

Appendix B – Consultation Statement

Desford Parish Council thanks the Big Lottery Fund (Awards for All) for the substantial financial assistance it gave by way of grant to fund a major part of the preparation of the Desford Parish Neighbourhood Plan.

It also thanks Locality for a similar grant and for the technical assistance provided by AECOM Ltd. This enabled not only preparation of the Plan, but also the carrying out and reporting on the Strategic Environmental Assessment which was a vital part of the process.

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INTRODUCTION

This Consultation Statement has been prepared to fulfil the legal obligations of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations 2012. It

- contains details of the persons and bodies who were consulted about the proposed Neighbourhood Development Plan;
- explains how they were consulted;
- summarises the main issues and concerns raised by the persons consulted;
- describes how these issues and concerns have been considered and, where relevant, addressed in the proposed Neighbourhood Plan.

This document provides a record of the engagement that took place at the various stages of the plan's evolution. The main methods used to publicise the consultation and engagement process are documented, along with the main findings from the engagement.

The aims of the consultation process were:

- to be inclusive and open in the preparation of the Desford Parish Neighbourhood Plan (DPNP)
- to ensure consultation took place at all key stages,
- to engage as wide a cross-section of the community as possible and
- to ensure that the results of consultations were made publicly available.

The process began with an open ended, parish wide consultation and awareness raising exercise, also involving stakeholders other than residents, to obtain ideas and opinions for preparing the plan and what it might contain. As the plan progressed, the principal context was to ensure that the community:

- was kept fully informed of what was being proposed
- was able to make their views known throughout the process
- had opportunities to be actively involved in shaping the emerging plan and
- was made aware of how their views informed the draft neighbourhood plan.

A similar context was adopted for the first, formal consultation on the pre-submission version of the DPNP, and a more focussed exercise was undertaken to consult on the final Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) report.

Full records of the processes were kept, which summarised the points raised, commented on them and indicated what actions were to be taken in respect of them. For those not appropriate for inclusion as policies, consideration was given to including appropriate Community Actions where possible. Those reports are attached as Appendices.

At this stage, it is appropriate to record DPC's gratitude to:

- ✓ Locality: for a substantial grant and assistance and support from AECOM Ltd. to carry out the Strategic Environmental Assessment
- ✓ The Big Lottery Fund (Awards for All) for a substantial grant in the later stages of the plan
- ✓ YourLocale, our consultants, for their advice and support throughout a long, and sometimes fraught, process
- ✓ All those other Councils, organisations and individuals, especially our volunteers, for their advice and input: thanks for taking part!

