

## Staverton Neighbourhood Plan – advice on development site choices

**Some basic policy principles** (based on NPPF, JLP, discussions with SHDC planners and personal professional experience)

1. Below I have set out several basic policy considerations which I hope will help the group.
  - a) Sites allocated in a plan should be suitable and sustainable. This has implications for location and for scale. Sites should normally be within or adjacent to sustainable settlements and of a size to enable some wider community gain to be achieved (for example, affordable homes, open space or community facilities).
  - b) It follows that it is unusual to allocate very small sites or single dwelling plots. A plan ought to make very few if any such allocations.
  - c) JLP Policy DEV8 establishes targets for affordable housing delivery on sites of 6 or more dwellings, as follows: for developments of 6-10 dwellings a commuted sum to enable affordable housing delivery equivalent to at least 30% of the number of dwellings; for developments of 11 dwellings or more at least 30% of the homes to be affordable.
  - d) JLP Policy TTV25 requires that the sustainable villages deliver about 550 homes in the plan period on sites allocated in neighbourhood plans (or failing that through other development proposals which may come forward). The indicative figures for Staverton and Woolston Green are 20 dwellings each, and the SPD which accompanies the JLP explains that the dwellings making up the numbers should be completed or originate after March 2017. The SPD also explains that sites of fewer than 5 dwellings will not count unless they have arisen through the neighbourhood plan process.
  - e) JLP Policy TTV27 sets out the parameters whereby sites might be released for housing development which would not normally be permitted. Such sites are commonly referred to as “exception sites”. The policy gives an incentive to such proposals by allowing up to 40% open market housing as part of the development. “Exception sites” are not normally allocated in plans. To do so makes them mainstream rather than exceptional.
  - f) There are rare instances where neighbourhood plans have stated that support would be given to a specific site being brought forward as an exception site. However, where this is done it should in itself be exceptional (that is to say, the plan ought not to make a habit of so doing).

2. In light of these principles and with an eye to the sites assessment already carried out I have reviewed the site choices made by the group. Below I set out some conclusions and recommendations for your consideration. They are designed to enable the plan to deliver the requirements of the JLP (which it must do) whilst also responding to local needs and concerns.

### **Covenants**

3. The great majority of sites available in the parish are subject to covenants. Most common is a covenant in favour of the Church Commissioners which claws back 30% of the uplift in land value up to 2034. Some sites are also subject to a further covenant clawing back 50% of any uplift in value until 2024.

### **Staverton village**

4. Staverton is stretched out along the village street, with no clear centre. There are focal points around the church and pub to the east and around Staverton Bridge, the former mill and the railway station to the west.
5. The sites assessment identified three sites as most suitable – sites 8, 13 and 15. The group chose sites 7, 8 and 13.
  - a) Site 7 was chosen by the group for just 3 dwellings, with 2 of those being affordable. JLP policy DEV8 appears to mean that no affordable homes could be required on the site if it were to be allocated. This constraint together with a planning history of refusals and some access difficulties leads me to recommend that it be deleted. The site could come forward to be considered as an exception site under policy TTV27 and the plan could express support for this to happen, although the history of refusals remains.
  - b) Site 8 was chosen by the group for just 2 dwellings, many fewer than the 12 or more shown in the assessment. It is understood that the site owner is unwilling to release the site for more than 2 dwellings at present, but if the site were to be allocated in the plan I consider that it may be hard to hold the line at only 2 dwellings. In any case, a more satisfactory form of development would be likely to be achieved through a larger scale proposal, which could create an enhancement of the village streetscene in this location. The site is also understood to be subject to both of the covenants mentioned in para 3 above, which the sites assessment had not taken account of. The terms of those covenants make the site more suitable for development in the longer term, probably beyond the plan period. I recommend that it is not included in this iteration of the plan.

