

Dear Resident

Heslington Parish Neighbourhood Plan

As you may know a leaflet has recently been distributed in some areas of the parish and to some village groups urging residents to demand a referendum on the Neighbourhood Plan. This follows the Heslington Parish Council decision in April 2021 to withdraw the current Plan, amend the policies with the necessary rationale and evidence base and following consultation, resubmit amended Plan to referendum. The Heslington Parish Council issued a statement in May 2021 explaining the rationale for this, and how the Neighbourhood Plan will be moved forward. You can read it on the News section of Heslington website <https://www.heslington.org.uk/news/2021-05-19-update-on-heslington-neighbourhood-plan>

We understand that some residents may be perplexed and even upset by the leaflet they have received and the Heslington Parish Council decision. This delay to the Neighbourhood Plan's progress is a particular disappointment for the Working Group who have worked so tirelessly on the Heslington Parish Council's behalf to get us to this point. All of their good work is highly valued by the Heslington Parish Council and will be retained as the Neighbourhood Plan goes forward. Like the residents who helped work on the Parish Neighbourhood Plan, Parish Councilors are volunteers. We are not experts in parish matters either. But as your elected representatives we have to be accountable, and take advice from Yorkshire Local Councils Association, other bodies and employ an official officer. The Parish Council take responsibility for submitting the Plan to independent examination without re-employing the expert Consultant to check it over first. This omission is one of the reasons we are in the current position.

The Neighbourhood Plan Working Group completed their work with the submission of the plan for independent examination in 2019. In the months since then, and particularly following the Independent Inspector's report of February 2020, Heslington Parish Council have had on-going discussions, gathering information with the Planning Consultant and other connected bodies. This more recent advice has informed their collective decision to the Neighbourhood Plan process.

We feel it is important to clarify and correct some points made in the leaflet as accountable representatives of the whole parish.

“There is no Local Plan” The Local Plan will be the strategic plan for the whole of York City. It is well advanced and CYC use the draft version to guide planning decisions. The major changes to the Neighbourhood Plan were partly to make it compliant with the draft Local Plan. The current draft Local Plan includes a new settlement of over 3 thousand houses in Heslington Parish.

“Reject the current version and start all over again” As explained in our earlier statement we would not be starting all over again, but we would withdraw the current Plan, amend the policies with the necessary rationale and evidence base and following consultation, resubmit amended Plan to referendum “ As advised by our Consultant, this would also give the added opportunity to strengthen wording of the

present 16 policies to ensure they are the most effective in planning terms. Your Parish Council want to make this Neighbourhood Plan the best they can for all of Heslington's residents, including the policies that residents wanted most.

“We will be completely unprotected for this period and possibly forever. Developers could be given a free reign.” The present residential areas already have good protection; Conservation Status for a large area and the Village Design Statement. These remain in place giving protection. Heslington Parish Council have also recently commented further on the proposed Green Belt Boundaries which adds another layer of protection around the built environment. The deleted policies relate to areas that presently do not have such protection. The Heslington Parish Neighbourhood Plan covers the whole of the Parish.

“reflecting your wishes” The Heslington Parish Council is mindful that at the preliminary consultation stage, the Resident Survey results indicated strongly that the deleted policies concerned issues that remain at the top of desirables/improvements for the Parish – student accommodation, traffic through the village, retaining the agricultural setting of the village.

The policies were deleted as the current plan's rationale, evidence base and drafting are insufficient to support them. Two of them were **moved to an advisory category** and re-cast as “Community Actions”. These have no status in planning law rendering them to a “hope”.

“Cost a great deal” We are assured of the finance to employ the Consultant who will guide the Parish Council through the process. This does not mean starting at the beginning but there is work to do. We welcome hearing from residents who would like to help take this forward.

For information about the Neighbourhood Plan and other major planning issues we would refer you to Heslington Parish website and the minutes of Heslington Parish Council Meetings. The information there is impartial, and we believe it accurately reflects the differing views of a range of residents.

Published by Heslington Parish Council 17th July 2021

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