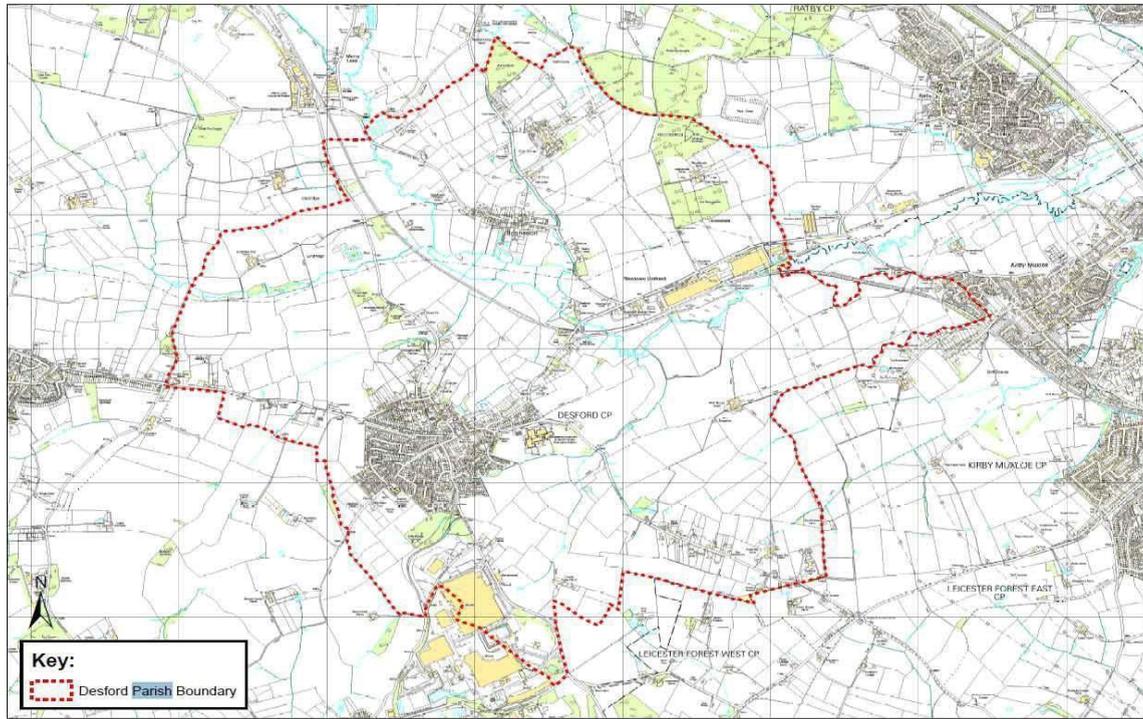
THE FIRST STEPS

Designation of Neighbourhood Plan Area

Although in late 2015, the approved Local Plan for the Borough of Hinckley & Bosworth (HBBC) did not require further housing sites to be allocated in Desford Parish until 2026, it was evident that national and regional circumstances and policies were changing and further residential development in the village of Desford, designated as a Key Rural Centre in the Local Plan, would be inevitable. So DPC resolved to prepare a neighbourhood plan which would give the local community a powerful set of tools to ensure that they would get the right type of development in the optimum locations for local people.

DPC submitted its application for the whole parish to be designated as an NP area on 12 February 2015. After discussions between DPC, Peckleton Parish Council and HBBC about extending the plan area into Peckleton, to cover the whole of a major employment complex, the plan area was approved in September 2015, without any extension.

PLAN OF DESIGNATED AREA



FORMING THE DRAFT PLAN TOGETHER

On 1 December 2015, the first public meeting was held and on 26 January 2016, the first meeting of the Desford Parish Neighbourhood Plan Working Group, comprising councillors and non-councillor parishioners was held. An early decision was to adopt the long title of Desford Parish Neighbourhood Plan to ensure that the smaller settlements of Botcheston and Newtown Unthank, plus the scattered rural occupiers, would feel included in the plan: the largest settlement by far is Desford Village and the title was important to communicate the determination to plan for all the parishioners and not just the village.

All the pre-drafting consultations were “open ended”: DPC was determined to elicit as much uninfluenced opinion and feeling as possible, rather than present a list of considered options for comment, so that there was community involvement from the start.

Drop-in Events, Stakeholder Workshop and Carnival Table

In May 2016 there were a series of Open Events to introduce the Desford Parish Neighbourhood Plan to residents:

- Friday 6th May 17.00-19.00 at Botcheston Village Hall (10 attended)
- Saturday 7th May 10.30 -14.30 at St Martin’s Church Centre (33 attended)
- Tuesday 10th May 16.00-20.00 at Desford Library (34 attended)

(of that total of 77, 58 were aged 65 or over).

The aim of these three events was to inform the community on Neighbourhood Planning and gain some initial feedback from residents on what they liked, disliked or would like to see improved within the parish. The event was publicised throughout the parish via:

- * A publicity leaflet distributed to all households
- * Colour posters displayed on notice boards and at key locations in the Parish
- * Articles in the *Graphic* and *Desford Parish News*
- * Desford Parish Council website

These Drop-in events were held at venues in both Botcheston and Desford and at different times in order to engage as many residents as possible across the designated area. The report of the sessions (Appendix 1) showed a wide range of likes, dislikes and aspirations for

the parish. Some were outside the scope of Neighbourhood Planning, some were suitable for policy consideration and others could be considered for Community Actions.

