

**Duddington with Fineshade Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Committee Meeting**  
**12 August 2020**  
**Via Zoom 19.30**

**1 In attendance:**

Sandie Parsons – Chair (SP), Shenagh Hackett- Secretary (SPH), Gary Kirk -  
*Yourlocale* (GK), Derek Doran – (DD) *Yourlocale*, Paul Hackett (PH), Barrie Galpin  
(BG), Sandy Scott (SS), Peter Kerr (PK),

**Apologies for absence: None**

**Members of the Parish Council:**

Maggie Scott (MS), Rae Spencer Jones (RJ), James Maunder Taylor (JMT), Rick  
Holder (RH)

**Apologies for absence: Dee George**

**2 Declarations of interest**

None.

**3 Minutes of meeting held on 15 July 2020**

**a) Amendments:**

**Item 7** Clarification was requested for the numbers (13 & 16) within brackets.  
These referred to the specific SSA criteria for Stocks Hill

Objections to affordable housing raised by JMT and JW were in relation to the  
fact that there was a lack of confidence in ENC planners to uphold the high  
standards of building within the conservation area given the costs associated  
with Collyweston slate and stone.

The access to Stocks Hill was raised and it was pointed out that access to the  
field was from Stamford Road via a gate and not from Highfield. This is to be  
raised under agenda item 5 of this agenda.

**Item 7** The Neighbourhood Plan (NP) defines the boundary and provides the  
strongest control possible outside the boundary with very little chance of  
development taking place. The NP defines that Stocks Hill is outside the  
potential development area and the boundary is Mill St.

**b) Matters arising**

There were no matters arising not covered by the agenda.

**4 Site Assessments**

DD reported that he had had a very positive discussion with Mike Burton, Principal  
Planning Officer (PPO) for ENC who was very pleased with the progress and that  
potential sites for development had been allocated. It was noted however that  
housing numbers for the two sites had not yet been confirmed by them. These  
proposals have to be reviewed by Anne Dicks the Planning Policy Officer for ENC to  
make sure she is happy with the proposals and who will then give final comments on  
the specific sites. Following this, the housing numbers can be agreed with the  
landowners. At the time of this meeting she was away on holiday for a week. Overall  
DD felt that this was a very positive discussion with the PPO who was particularly  
pleased with the proposed redevelopment of the derelict buildings at Manor Farm.

It was confirmed that the Group were comfortable with the two sites as allocated for housing development however the results of the consultation with Anne Dicks will need to be taken into consideration.

**Action:**

Your locale to proceed with the amendments to site development sites to the Neighbourhood Plan when comments have been received from ENC.

**5 Local Green Spaces**

GK presented a briefing note on Local Green Spaces (LGSs) to the Group and it was explained that this was one of the most powerful designations available within Neighbourhood Plans and in order to qualify as a local green space the criteria contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) have to be met. Every field in the parish had been measured against the criteria and each site was scored. As a result of the exercise four sites within the neighbourhood came to the top of the scoring system and have been put forward as LGSs. The Sheep Field and Village Green with the adjoining community orchard at Fineshade and Macgregor's Garden and the Welland Approach in Duddington. At the previous meeting the Parish Council had requested that Stocks Hill (SH) was reassessed as it was felt that local information had not been made available at the time of the assessments. It was suggested that people who had not had the opportunity to comment (e.g. new residents) within the last two years should be contacted for their views however it was recommended that the need to progress was important and that everyone in the neighbourhood would have the opportunity to contribute with their thoughts as part of the Regulation 14 and 16 consultation process.

It was emphasised that it was the Parish Council's decision over the allocation of Local Green Spaces. However the importance of using the NPPF criteria was stressed to demonstrate that in the event of an objection from the landowner, the scoring had been consistent if subjected to a more forensic investigation to justify the scores.

A query was raised concerning the definition of "settlement". It was explained that settlements can be different sizes and that Duddington is one larger settlement and Fineshade a smaller one however four sites was felt appropriate for the area. Examples were given of other NPs where larger settlements had been allocated LGSs close together and had subsequently been dismissed by Examiner.

