

**HOUGHTON PARISH COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of the Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting**  
**held on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024 at 19.00**  
**at Houghton Village Hall**

Present: Parish Councillors: A Young (Chairman), L Adams (Vice Chairman), L Middleton, A Dougall,  
P Chant, B Battey, J Coombes.  
Planning Consultant Steve Lees

Members of the Public: 8

Minutes: Mrs C L Cotterell (Parish Clerk)

The meeting started at 19.00

**Item Minute**

- 1. Chairman's Welcome and Public Participation**  
The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting.
- 2. Apologies for Absence – None.**
- 3. Declarations of Interest**  
To declare an interest in any items of business on this agenda – **None**.
- 4. Planning Consultant**  
To approve the engagement of a planning consultant to advise the Council on planning application responses when needed – **Resolved** to engage a planning consultant – Proposed Cllr Dougall, seconded Cllr Adams.
- 5. Planning**
  - a) 23/03268/OUTS - Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of 6 detached dwellings with all matters reserved except layout and access – Houghton House, Houghton – The planning consultant outlined his draft response on the planning application and answered questions from Cllrs and residents – Cllrs **resolved** to accept the planning consultant's advice and object to the planning application for the reasons outlined in the consultant's response – (see Appendix to minutes) - **Objection** – Proposed Cllr Dougall, seconded Cllr Middleton.
  - b) 23/03222/FULLS - Erection of garden outbuilding (craft room) – Millbank, Horsebridge Road, Houghton – **Resolved No Objection** – Proposed Cllr Adams, seconded Cllr Middleton.
  - c) To consider any other planning applications received – **None received**.
- 6. Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan Consultation**  
To consider a response to the consultation – **Agreed** that the Parish Council will not provide a response on this occasion.
- 7. Next Meeting**  
Full Council Meeting – Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 19.00

**Meeting closed at 20.16**

**These minutes were approved and signed at the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

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## Appendix

Response of Houghton Parish Council to the, Proposed Development of Six dwellings ref 23/03268/OUTS, Houghton House, Houghton.

### Summary

The Parish Council considers that the proposed development is contrary to the relevant policies of the Development. It objects to the proposed development at Houghton House ref 23/03268/OUTS, under Policy SD1, Policy COM2, Policy COM7, Policy E1, E7 and Policy E9 of the Borough Local Plan and Policy HTN1, HTN3, HTN4 and HTN5 of the Houghton Neighbourhood Plan.

### Introduction

1. This submission sets out the response of Houghton Parish Council to the proposed development of six dwellings at Houghton House.
2. The Parish Council may make additional representations in the response to the publication of additional material submitted by the applicant and responses of consultees.

### Background

3. An application was submitted to TVBC and registered on the 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2024 ref 23/03268/OUTS. It is an outline application for the demolition of an existing dwelling and erection of six dwellings, all matters except access and layout to be determined at a later date. Access is via the existing track serving Houghton House which would be improved.
4. The starting point in the consideration of proposals for development is the Development Plan for the area. Applications should be determined in accordance with it unless material considerations indicate otherwise ref section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
5. The Development Plan for the area is the Test Valley Borough Revised Local Plan adopted in January 2016 and the Houghton Neighbourhood Plan (HNP) made on the 19<sup>th</sup> May 2022. The Neighbourhood Plan is the most up to date part of the Development Plan and should be given significant weight in the decision-making process
6. In terms of housing land supply, local planning authorities are required to have a five-year supply of housing land. As at the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2022 for the housing area within which the application site falls (Northern Test Valley) TVBC can demonstrate that it has 5.71 years supply. Where local planning authorities have a five-year supply of land the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply.
7. The Parish Council's objections are presented with reference to the relevant Local Plan and HNP policies.