Stakeholder Involvement

On 5th June 2016 a Stakeholder Event was organised to introduce the DPNP to the local business community, farmers, neighbouring parishes and statutory authorities. The event was hosted by Bosworth Academy. Approximately 50 statutory consultees, 80 local businesses, 34 community organisations and 16 landowners/developers were notified of the event.

46 Delegates attended, and after a presentation, worked in 4 groups which submitted a wide range of issues in 3 broad areas:

- a) heritage, history and housing
- b) environment, flooding, open spaces, recreation and renewable energy
- c) facilities, services, education, employment and economy.

The drop-in days and workshop were followed on 15th June 2016 with a DPNP public awareness stand at Desford Carnival.

Appendix 1 is a full report of the drop-in sessions and Appendix 2 is a similar document recording the process and results of the Stakeholders Workshop.

PREPARING THE PRE-SUBMISSION DRAFT PLAN

The Questionnaire

From these exercises, a questionnaire was developed by the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group. The final version of the questionnaire was delivered to all households in the designated area for every person on the electoral register to complete. The questionnaire was 20 sides of A4 in length including the instructions, guidance notes providing further background and context and a map of the designated area. Those completing the Parish of Desford Neighbourhood Plan Questionnaire also had the opportunity to enter a free prize draw.

In addition, any residents in need of a home in the Parish were also able to complete a separate *Housing Needs Survey* which was being facilitated by Midlands Rural Housing, with the support of Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council.

A total of 1820 questionnaires were delivered to households in the designated area during March 2017 by members and volunteers of the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group. Completed questionnaires were collected week commencing 27th March 2017 by Working

Group members. Residents could also leave their completed questionnaires at the Parish Office, Desford Library or Manor Farm Cottage, Botcheston.

Completed questionnaires were returned and then uploaded by volunteers from the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group onto a survey software system for analysis by the Rural Community Council (Leicestershire & Rutland)

The total number of completed Questionnaires returned and submitted onto the survey software system was 627. This equates to a 34% response rate to the questionnaire.

Appendix 3 is the RCC(L&R) report containing the Questionnaire, the methodology, the distribution and analysis of the responses.

Also, from 2011 census data and a previous 2001 village appraisal, it emerged that there were particular issues with local housing need. Accordingly, to ensure that the issues affecting the elderly wanting to downsize or move to specialist accommodation and younger households wanting to rent or buy in the parish, as mentioned, HBBC and DPC carried out a Housing Needs Survey alongside the questionnaire. That survey was prepared by Midlands Housing Association and the replies analysed in a report attached to the Submission NP itself.

Evidence Gathering

3 Focus Groups were established to research and gather evidence:

Housing

Environment and Heritage

Traffic, Facilities, Amenities and Employment

Each group was assisted by a consultant from YourLocale with experience in the relevant areas. Their researches involved many contacts with landowners, associations, e.g. for sport, local businesses and a range of voluntary bodies. Constant contact for information and guidance was maintained with HBBC, with whom a Service Level Agreement was entered into, and with RCC (Leicestershire and Rutland) who delivered important parts of the service on behalf of HBBC, especially in the early awareness-raising exercises and the open ended consultations. Many buildings were visited for the proposed Local Heritage List and all open land was visited to assist in assessing environmental quality, views of the landscape and contribution to the amenities of the parish. There were detailed discussions with landowners in the Site Assessment process, recorded as part of the NP itself.

PRE-SUBMISSION DRAFT CONSULTATION

All the information and opinions gathered were integrated, with guidance given by HBBC about the indicative housing need during the plan period, and a draft plan was put out to consultation between 9 November 2018 and 21 December 2018, the statutory period of 6 weeks, subsequently extended to January 2019. HBBC, statutory consultees, a wide range of institutions and associations and societies were consulted; notices were published on council notice boards. The website plus social media were also used. A pre-consultation

leaflet was delivered to most households in the parish by The Graphic, a magazine delivered to the majority of homes in the parish, and other areas were covered by volunteers.