**a) Stocks Hill**

BG had previously been requested by SP to carry out a re-evaluation of the area. Following his reassessment BG presented a report with pictures using new information given to him which was then taken into account when the site was visited again. Despite this information and following an intense survey SH still fell below the threshold and therefore would not qualify as a Local Green Space.

A number of points were addressed:

- Using the settlement boundary as defined within the Neighbourhood Plan, HBE.1, SH is in open countryside therefore has strong protection against development and does not need to be designated as a LGS.

- SH is quite unlike any area within the village; it is a semi-wild space and this is why people in the village feel it is special.
- There is only one entrance with access from Stamford Road. There is a gate which is not locked but with a rope across the latch and there is nothing to stop people going in. However at the time of the assessment nothing was observed to support the fact that it was used regularly by dog walkers or any walkers. Evidence of sheep poo was observed.
- The field scored highly for views and beauty. Together with apple and walnut trees, there is limestone grassland, and a natural spring and it was suggested that there was great potential for a community-managed orchard or wildlife conservation area
- Remains of a house were visible but this only produced a low history score.
- Previous assessments had been carried out by Sandy and Maggie Scott and BG following guidance from John Martin the environment consultant from Yourlocale. Tranquillity had been assessed largely in terms of how close areas were to traffic noise. SH was assessed as being middle level in line with other adjacent sites.
- Recreation value was to remain at zero as there was no demonstrable evidence to support activities taking place. BG had found no evidence on the ground and there were no known photos providing evidence of recreational activities such as sledging or community events.

Based on the information provided and the re-assessment, the scoring was reaffirmed that SH did not qualify as a LGS. Again it was stressed that as SH is outside the settlement boundary it is technically in open countryside, and therefore LGS would not offer any additional protection against development.

A discussion took place concerning the criteria used to determine community use and the possibility of the Village claiming the field as a community orchard was debated. Examples were given of other villages in the area that have a pocket park or community orchard.

It was stated that in the past Stocks Hill had been used for sledging, walking and gathering windfalls but it was stressed that there was little current evidence of these activities taking place and personal testimony would be required. It was stated by JMT that people would be willing to write affidavits to support local usage. It was questioned to as whether these activities were carried out with the permission of the landowner and it was felt that these had become custom and practice within the village. Following the death of the original owner the land had been passed to one of the owner's sons who now resides in Australia.

One of the main issues with designating SH as a LGS was that the field is in private ownership and would require the landowner's permission. If it were to be claimed that there was recreational use the owner would possibly say that people were trespassing on the land and lock off. The owner could also inform the Examiner of this fact resulting in it being refused as a LGS.

The recreational value 3 of the Welland Approach was queried and it was stated that, contrary to previous advice received, it was never used for recreational purposes. GK reminded the meeting that the LGS designation is not meant to be used simply to block potential development but rather to recognise and celebrate the glorious open spaces within the community.

When examiners are reviewing LGSs some things will be obvious to them e.g. the examiner would be able to see that there are views and nothing to prevent access from the Welland Approach. The examiners would not walk through and observe SH or MacGregor's Field, both of which are enclosed land but they would need to rely on demonstrable evidence of their value to the community.

Furthermore SH is a large field, worth a substantial amount if developed and other sites are small in comparison. In GK's opinion it would be very difficult to justify a green space of the size of SH; it would have to be used almost every week with signs of regular use.

Without LGS status SH would still be protected as it is outside the settlement boundary, technically in the countryside and a greenfield site. The settlement boundary includes houses and gardens and HB1 of the NP demonstrates that SH is outside the village boundary. Under Policy HB2 of the NP, with the site allocation of Manor Farm and the Builders' Yard the village would meet its allocation of housing offering further protection and no further housing development would be required. The question of resurrection of the orchard was raised together with the possibility of creating a community orchard.

It was agreed that it would be perilous to put SH forward as a LGS and that engaging with the Landowner would be the best option. It was felt that the Landowner should be approached and not to go through the Agent and it was also stressed that nothing could progress until the permission had been granted.

A query was raised concerning whether the trees in SH were protected.

### **Proposals:**

1) The Landowner of Stocks Hill to be approached with the view to expressing how special the field is to the Village and requesting permission for the Village to use it as a community orchard.

