

Dear Sir or Madam

I am writing to you in support of the Neighbourhood Development Plan that Houghton Parish Council has recently submitted for adoption.

I fully support the Plan. In particular, I support what it says in relation to any development being sustainable, our community services, the size and style of any new development and the importance of protecting our local green spaces.

We have very few community services in our village, but they are much valued, and I am keen that all should be done to preserve and protect them. Pages 14 and 15 of the Plan set out the services and I fully support what it says. Earlier this year, a planning application was submitted which proposed building four houses on the site of the village allotments. This application was, thankfully, refused, but it brought home to many of us how much we value having the allotments and our other local green spaces. I am very keen that the allotments should be preserved and that all the remaining local green spaces outlined on page 37 should be protected from any development.

Despite the fact that some houses have been allowed to be built in the village that have in my opinion neither reflected or enhanced the local character of existing houses, Houghton still has a distinctive character and I am anxious that this should be preserved. I think that it is very important that any new development should reflect and enhance the local character. Insufficient weight has been given to this by developers and planners in recent years. We have seen a large number of large properties built in recent years that are not sympathetic to the character of the village or neighbouring properties, and we certainly do not need any more large houses. If there is a housing need, it is for smaller houses. To that end, I fully support what the NDP says in pages 16-22.

In terms of the character of the village and the importance of the conservation area, I support what the NDP states on pages 23-25. It is not, though, just the size and design of any development that concerns me and that can have an adverse impact on the character of the village. It is also important to maintain the landscape character of the village. To that end, I think it is vital that we maintain the linear nature of the village and the hedgerows and green spaces that we still have. This is a rural village and many of us are concerned that over development and the loss of hedgerows, trees and green spaces will inevitably lead to a creeping 'urbanisation' of the village and lose its distinctive character forever. I therefore support the points made in chapter 7 of the NDP (pages 26-29). I wholeheartedly also support the points made about preserving and not blocking the important views listed on page 31.

I have already mentioned the importance of preserving the local green spaces that we have left in Houghton, but I want to return to that as a number of these have come under threat of development in recent months and we have already lost others to development in recent years. I cannot stress enough how horrified most of the village was at the loss, for example, of the old copse at the southern end of the village which was allowed to be destroyed for a large (5 bedroom?) house. The southern end of the village has already changed enormously by the building of a large number of houses in the past few years. The character of that part of the village has been changed and harmed and some green spaces have been lost. If the further loss of any green spaces is allowed, it will change the character of the village completely as well as further damaging biodiversity. To that end, I would be completely against any development on the local green spaces listed on page 37 (and shown in the plan on page 39). Each of them needs protecting.

It is important also to note that we have no shop or bakery or school in the village and we have a very limited bus service. We also have no mains drainage or gas in the village. Any further - and particularly any large-scale - development will inevitably lead to more traffic as homeowners are largely car reliant and tankers to empty septic tanks/cess pits or to deliver oil or gas. The traffic from, to and through the village is already significantly higher than it was just a few years ago. The sustainability of any future building must, therefore, also be an important consideration (page 13 of the NDP).

In summary, I support the adoption of the NDP and am particularly concerned to preserve and protect the remaining local green spaces in the village, and to see that any future building is sympathetic to the style of the older buildings in the village and enhances rather than detracts from the character of the village.

Yours faithfully,

Dr Alistair Dougall
Houghton
Stockbridge
Hampshire
SO20