Judged by the criterion of numbers responding, this exercise was very successful: it reached a wide range of interested people and bodies and it generated a substantial response. YourLocale analysed and tabulated each response, commented on it and suggested the action to be taken in respect of it. Appendix 4 is a schedule of responses, comments and actions to be taken.

Supplementary Housing Sites Consultation

Because the housing element of the DPNP was considered to be especially important, a supplementary consultation was held, expiring on 23 May 2019, to elicit views about the latest sites identified by HBBC in their most recent call for sites.

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA) AND CONSULTATION

During the Regulation 14 Consultation, RCC (Leicestershire & Rutland) screened the plan for the need to carry out an SEA. It was established that a site allocated for housing in the draft plan lay within the statutory distance of a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Accordingly, HBBC directed that a Strategic Environmental Assessment was required. Locality provided and funded the services of AECOM Ltd., highly experienced, specialist consultants in this field, to carry out this assessment, and they scoped in the need to assess the whole plan, not just the relationship of the proposed allocation site to Botcheston Bog, the SSSI in question.

The final SEA report (Appendix 5) was received on 17 October 2019. It was supportive of the draft plan and made a series of recommendations for improvement, which were accepted by DPC on 18 December 2019 for incorporation in the submission version of the plan. As required by Regulation 13 of the 2004 Regulations, DPC consulted on the SEA report and a more up to date version of the draft plan (“the relevant documents”). As the latest version of the plan did not differ in substance from the earlier one and the SEA report was supportive, DPC determined that the appropriate steps for the purposes of the Regulations would comprise a focussed consultation, carried out between 1st November and 23rd November 2019. The statutory consultees (Severn Trent, Natural England and Historic England) were consulted, as were Leicestershire County Council, HBBC, adjoining Parish and District Councils and owners/agents of sites assessed in the NP. Public Notice Boards and the website were used to offer the opportunity for public participation.

Appendix 6 is a schedule of amendments suggested in the report and adopted by the Parish Council and Appendix 7 is a YourLocale schedule of responses, comments and suggested actions in respect of the responses to the Regulation 13 Focused Consultation.

Appendix 8 is a schedule of amendments suggested by HBBC and Appendix 9 is a schedule of responses to these proposed amendments.

It should be noted that much of the response comprised objections to the amount of housing provided for in the draft plan: this, of course, is not a matter for the Neighbourhood

Planning Authority, which must comply broadly with the Local Plan and thus DPC have used the housing need indicative figure supplied by HBBC. DPC does not have the resources or capacity to research its own figure, and therefore has relied on that indicative figure supplied by the LPA, calculated for Borough wide consistency using the government's standard methodology, subject to important caveats. No indication has been provided to DPC that the circumstances covered by those caveats have changed, and no alteration to that number has been suggested to DPC. Although a recent Planning Appeal on a non-allocated site, has been allowed, and will have to be taken into account. Appropriate wording has been written into the plan, pending further discussions with HBBC after submission.

CONCLUSION

It can be seen, therefore, that DPC has consulted widely and effectively, initially to gather the material to prepare the first draft of their plan. There were ongoing communications during the plan preparation and the website "Desford Vision" was maintained with notes of meetings, documents and news/updates.

There was a statutory consultation under Regulation 14 of the Town and Country Planning (General Regulations) 2012 Regulations and a supplementary consultation on housing sites. A further statutory consultation under Regulation 13 of the 2004 Regulations was carried out after the SEA report was received.

From the various appendices, it can be seen that the various consultation exercises reached a wide audience. The responses were systematically considered and provided:

- * a major element of the input which formed the first draft plan and
- * an effective critique of that draft, enabling the submission version to be prepared in a way which both reflected local opinion and had regard to up to date planning realities.