brought forward.

Response to Ms Notaras

Mr Kinghan stated that the plan includes no dates as to when houses should be built at SODC's request. His personal opinion was that the Wyevale site would be available soon, but that he wasn't sure on the station site. The Stuart Turner site was expected to be medium term and partly depended on notice periods for tenants. He hoped Highlands Farm would be available relatively quickly, but again it is dependent on tenants.

With regard to environmental aspects, the JHHNP doesn't have power to create Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, though it does have a responsibility to respect the environment. He also stated that Nexus did not choose which groups would be reconvened.

Ms Notaras replied that she felt her questions had not been answered fully. The Mayor said that answers would be provided in due course.

4. **JOINT HENLEY AND HARPSDEN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

The Mayor invited Mr M Kinghan to give a presentation on the JHHNP. (Appendix A)

The Mayor invited comments and questions on the presentation.

Councillor Reissmann enquired about the flexibility of the plan given that it covers a period until 2027. He asked what the options were if other sites became available or were not deliverable.

Mr Kinghan replied that he was confident that all the sites in the JHHNP were as deliverable as they could be, though this was dependent on landowners. The Town Council can revise the plan at any time. They could begin again if they see fit, or allow SODC to make changes. There are referenced reserve sites if the school land is not available. The low density of planned housing also allows for a flexible layout and distribution.

Councillor Thomas queried the allocation of site A1 as a reserve.

Mr Kinghan replied that if the Gillotts site was not available by 1st January 2020, then two reserve sites for 30 units at Highlands Farm and 30 units at Fairmile would be employed. The A1 site off Fairmile would be accessed from the main site, so would only be possible to use if that site has already been developed. It is necessary to have reserve sites in the JHHNP. Mr Kinghan recognises that the community support was marginal, but that inclusion of the site was logical in terms of what the plan was trying to achieve and incorporates the wider strategy.

Councillor Gawrysiak acknowledged the work Mr Kinghan has carried out. He enquired how strongly concerns about transport had been voiced and what was planned to mitigate these.

Mr Kinghan replied that concern about transport had been greater in the first consultation, when it had been the main area of concern. He felt that it was important to consider the current UK wide state of austerity and the constraints the County Council are under. The Highway Authority had been able to support other Neighbourhood Plans, for example in Thame. Henley was unable to benefit from this advice, so had to move forward with the best resources available, namely community groups, landowners and developers. Rightly, HTC have funded a Transport Study, which is moving forward.

Councillor Miss H Chandler-Wilde asked whether other sources of funding for Gillotts had been considered, e.g. crowd funding.

Mr Kinghan replied that funding and planning were two separate issues and he couldn't say whether all the funding avenues had been explored and that this wasn't in the Nexus remit. The plan was reliant on landowners to bring evidence forward. He felt that the school had been transparent and the allocation of school grounds to the report was based on the best knowledge and evidence at the time.

Councillor Miss H Chandler-Wilde then asked whether the costs had been taken into account with the Gillotts site.

Mr Kinghan replied that it would be complex to do a cost benefit analysis and that overall it was assumed that the school knows best as far as their students are concerned.

Councillor Miss S Evans stated that she was involved with a full study of the use of green spaces in Henley. She asked for advice on making the most of the available resources.

Mr Kinghan replied that there were three areas to consider. Firstly, Section 106 which mitigates the impact of new population and development pressures. If a developer is providing some green space on their site, they will argue that there is no impact on existing green spaces and will avoid additional extra contributions. Secondly, there is Community Infrastructure Levy which provides a set figure per m² of development. This goes to the planning authority. Where there is a Neighbourhood Plan, 20% of that amount will go to the Town Council. Transport is the first priority for the funds, but green spaces and play areas are on the list. This can be revised. Thirdly, the JHHNP protects green spaces, but has not done more as Henley's green spaces are already well protected. There is a case for investing in existing green spaces rather than new ones.

Councillor Thomas suggested that not enough consideration had been given to traffic and pedestrian footfall. Cycle routes were marked, but there were no pedestrian crossings. In Northfield End, he stated that it was not safe to be on the pavement and that there was a risk from HGVs to pedestrians. Why was this not in the JHHNP?

Mr Kinghan explained that the strategic nature of the JHHNP meant that there was not that level of detail in it. However, promoters have put forward suggestions for footpaths etc and this is on the JHHNP website. Officers at the planning authority will ensure that any developments are as sustainable as possible.

Councillor Reissmann asked whether there was any indication of how much CIL may be gained from the developments in the JHHNP.

Mr Kinghan replied that the estimate was for circa £1million CIL. This would be in addition to Section 106 revenue. There is also revenue from the New Homes Bonus scheme.

