

Report to Stockbridge Parish Council

Community Planning

Date 20th February 2020

Meeting Full Council

Authors Community Planning Working Group

Recommendations

- 1.** That the Parish Council consider the options set out in this report and decide how best to influence the future planning policy framework for Stockbridge.

 - 2.** That the Parish Council agrees to liaise with Houghton and Longstock Parish Councils in relation to any proposals in their parishes which could impact on Stockbridge.
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Introduction

1. Following various discussions in relation to the McCarthy and Stone proposals to develop the Copperknobs site behind the High Street, Stockbridge in 2019, the Community Planning Working Group was subsequently formed by Stockbridge Parish Council to “*report back to council on options to enable the Parish Council to best influence the future planning policy framework for Stockbridge.*”
2. The membership of the Working Group was Cllrs Stephen Taylor (chairman), Frances Candler, and Angie Filippa, together with local residents Steven Brown and Bruce Williams.
3. Cllrs Candler and Filippa retired from the Council in May 2019 but were reappointed to the Working Group in May 2019 as were Cllr Taylor and Messrs Brown and Williams to ensure continuity, together with Cllr Tony Hale so that the Group had 2 serving parish councillors on it. The group has not met as a body since Cllr Hales joined it and so he has not had the benefit of the various discussions that have taken place.
4. The Group met with a number of individuals in the course of their research and deliberations including Sarah Hughes (TVBC planning officer), Roger Tym, and representatives from Longstock and Houghton Parish Councils.

Planning Context

5. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPF) sets out the Government’s planning policies and how these should be applied. It applies a presumption in favour of sustainable development, and approval of development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan. Where, however, a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan (including any neighbourhood development plans) permission should not be granted. A neighbourhood development plan should support delivery of strategic policies in the District Local Plan and should shape and direct development that is outside of those strategic policies.
6. A neighbourhood development plan is only likely to be given significant weight sufficient to overcome the presumption in favour of sustainable development provided that:
 - The neighbourhood development plan is less than 2 years old;
 - it contains policies and allocations to meet its identified housing requirement;
 - The local planning authority (Test Valley BC in our case) has at least a 3 year supply of deliverable housing sites; and
 - Test Valley’s housing delivery was at least 45% of that required over the previous 3 years.

7. Test Valley BC has a relatively up-to-date District Local Plan which is undergoing review at the moment and has ample housing provision.
8. So far as the Test Valley District Plan (TVDP) and the relevant planning policies relating to Stockbridge Parish are concerned, inset map 45 (attached) of the Local Plan sets out the settlement boundary and the area designated as countryside (Policy COM2), the conservation area boundary (Policy E9) and the sites of special scientific interest (Policy E5).
9. The specific paragraphs relating to Stockbridge itself, described elsewhere in the TVDP as a key service centre, are as follows:

Stockbridge Local Centre

6.76 Stockbridge, as a local centre, serves the immediate day to day retail and service needs of a number of rural settlements in the centre of Test Valley. The High Street contains a mix of both residential and business premises and includes a number of retail outlets, both convenience and specialist shops, public houses, restaurants and tourist accommodation. The town has a tourist role, particularly associated with the River Test and is internationally renowned for fishing.

Policy LE15:

Stockbridge Local Centre Development fronting on to the High Street (Map 45) will be permitted provided that: a) its size is appropriate to the scale and function of the local centre; and b) it would not have a significant adverse impact on the vitality and viability of the local centre.

6.77 Development should be at a scale that respects the size of the local centre and its vitality and viability protected. Account should also be taken of the character of the town and the more detailed aspects of shop front design

6.78 The Council wishes to retain the existing provision of shops in ground floor uses in the High Street in order to maintain active frontages which are attractive to both shoppers and visitors and to meet the retail and service needs of the communities which Stockbridge serves.

10. In addition to all the constraints referred to above, Flood Zones are also another constraint on development in Stockbridge.

Test Valley BC Community Toolkit

11. To help community planning and place shaping, Test Valley BC have produced a community planning toolkit - <https://www.testvalley.gov.uk/communityandleisure/workingwithcommunities/communityledplans/community-planning-toolkit>.

12. The Group discussed in depth the outcome of the TVBC Symptom Checker exercise in that toolkit, which aims to identify which Community Planning Tool is most appropriate for a village's needs, and would enable us to understand whether a Parish Plan, a Neighbourhood Development Plan, a Village Design Statement or inputting into the Local Plan would provide the most effective vehicle to influence the planning policy framework for Stockbridge.

13. Turning to each of those options:

(a) From the match of issues and relevant plans it was clear that the option which would provide the least opportunity to achieve our objective, would be the **Parish Community Plan**, which is not a planning document and is not intended to be a response to planning issues.