#### **Action:**

- The Parish Council to seek to engage with the Landowner concerning use of the orchard as a community access area.
- Members of the Parish Council to discuss outside of this meeting the most effective method of carrying this out and who to prepare the proposal.
- Sandie Parsons to confirm the tree protection orders on the existing trees.

2) The management and preservation of the orchard and field to become an additional Community Action within the Neighbourhood Plan with the possibility of finding someone taking on the role of nature conservation officer. This will help to demonstrate to the landowner the strength of local people's feelings.

#### **Action:**

- It is recommended that the Parish Council approve the proposal to adopt Stocks Hill as a community orchard

- Personal testimonies to be provided from local people to demonstrate usage of SH. (JMT)

The question of the Village purchasing the field was discussed. DD explained that the site would not be valued at building land price as it was outside the boundary.

It was noted that the owner of SH has other land for development in the Village. As part of discussions, the PC could make clear that they do not object to Manor Farm but do object to SH. Without LGS status SH would still be protected from development as it is outside the village boundary and is classed as countryside.

It was queried whether the intention to develop SH could be used in the Plan. It was confirmed that Community Actions can be aspirational

To seek to engage with the landowner regarding use of the site as a community orchard as proposed by BG was felt by *Yourlocale* to be a good way forward. If the PC could purchase a part of the land using grant income this would be considered a bonus.

It was recommended by GK that the PC agree to the four LGS sites, two at Duddington and two at Fineshade and to be aware that if the Landowner of SH was pushed over the green space issue the site would probably be lost for any type of future community activity.

Because both Macgregor's Garden and the Welland Approach sites, are never likely to be developed it was questioned why they need to be included. It was explained again that the purpose behind LGSs was to recognise and celebrate areas within the village that people considered to be special.

The selection of sites is ultimately the PC's decision but if SH was put forward as the only Duddington site the landowner could object strongly, meaning that the village would be left without any LGSs.

JMT was not in agreement with the four sites selected and requested a further review of all sites and their assessments.

**Action:**

- Inventory scoring of all open spaces to be sent to JMT to review consistency of approach. (SPH completed)

The strength of the red line showing the settlement area boundary was queried. It was explained that if passed at the referendum the red line has full weight. Any landowner can object to the boundary but here it can be adequately defended because the two sites selected already provide the housing requirements. It was also highlighted that anyone can challenge parts of the NP and in *Yourlocale's* experience every plan had been challenged. In the majority of cases the Examiner will go with the NP because of the weight of evidence provided by the Plan.

Although there was passionate support for SH, GK recommended that the PC goes with the evidence in the briefing notes provided at the meeting.

## **Fineshade LGS**

The Sheep Field at Top Lodge is owned by Mrs Barney and the Parish Council agreed the designation as a LGS at an extraordinary meeting last year. Mrs Barney had been written to and invited to comment however no communication was received. As part of her application for her proposed development of the field Mrs Barney had had an ecological survey carried out and this had demonstrated its ecological importance. It has also been designated as a Local Wildlife Site by the Wildlife Trust primarily because of its importance for reptiles.

The Forestry Commission had been involved in the discussions concerning the Village Green and orchard with the adjoining meadow and had not had any objections to it being designated as a LGS.

It was noted that the Wildlife Trust could be asked to assess SH for designation as a local Wildlife Site if that was a route that the Village wanted to take. However, it was pointed out that there were no known important biological records at present.

It was agreed to put four sites forward for LGS designation to PC

- Duddington - Macgregor's Garden and the Welland Approach Green
- Fineshade – the Sheep Field, the Village Green and orchard with adjoining meadow.
- The Parish Council would hold an extraordinary meeting to agree the proposals for LGS without delay. Proposed first Tuesday in September. Meeting by Zoom.

## **6 Next stage**

If accepted by the Parish Council, Your locale to make the changes to the Plan following any recommendations from the Senior Policy Planner. The Neighbourhood Plan will then go to East Northants Council for an environmental strategic assessment and following that the regulation 14 consultation to take place.

## **7 Date and time of next meeting**

It was felt that after this meeting there will be no requirement for the Advisory Group to meet again.

An extraordinary meeting of the PC would be set up as their next meeting was not until 9<sup>th</sup> October.

### **Action:**

SP to contact Richard Reed to set up a Zoom meeting for the second week in September.