The Mayor opened the debate on the adoption of the JHHNP.

Councillor Hamilton thanked Nexus, Mr Kinghan and his team for their hard work over the last two and a half years. He also thanked the people of Harpsden, without whom the plan would not have been possible. The people of Henley were thanked for their participation in working groups and for going through the detail. He stated that the plan was superbly written and proposed that

the final submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan should be adopted by Henley Town Council and submitted to South Oxfordshire District Council as the Joint Henley and Harpsden Neighbourhood Development Plan

Councillor Akehurst seconded the motion.

Councillor Reissmann proposed an amendment to the motion. He stated that he supported the plan in principle, but that it was clearly lacking in transport infrastructure. The County Council has not provided the support to Henley that it has to other councils, and Henley Town Council has correctly appointed a company to undertake production of a Transport Study. He proposed submitting the JHHNP after the Transport Study has been completed.

Councillor Hamilton was not prepared to accept the amendment to the motion.

Councillor Gawrysiak seconded the amendment to the motion, which was that

the final submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan should be adopted by Henley Town Council and submitted to South Oxfordshire District Council as the Joint Henley and Harpsden Neighbourhood Development Plan after the Transport Study has been submitted and included in the draft.

Councillor George from Harpsden supported Councillor Reissmann's statement of the inadequacy of the coverage of transport issues in the JHHNP. The problems with Gillotts Lane and Sheeplouse Lane need to be addressed if Highlands Farm is to be developed. Transport is a top priority for CIL money and he was sure that the infrastructure would be developed accordingly.

He felt that the overriding priority was speed and that developers were waiting to take advantage of any delay. The JHHNP should be submitted at the earliest moment, adding a rider regarding transport, but not delaying the submission.

Councillor Thomas stated that he did not support the plan in its current format. The residents of North Henley have not been heard. Everyone that he spoke to had been opposed to the plan. The area is an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and should be a grand entrance to the town. No thought had been given to transport issues and he was minded to support the amendment. There is a need to shape the Transport Study and have a stronger case to go to the public.

Councillor Akehurst replied that councillors needed to understand the implications of delaying. He was not aware of the target date for completion of the Transport Study, but it could be months. There are two impacts. Firstly, if there are amendments, another six week consultation will be required. He was concerned that there would be consultation fatigue amongst the public. This has been previously observed elsewhere. Secondly, the District Council want the plan cleared. They need to demonstrate that their allocations are deliverable. Until then, they will be vulnerable to speculative developers. Other sites may be brought forward and could be granted planning, possibly at appeal, if the council cannot defend the decision not to allow them.

Councillor Miss Evans informed the meeting that she was part of the consultation process and how wide and broad this was. Initially people had dismissed the plan as something over which they had no impact, but after several months, when talking to supermarket customers, they said that they felt part of the process and more involved than ever before. She agreed that there had been many questions about the plan when canvassing, but that equally many people said that it had been good to be part of it.

Councillor Akehurst indicated that the JHHNP had legal weight with SODC, who are responsible for planning. However, with regard to the Transport Study, this is handled at County level, not District level. It is therefore illogical to link the Transport Study with the submission date. He echoed Councillor George's thoughts on developers and stated that the JHHNP had been generated by residents. The document means that development will happen on openly agreed sites. The council are voting for a planned framework for Henley.

Councillor Thomas agreed that he recognised this, but asked what would happen if the council lost the referendum. Developers would descend on the town. He wanted to be sure that the majority back the plan. 51% of respondents were against the inclusion of sites A and A1, and yet they were included.

Councillor Akehurst responded that there had been thousands of hours of residents working in groups and that it was not a council plan, but a residents' plan generated under the excellent management of Mr Kinghan. It is not correct to say there has been no consultation.

Councillor Gawrysiak contended that Councillor Hamilton was incorrect in his proposal and that the Neighbourhood Governance Committee did not approve the plan for submission, only the sites to be included in the document.

Councillor Hamilton cited Minute Number 89 in the Minutes from the Neighbourhood Governance Committee Meeting on 1st May, 2015.

Councillor Gawrysiak replied that it still did not state that the document was being submitted. The council has spent £100,000 on the JHHNP and is spending £50,000 on the Transport Study. He suggested that the council paused and consider reconvening the Neighbourhood Governance Committee to review the document. The Transport Study is due in early July. Voters will look at the Neighbourhood Plan and ask where the Transport Study is to go with it. There should be a pause for six or seven weeks. Developers will not come in within that period of time and SODC has to take into account any Neighbourhood Plan that is in progress.

