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Our Ref:

Your Ref:

6th May 2021 (by email)

Dear Planning Policy Team,

Much Hadham Neighbourhood Plan- Submission March 2021

CPRE Hertfordshire support the production of Neighbourhood Plans; after six years of local effort, we would above all wish to congratulate the Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group, Much Hadham Parish Council and its residents on producing such a comprehensive plan with detailed policy, information on locally designated sites, and details such as local architectural references and priorities for S106 funding.

The plan identifies new housing sites in village centre locations without significant encroachment of the countryside and to meet the needs identified by the East Herts District Plan 2018. CPRE Hertfordshire note and welcome the wider public involvement including that of some Year 6 pupils in earlier consultation.

Our comments are intended to be supportive and relate to additional matters going forward, not least to issues of climate change, place making and affordable housing.

Climate Change: Perhaps due to its timing, climate action and the climate emergency do not feature prominently in the plan. The planning groups looking at Much Hadham may well be minded to continue with a new focus on actions and ways to reduce carbon footprints and transition to zero-carbon living. This is often related to planning, but involves actions that go beyond development control policy. For instance

- supporting business ideas to promote home working, co-working hubs and local services that reduce the need to travel,
- giving advantage to walking and cycling in local street design, supporting low-emission transport initiatives and the use of ebikes as well as electric vehicles,
- promoting more local food growing and food related businesses,
- community-led renewable energy schemes, pro-active working with local landowners and wildlife trusts on wildlife corridors and habitat creation and sustainable drainage initiatives that enhance water levels and quality in the River Ash.
- local community and street events that support local business and social activity. The challenges of climate change may well require villages and towns to recover many of the services and resilience lost over recent decades.

Place making: Some local parishes have established 'place making groups' to follow up on local neighbourhood plan work. These can focus on the public spaces and routes that villagers travel and meet in with ideas on how to enhance them, supporting both business and quality of life.



A major issue for Much Hadham for instance is vehicular domination of the B1004 High Street and what this means for the amenity and character of the village as well as peoples' travel choices. The Parish Council has formed a Traffic Working Party (2018) and the NP advocates traffic calming for the B1004. Guidance in *Manual for Streets* 2007 is relevant for matters of street design, with priority to put people ahead of vehicles in street design. This is further illustrated within *Traffic in Villages*; although produced for the County of Dorset, the principles apply widely and it is a useful reference for rural highways design and village centres.

Traffic in Villages <https://www.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/planning-buildings-land/planning-policy/north-dorset/neighbourhood-planning/submitted-plans/pdfs/hazelbury-bryan/associated-docs/background-info-and-docs/dorset-aonb-traffic-in-villages-toolkit.pdf>

Sustainable / Active Travel: Enhanced provisions for walking and cycling overlap with both climate change and place-making objectives. Much Hadham has always been deficient in public transport since the closure of the Buntingford branch line to Ware in the 1960s and the Traffic Working Group could expand its terms of reference to include sustainable and active travel planning, given the priorities of climate change to reduce traffic levels and decarbonise transport.

Baseline evidence is needed on patterns of use and the existing journeys that are made, to see which are potentially avoided and are least desirable due to lack of local alternatives. Is the old railway line a project for a new greenway for cycling and walking? Are there roads that could be made available as traffic free routes for cycling? Could a more effective Green Travel Plan for St Elizabeth's be encouraged for instance with more on site accommodation for staff?

The Neighbourhood Plan already includes a number of positive recommendations on footpaths and bridleways. More opportunities for local action might then be identified, the objective being to deliver a full network of attractive alternative routes which link the wider area.

Affordable housing: The NP includes land at Hill House (Policy MH H10) which is not allocated for housing, but earmarked as a possible reserve and a rural exception site to meet local needs with the role of a Community Land Trust. We would hope that identifying the site does not frustrate this process or embolden an application for general needs housing.

Past policies for rural exceptions schemes for affordable housing have not always secured significant local landowner interest. A local group, actively working with known local landowners, may be better placed to scrutinise schemes and give confidence and backing to those that meet the relevant planning policy criteria.

Ideally this brings forward affordably priced land for housing which is the key to securing genuinely affordable housing to meet local needs, be it for sale or rent. While these sites would not be allocated, the exceptions mechanism is there within the East Herts District Plan (Policy HOU4) and an established local working group to facilitate it may be able to deliver some positive outcomes.

Yours sincerely

Chris Berry
Planning Manager