### The Parish Council's Response

#### Sustainable Development

8. Policy SD1 of the Local Plan permits development that accords with policies set out and those in the HNP. The key objectives of the HNP relevant to the application are;
  - **To protect, retain and improve community services and facilities** including open space and land and buildings used for sport and recreation and access to the countryside, to support health, social and cultural well-being.
  - **To help meet housing requirements** by encouraging a mix of type and size of properties in line with community needs.
  - **To ensure that any future development takes account of the impact on the community** including infrastructure and amenities.
  - **To conserve the rural character of the village and to preserve and enhance the things that are valued by the people of Houghton** such as its peace and tranquillity.
  - **To ensure that any future development** is in keeping with the rural setting and meets the needs of the community.
  - **To protect Houghton and Bossington Conservation Area, important buildings and open spaces.**

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9. The policies of the Neighbourhood Plan are intended to deliver these objectives.

Policy HTN1 Sustainable development

*Development proposals which contribute to the sustainable development of the Houghton Neighbourhood Area will be supported. In assessing the sustainability credentials of a development proposal, the achievement of the following objectives will be sought and balanced against each other, as relevant to the proposal:*

- *meeting the needs of the community for housing, services and facilities;*

10. Policy HTN1 of the Neighbourhood Plan seeks to meet the needs of the community. Policy HTN3 seeks to achieve a more balanced stock of homes to meet the housing needs of the community. For the reasons set out below in regard to these two policies the Parish Council considers that the proposal for six large detached properties is not meeting the needs of the community.

11. Houghton is categorised as a rural village in the settlement hierarchy set out in the adopted local plan. Such villages have a limited range of facilities and because of that the local plan considers that only some additional development may be appropriate, ref paragraph 5.45. Notwithstanding the policy approach because of the extent of the settlement boundary for the village Houghton has experienced a considerable amount of development (30 dwellings) relative to its size have been permitted since 2016

12. It should be noted that the Regulation 18 version of the local plan considered by TVBC at the Council meeting on the 17<sup>th</sup> January 2024 does not include Houghton as a named settlement in the hierarchy but falls under Tier 4 open countryside where development is restricted.

**The Parish Council objects under Policy SD1 of the Local Plan and Policy HTN1 of the Neighbourhood Plan.**

Principle of Development

13. The site is within the settlement policy boundary, ref Policy COM2 of the Local plan, where the principle of development is accepted if appropriate to the other policies of the local plan. It should not be assumed that being located within the settlement boundary means that a permission would be granted as the other policies of the Development Plan which includes the Neighbourhood Plan need to be satisfied.

14. The Parish Council considers that the proposed development is in conflict with Policies COM7, E1, E9 and T1 and therefore is in conflict with Policy COM2.

**The Parish Council objects under Policy COM2 of the Local Plan**

Policy HTN3 Type of new housing

*New housing development should provide dwellings of a type and size that meets the latest assessment of local needs. This includes providing dwellings with 2- and 3- bedrooms to meet the need for smaller properties. Larger dwellings will only be supported where there is up-to-date evidence of a local need for such homes. As part of providing a range of housing types, self and custom-built dwellings will be supported subject to other Development Plan policies.*

15. A summary of the supporting evidence for the policy is set out in paragraphs 5.6-5.15 of the NP. It includes: the Test Valley Strategic Housing Market Assessment 2011-31 for the sub-area within which Houghton is located highlighted a requirement for smaller (1-3 bed homes) and the Village Housing Survey 2018 which identified a need for smaller market housing.

16. The Parish Council in early 2023 carried out a survey of residents seeking views on village life. From the responses received many were concerned about the continuing pressure for new development. In particular there was opposition to any more large houses and if there was a need then they should be smaller and ones which would encourage people to stay in the village.

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17. The response of the TVBC Housing officer of the 13<sup>th</sup> March 2023 in respect of the previous application ref 23/00557/OUTS for five dwellings identified a need for smaller dwellings.

18. TVBC commissioned a Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) to inform the review of the adopted local plan. It was published in January 2022. It provides the most up to date picture in respect of the housing stock of the Borough. The SHMA has been selectively quoted in the applicant's planning statement in support of the proposed mix of housing.