Councillor Miss S Evans asked how important the transport Study was. She said that it was more than headlines and a means of delaying five to six weeks.

Councillor Brookes asked Mr Kinghan to put up the slide on Forward Timescales again. He asked the meeting to vote against the amendment. The referendum does not take place until October or November and gives time for a version of the Transport Study to be created. He commented that he had knocked on several thousand doors in the North Ward and that the JHHNP had not been mentioned as much as Councillor Thomas had suggested. Suggestions from HiT can be put forward, but this is not a reason to hold up the plan. The council needs to move forward.

Councillor Thomas said that he was sure that the Deputy Mayor was not accusing him of lying and that it pained him to be split with the Conservative group. He had the luxury of living in Northfield End and felt that this area had not had a fair hearing and the consideration it deserves. He will campaign to vote No in the referendum.

Councillor Mrs J Smewing proposed two wording amendments, but the Town Clerk explained that the council was currently voting on the amendment to the motion, and these would have to be raised at a later stage.

Councillor Hamilton reiterated his view that the plan had been widely consulted with the public, including in supermarket car parks and the town hall. The people have defined the plan. The Transport Study will happen and be put to Oxfordshire County Council. If the JHHNP doesn't go through, there will be an unplanned, open season.

Councillor Brookes stated that the Transport Study was very important, but that it shouldn't delay the submission of the plan.

Councillor Reissmann commented that all were agreed on the importance of Transport and its inclusion in the plan. The meeting had heard from Mr Kinghan that normally the Highway Authority would contribute to the plan, but that we hadn't had this here. The Council has spent £50,000 on its own Transport Study and this should become part of the plan. There would only be a need for a re-consultation if there were significant changes. The talk about an open season with regard to developers is unfortunate. This only happens where there is no neighbourhood plan and no district plan. This would apply if there was no neighbourhood plan. The process has taken three years to date, another two months will not make a difference. The council has a duty to residents to make it right. The worst result would be a bad plan voted down at referendum.

Councillor Gawrysiak requested a recorded vote.

The Town Clerk clarified that if the amendment to the motion is passed, that becomes the substantive motion which in turn can be changed. A recorded vote is taken on whether members vote for, against or abstain.

The meeting voted on the amendment to the motion, which was that

The final submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan should be adopted by Henley Town Council and submitted to South Oxfordshire District Council as the Joint Henley and Harpsden Neighbourhood Development Plan after the Transport Study has been submitted and included in the draft.

FOR

Councillor Ms S Abey
Councillor D Eggleton
Councillor S Gawrysiak
Councillor Miss K Hinton
Councillor Miss S Miller
Councillor I Reissmann
Councillor Mrs J Smewing
Councillor S Smith
Councillor D Thomas

AGAINST

Councillor M Akehurst
Councillor J Brookes
Councillor Miss H Chandler-Wilde
Councillor Miss S Evans
Councillor W Hamilton
Councillor Miss L Hillier

It was RESOLVED that the amendment be added to the motion.

Councillor Smewing stated that the plan needs to be clear if it is going to referendum. A definition of affordable housing needs to be added to the glossary. Policy H3 on page 36 is also unclear.

Discussion took place on the best way to apply amendments. The Town Clerk suggested that another full council meeting should be called and all members could submit changes for review.

Councillor Thomas was pleased that the Transport Study would be included. He felt that it was important for the council to debate as half the councillors were new and it should not just be rubber stamped.

Councillor Gawrysiak wanted to convey the message that he was not against the Neighbourhood Plan and the residents, but that it was important to get it right. £150,000 has been spent and there was a danger that the plan would get through the referendum.

The motion as amended was then put to the vote subject to a further minor amendment permitting Council to consider other amendments to the Plan that members may wish to submit in writing for Council's further consideration.

A recorded vote was requested.

FOR

Councillor Ms S Abey
Councillor D Eggleton
Councillor S Gawrysiak
Councillor Miss K Hinton
Councillor Miss S Miller
Councillor I Reissmann
Councillor Mrs J Smewing
Councillor S Smith
Councillor D Thomas

AGAINST

Councillor M Akehurst
Councillor J Brookes
Councillor Miss H Chandler-Wilde
Councillor Miss S Evans
Councillor W Hamilton
Councillor Miss L Hillier

It was RESOLVED that the final submission version of the Neighbourhood Plan should be adopted by Henley Town Council and submitted to South Oxfordshire District Council as the Joint Henley and Harpsden Neighbourhood Development Plan after the Transport Study has been submitted and included in the draft, and any other amendments that Members may wish to submit in writing for Council's further consideration.

The meeting closed at 9.10pm.

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Mayor