(b) We already have a **Village Design Statement** which, though written in 2002, is still relevant. It was adopted by Test Valley BC as Supplementary Planning Guidance in 2003 and so has statutory status -

<https://www.testvalley.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planningpolicy/village-design-statements/stockbridgevds>. Its purpose is to help to control the design of new

development so that the village's essential character can remain. It includes both the built environment and an assessment of landscape which helps to protect the built edge of the village. A VDS can stand in its own right as a Supplementary Planning Document to be taken into consideration when planning decisions are made and could potentially be linked to a Neighbourhood Development Plan.

(c) Another option is to rely on the current **Test Valley District Plan (TVDP) plus additional protections** such as Conservation Area status, Flood zones, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Special Protection Areas, Sites of Importance for Nature Conservancy, Open Spaces plus, of course, the existing Village Design Statement - <https://www.testvalley.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planningpolicy/local-development-framework/dpd>.

This is essentially a 'stay as we are' option.

Points to bear in mind are:

- the TVDP is, of course, a plan for the whole of the Test Valley, and although there are a few Stockbridge specific references (see above) they do not offer a great deal of added protection particular to Stockbridge in addition to the national policies and local policies already in the TVDP;
- the current plan is currently in the process of being revised and Stockbridge Parish Council can input into the process;
- at present TVBC's provision of new housing has exceeded the number of homes required by a substantial margin for the foreseeable future but this might not always be the case in future years;
- If TVBC housing provision slows, there will be more pressure for development and more stringent rules would apply; and
- The 'stay as we are' option gives no guarantee that we will stay as we are.

(d) An approved **Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP)** has statutory status and would influence planning decisions as being part of the Development Plan framework. It is not restricted to housing allocations. For example, it can also address issues of local concern such as the protection of local green spaces, as can the Village Design Statement, and flood mitigation.

However, points to be kept in mind:

- An NDP does need to be in conformity with the TVDP and comply with its policies
- The key purpose of a NDP is to identify new sites for development (ie a Neighbourhood **Development** Plan) which enables communities to put forward new sites the community identifies as suitable for development which have not already been identified and may not otherwise be permitted
- By putting forward a minimum of two sites, with a minimum of three or four houses each, other sites can be protected.
- The landowner's permission is needed to put sites forward
- Developers can be alerted if an area embarks on an NDP and bring forward proposals for development
- Developers can comment on NDP proposals
- Developers can target areas without an NDP
- If we decide to embark on an NDP, we must be ready to move quickly to reduce the time available for developer intervention
- There are funding issues as external planning advice would be needed – but grants are available
- Preparation of an NDP would need community support and involvement as it is resource intensive
- The consultation exercise would give a deep understanding of community needs and priorities, with supporting evidence
- An NDP is a 25-year plan, reviewed every 5 years

Relationship with adjoining parishes

14. Houghton Parish Council is embarking on a Neighbourhood Development Plan which will cover Houghton Parish which extends to Boundary Cottage on Houghton Road where it meets the boundary of Longstock Parish.
15. The process began in Oct 2016 and an application to designate the whole of Houghton parish as a Neighbourhood Area was approved in February 2017. Since then a village survey had been conducted by the steering group (four members), with a summary report completed and presentations of the findings made to residents. In addition, a traffic survey had been completed by HCC, and a Housing Needs survey undertaken by Action Hampshire.

16. Longstock Parish Council is currently considering embarking on a Neighbourhood Plan. The Stockbridge Settlement boundary carries on over the river and includes part of Houghton and Longstock parishes; namely Roman Road and Test Valley school together with dwellings along Longstock Road and Houghton Road.

Current issue in relation to land outside Stockbridge Parish

17. One of the most immediate current concerns to Stockbridge Parish is an existing pre-application approach for a large residential development in Houghton and Longstock on land adjoining Test Valley School.
18. Members will recall that a previous planning application by David Wilson Homes involving the same land was refused on appeal. This does, to a large extent, validate the policies in the existing TVDP and emphasises that they can be effective in controlling development on such sites. That is not to say, however, that we can be complacent on that front as it does rely on TVBC consistently applying those policies and adequately resourcing any appeal.
19. The proposed developer has already been in contact with each of the 3 parish councils. It is suggested, therefore, that we work closely with Houghton and Longstock parish councils on any 'pre-app' discussions.
20. For that reason, it is further suggested that Stockbridge Parish Council supports closer working with Longstock and Houghton parish councils not only in relation to that particular issue but also in relation to their Neighbourhood Development Plan proposals.

Conclusion

21. The Working Group was not tasked by Council as part of its terms of reference to recommend a particular way forward.
22. It is, however, fair to say that there were differing views on the way forward. The majority of the Group were not in favour of embarking down the Neighbourhood Development Plan route at this time by virtue of the various planning constraints which already apply to the Stockbridge area referred to above, and which were gone into extensively in relation to the McCarthy and Stone proposal already mentioned.
23. There was support, however, for reviewing the Village Design Statement.

Financial and Other implications

24. Should the Council wish to explore further whether to embark on a Neighbourhood Development Plan, or the preparation of any other planning

document, there will need to be a further report in respect of any financial or resource implications.

13th February 2020