19. Figure 6.17 of the SHMA is referred to which sets out a proposed mix for market housing for Southern Test Valley Rural area (STVR) within which Houghton is located: 1-bed 6%, 2-bed 26%, 3-bed 39% and 4+beds 29%. The current application expressed in percentage terms is, 3-bed homes 66% and 4/5bed homes 33%. There is no provision for smaller one and two-bed homes.

20. In support of the proposed mix the planning statement relies on selective quotes from paragraph 6.42 of the SHMA. They refer to the role and function of the area in this case the higher priced areas such as STVR providing opportunities for wealthier families and that edge of village sites may be more appropriate for family housing.

21. What the Planning Statement does not do is refer to the fact that STVR has the highest proportion of 4+bedroom homes compared with the other housing areas within the Borough and that the Borough has a higher proportion of such homes than the South East of England ref paragraphs 6.36 and Figure 6.5. Paragraph 6.42c) highlights that the rural area is likely to have very few small/cheaper homes and therefore consideration needs to be given to measure to diversify the supply of homes available. It is also worthy of note that paragraph 6.11 of the SHMA advises that "the size of housing which households occupy relates more to their wealth and age than the number of people they contain".

22. In the context of the advice in the SHMA the applicant has provided no evidence to justify this mix of house sizes in relation to the NP policy which seeks to improve the provision of smaller 1-3 bed homes. The only justification for the larger 4+bed homes is to replicate the development on land at Four Winds which comprises four 4-bed homes which the proposed 4+ homes would be of a similar size.

23. This approach fails to understand the purpose of the NP policy which is to have a more diversified housing stock which better meets the housing needs of the village. The policy is a response to the continuing addition of large homes to the supply of housing in the village. In the last 10 years prior to the adoption of the NP of the 25 permitted 18 were four 4 and 5 beds. There is no justification within the current planning application for the proposed house types to support a departure from Policy HTN3.

24. The Parish Council understands that two four-bed properties on the adjoining Four Winds site, remain unsold some two years after they were completed. This would suggest that there is little need or demand for additional large properties in the village.

25. The size of the proposed dwellings is a further concern of the Parish Council. The three bed homes range in size from 292-367sqm which is significantly larger than the average three bed home which is approximately 95-110sqm. The four+ bed homes range from 300-356sqm compared with an average size of approximately 140-150sqm. The description of the proposed dwellings as three and four/five bed given the size of the dwellings is considered to be highly misleading having regard to the aim of Policy HTN3.

26. The Parish Council is very concerned that as the layout is a matter to be determined at this stage, if permitted, it would be very difficult indeed for TVBC to control the number of bedrooms and as a consequence the NP policy would be undermined.

27. Given the size of the proposed dwellings which is far in excess of what one would normally expect for 3 and 4+ bed homes it is a reasonable assumption that they have the potential to have more bedrooms than that described. In support of its position the Parish Council would refer TVBC to the appeal decision ref 3205051 which was relied upon by officers in recommending permission for the development at Stevens Drove ref

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22/00217/OUTS. In their decision, the inspector said that 'unless there was clear evidence to the contrary, an application should be dealt with on the basis of the description and the information actually provided' see paragraph five of the decision letter.

28. In that context the Parish Council considers that there is clear evidence i.e.; the extremely large size of the proposed dwellings, that they would have more bedrooms and the application should be considered on that basis with regard to Policy HTN3 of the neighbourhood plan.

29. The proposed scheme is not considered to satisfy the type of housing identified to support the local community with no evidence provided to justify a departure to Policy HTN3.

**The Parish Council objects under Policy HTN3 of the Neighbourhood Plan**

Policy COM 7 Affordable Housing

30. The size of the application site is stated as 0.79ha on the application form. The planning statement at paragraph 2.1 refers to a developable area of 0.49ha taking into account the area required for the access and vegetation margins. The planning statement at paragraph 5.13 refers to the Affordable Housing SPD and the threshold of 15 dwellings or 0.5ha as triggering a requirement for 40% affordable housing. The case is made for no affordable housing on the basis of a net gain of five dwellings and a developable site area of 0.49ha.

