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## Finding the shape of Haslingfield's possible futures





As part of the Neighbourhood Plan process, it's vital to dig into assumptions and perspectives about what kind of a village we are and want to be.

Working with Rachel Hogger from ACRE and other consultants, the Neighbourhood Plan team have recently commissioned a Housing Needs Assessment, are developing a village Design Code, and are running two workshops: the first to understand the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that affect the village; and the second to more clearly understand what is within a Neighbourhood Plan, and what lies outside its influence.

The first of these scoping workshops took place upstairs in the Village Hall on the afternoon of Monday February 24th 2025. 13 people joined, some familiar with the process, some new to it. Fortified by home made biscuits, chocolates, samosas and apples, washed down with tea, we set to.

We first looked briefly at what a Neighbourhood Plan can and can't do. Here are some headlines:

- Once adopted, a Neighbourhood Plan has legal standing and the planning authority must refer to our policies in deciding on planning applications.

- Once submitted the Plan goes through a detailed process of approval, including examination by an appointed neutral examiner.
- After examination a public referendum takes place through which 50% or more of respondents must vote in favour for the Plan to be accepted.

We learned what the official examiners will be looking for in our plan. First of all there are three crucial tests:

- Do policies conform with the Local Plan?
- Are policies appropriate to national planning priorities and guidance?
- Do the policies contribute to the achievement of sustainable development?

In addition, examiners want to see a clearly articulated vision; relationship between policies (that they work together); evidence that we tried to engage with our full demographic (all ages, various interests, all income levels and so forth); and evidence that policies reflect actual community priorities and factual data, such as Housing Needs Assessments.

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The second part of the workshop turned into a lively conversation about different points of view on strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. We started to dig into questions around parking spaces and transport systems; community spaces and business spaces - do we want these, where would we make them, how would they be run, are they really needed? Of course we talked of East West Rail, but realistically know that this is outside of what a Plan can directly influence, even as we as a village work out how to respond. And how do we handle growth, and relationships with the City of Cambridge? If you think of conversation fierceness in terms of how many chillies are next to them, like an Indian restaurant menu, you might say we had a one or two chilli conversation. Which was great. People felt free to express their opinions without judgement or incivility. These are difficult questions, and it's possible we'll need some three chili conversations before the job is done.

Workshop two, on Monday, March 10th, 1-3 pm upstairs at the Village Hall, will look at specific policies which come out of the agreed priorities. After both workshops, we

should have a good idea of what should be in our Plan – the priorities – and what should not be in the plan, as it is out of the scope of the planning system or not supported by evidence.

Anyone is welcome to join us for these workshops. No experience necessary, just a willingness to listen and learn, and a desire to protect and improve our lovely village. Write to [hnp@haslingfieldparishcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:hnp@haslingfieldparishcouncil.gov.uk) to let us know you are coming!