31. The Planning Statement fails to reference the complete picture regarding the advice in the SPD in respect of when affordable housing would be required. The thresholds set out in paragraph 6.2 of the SPD advise that affordable housing will be sought for:

- 15plus dwellings or sites of more than 0.5ha 40%
- 10-14 dwellings or sites of 0.30-0.49ha 30%
- 6-9 dwellings or sites of 0.22-0.29ha 20% financial contribution equivalent

32. The SPD does provide some flexibility in respect of the particular characteristics of a site and constraints which may affect the what would be an acceptable number of dwellings ref paragraphs 6.15 -6.19.

33. Whilst some flexibility would be reasonable regarding the impact of the retention of trees on the site the applicant's approach to include the land required for the access to the site is considered wholly unjustified and if accepted by TVBC would set a precedent which could be applied to other sites with consequences for the provision of affordable housing. The layout comprising six very large dwellings to limit the net gain to five is considered to be a contrived approach to avoid providing affordable housing, as the site could clearly accommodate more dwellings.

34. If the applicant's assessment of the developable area was accepted, applying TVBC's Policy COM7 and the SPD then 30% of the proposed development should be affordable housing.

35. In respect of the previous application TVBC did not raise as a reason for refusal for lack of affordable housing. The net gain of dwellings was four which is below the threshold in terms of dwellings and it accepted the applicant's view that the site constraints reduced the developable area.

36. The current application needs to be considered on its merits having regard to the relevant Development Plan policies. The requirement for affordable housing is triggered by either the number of dwellings or the size of the site and for the purposes of establishing the quantum of affordable housing to be provided, Policy COM7 and the SPD set out a sliding scale, as referred to above. The applicant appears to have adopted a mix and match approach selecting the number of dwellings at the lowest end of the scale and applied it to the site area at the top of the scale. In this way, they seek to circumvent the need for affordable housing. In the Parish Council's view this is not the correct approach and if agreed by TVBC would in effect rule out many small sites, particularly in rural parts of the Borough from providing affordable housing where there is a significant need.

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37. TVBC are requested to undertake their own assessment of the site area suitable for development excluding the access track. Even on the assessment of the applicant, which the Parish Council considers is an under-assessment, the developable area of 0.49ha triggers a requirement for affordable housing.

38. The size of the site justifies the provision of affordable housing for which there is a need in the village. The Parish Council considers that the lack of any contribution is contrary to Policy COM7.

**The Parish Council objects under Policy COM7 of the Local Plan.**

Policy E1 High Quality Development

39. This Local Plan policy and the supporting text paras 7.7-7.16 provides a framework for considering the application in design terms. New development under Policy E1a) should complement the character of the area within which it is located and make efficient use of land whilst respecting the character of the area ref Policy E1d). development will not be permitted if it is of poor design and fails to improve the character, function and quality of the area.

Policy HTN4 Village Design

*Development proposals should protect and enhance the key characteristics of Houghton village as set out in Table 2 and have regard to the National Model Design Code and Guidance. In particular, proposals should:*

- *maintain the overall dispersed and linear form of the village through the siting and orientation of development; and*
- *be in keeping with the character of properties in the locality, including as to scale, height, materials and detailing;*

40. The applicant's approach to the design of the scheme is a simplistic one. Their starting point is the existing development of four large dwellings on adjoining land, ref para 6.13 of the submitted planning statement. There is no reference to or analysis of the wider setting of the site and its character and its relationship with the conservation area. The scheme, if permitted, would result, in-combination with the Four Winds development, a cluster of ten large dwelling set back from the highway which would be contrary to the predominantly linear character of Houghton. That character has been seriously eroded as a result of a number of recent decisions by TVBC

41. The Parish Council considers that the right approach is one which analyses the character of the village, the setting of the site and the housing needs of the area.

**The Parish Council objects under Policy E1 of the Local Plan and Policy HTN4 of the Neighbourhood Plan.**

Flood Risk and Water Quality

42. In periods of heavy rain there is a significant flooding issue of the road close to the access track which would serve the proposed housing, which Hampshire County Council are aware of. The Parish Council and local residents have observed water running down the track into the public highway. There is a concern that the proposed development and the introduction of hard surfaces will make worse the current problem. TVBC are requested to seek the advice of the Local Lead Flood Authority.

**The Parish Council objects under Policy E7 of the Local Plan In the absence of any technical information to demonstrate that the proposed development would not make worse the existing flooding issue.**

Heritage

43. Houghton has a conservation area and contains a number of listed buildings and buildings of local interest which have been identified in the neighbourhood Plan. Policy E9 of the Local Plan and HTN5 of the Neighbourhood Plan provide the framework for assessing the impact of development along with the NPPF.

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Policy HTN5 Houghton and Bossington Conservation Area

44. Development proposals in or adjacent to the Houghton and Bossington Conservation Area should preserve or enhance its character or appearance, having regard to its significance and special interest as this is set out in the Conservation Area Policy document adopted by Test Valley Borough Council, including by:

- reflecting traditional building forms in terms of density, height, massing and scale; and
- using local or traditional materials, colours and detailing; and
- retaining and reinforcing local landscape features such as trees and hedgerows.

45. The NPPF (2023) ref paragraphs 195-214 provide a framework for how the impact of development on historic environment should be assessed. Paragraph 200 advises local planning authorities to require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected the contribution to their setting and to the potential impact of the proposed development.

46. The submitted heritage statement makes no mention of the relevant local plan and neighbourhood plan policies or the advice in the NPPF and does no more than describe the proposals and the nearest listed building, Beam Cottage and makes reference to the use of the access drive.

47. There is no assessment of the impact of the proposed changes to the access to accommodate an increase in vehicle movements on the setting of the Beam Cottage. The submitted transport assessment refers two passing bays proposed along the section of the access from the highway to the entrance to the site. One of the bays is immediately adjacent to Beam Cottage which is a listed building.

48. The application site is located to the south of a group of three listed buildings on Church Lane, the Manor House, All Saints Church and the Old Rectory. The heritage statement does not assess the impact of the proposed development on their setting.

49. There is also no reference to the impact on the setting of the Houghton Conservation Area the boundary of which runs along the eastern and northern boundaries of the site. Indeed, the only mention of the Conservation area is the extracts from the pre-application advice provided by TVBC.

50. The NPPF is quite clear in advising what the process should be when there is any harm to the significance or setting of designated assets i.e. that any harm should require clear and convincing justification.

51. The application site is located to the south of the property Church Stow which is identified in the Conservation Area as a building of local interest and in the Neighbourhood Plan as a non-designated heritage asset.

52. The Parish Council considers that the heritage statement submitted has not been prepared in accordance with national guidance and no clear and convincing justification has been submitted by the applicant in support of their proposals.

**The Parish Council objects under Policy E9 of the Local Plan and HTN5 of the Neighbourhood Plan**

Access

53. The submitted Transport Assessment (TA) has estimated a net increase of 23 trips along the existing access serving Houghton House on which it has based the proposed improvements to the existing access.

54. The Parish Council considers that relying on the past lack of a history of collisions through-out the operation of the access track when it has only served a single dwelling does not justify the proposed sub-standard forward visibility, ref paragraphs 4.6 and 4.7 of the TA.

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55. The proposed improvements to the existing access between the entrance to the site and the highway comprise two passing bays shown as accommodating two cars (Skoda Octavia). There is no drawing to show if a delivery vehicle larger than a Skoda Octavia and a car can pass safely using the two passing bays on the otherwise unimproved access. The Parish Council is concerned that a vehicle entering the site would have to reverse back onto the highway to allow a larger vehicle to exit the site.

56. The TA refers to the provision of a bin collection point adjacent to the carriageway ref paragraph 4.8. The Parish Council is concerned that given the number of dwellings proposed and TVBC's proposed revised collection arrangements that there could be an issue of uncollected bins obstructing the footway. The residents of the proposed new properties would be expected to take their bins a significant distance to the roadside collection point which could be an issue for those who may have mobility issues.

**The Parish Council objects under Policy T1 of the Local Plan.**