- c) Site 13 was chosen by the group for 4 dwellings, a reduction from the 12 or more shown in the sites assessment, but it is understood that the site owner is only willing to release the site for 4 dwellings. The group aspire to see 3 of those dwellings as affordable, but JLP policies cannot secure that. Indeed, JLP policy DEV8 would appear to deliver no affordable houses on such a small site. Since there seems to be no realistic prospect for the site to be brought forward for more than 4 dwellings I recommend that the plan express support for it to come forward for consideration as an exception site under policy TTV27.
  - d) Site 15 was not selected by the group because of recognised constraints, particularly flood risk. It is, however, a brownfield site and has in the past received planning permission for 17,000 sq ft of offices. It is understood that the site owner is presently considering housing development, and site constraints should be able to be overcome through good design and mitigation. Housing development would require more garden and amenity space than an office development, and it would be important to provide enough car parking space, but the site ought to be able to accommodate more than 11 dwellings if the development includes some flats. That could secure 30% affordable homes on site under policy DEV8. Providing the site is able to be considered suitable located to contribute towards the indicative figure of 20 dwellings for Staverton, I recommend that it be included and that it be proposed for at least 11 dwellings. I consider that a flatted development or town houses, designed to be in keeping with the adjoining former mill buildings, could enable up to about 15 dwellings to be satisfactorily brought forward.
2. In summary, for **Staverton** village the choice is presently very difficult. Not many owners are prepared to release their sites for more than a handful of houses (too few to deliver affordable homes under DEV8). The most suitable large site is subject to a covenant which would presently claw back 50% of any uplift in site value and the owner is only willing to release a small corner for 2 dwellings. The most substantial site presently available is adjacent to Staverton Mill (with a lapsed permission for 17,000 sq ft of offices), where the owner is understood to be considering housing development, but it is a constrained brownfield site with some flooding issues and there is some uncertainty as to whether it would be considered to fall within the village and be counted as contributing to the JLP requirement for 20 dwellings.
3. I recommend that **site 15**, providing it can be counted as part of the village, be allocated for at least 11 dwellings and that **site 13** be supported for consideration as an exception site under policy TTV27. However, depending on the number of dwellings proposed at site 15, a significant shortfall from the 20 dwellings figure for the village in the JLP could result. Indeed, if site 15 is not considered to fall within the village then there are only very small sites available in Staverton.

4. To compensate for any shortfall, I recommend that **site 8** be identified as the most suitable site for development in the longer term and that the plan supports its allocation for at least 11 dwellings in the next plan review. The plan could also state support for it to be advanced sooner if the owner's attitude should change.
5. I recommend no fewer than 11 dwellings on both **site 15** and **site 8** in order to secure delivery of at least 30% affordable homes under JLP policy DEV8 in each case.

### **Woolston Green / Landscope**

6. Like Staverton, Woolston Green / Landscope also has two focal points, one around the church and the school and the other around the pub and the green.
7. The sites assessment identified a single site as most suitable – site 1. The group have chosen six sites in total, although some are very small and three have only come forward since the original sites assessment was completed. The group's choice is – sites 1, 3, 4, 26, 28 and 29. Site 28 is already the subject of a planning application for 14 dwellings.
  - a) Site 1 was chosen by the group for 6 dwellings. Once allocated it may be hard to hold the line at 6 dwellings, and this number would only secure a 30% commuted sum for affordable homes with no on-site delivery. The site is still considered to be the most sustainable choice in the village, capable of delivering the whole of the JLP figure of 20 dwellings. However, if the pending application for 14 dwellings on site 28 were also to be approved, it would result in almost twice the JLP figure of 20 dwellings being built in the village. It may therefore be better to hold site 1 back for a future plan review.
  - b) Site 3 was chosen by the group for 3 dwellings with the hope that 2 would be affordable. JLP policies do not allow the NP to require affordable homes on such a small site. The site is also somewhat removed from the village and a strong case would have to be made to demonstrate that the functional reach of the village extends to include it.
  - c) Site 4 was chosen by the group for a single affordable dwelling. I recommend that if this is to be included it be the subject of a statement that an exception site for a single affordable dwelling there would be supported.
  - d) Site 26 has come forward relatively recently and was chosen by the group for a single dwelling. This is acceptable. The site is well contained in the village structure. There could be no affordable housing requirement.

- e) Site 28 is the subject of a current planning application for 14 dwellings including 5 affordable homes. It is quite well located in relation to the village and, subject to satisfactory design, is acceptable. Site 1 is better related to the village form, but If the plan proposes site 26 then site 1 ought to be held in reserve for the future.
  - f) Site 29 was chosen by the group for 6 self build homes. However, I consider that it is too far removed to argue that it forms a functional part of the village.
8. In summary, in **Woolston Green / Landscope** there is a reasonable range of suitable sites available and the most difficult choice is between **site 28**, which is already subject to an application for 14 dwellings (including 5 affordable homes), or **site 1**, which is even more suitable and could provide about 20 dwellings. It would be inappropriate to allocate both sites since this would result in too great a scale of development for the village during the plan period. If it seems likely that **site 28** will receive planning approval then I advise that **site 1** be held in reserve for a future review of the plan.
9. I recommend that **site 28** be allocated for 14 dwellings (including 5 affordable homes) as proposed in the planning application, that **site 26** be proposed for a single dwelling, and that the plan express support for **site 4** to come forward for consideration as an exception site under policy TTV27.

### Memory Cross

10. **Site 3** and **site 29**, mentioned above, lie a little way to the south of Woolston Green around the clusters of development locally known as Memory Cross. The group feels that this should be considered to form a hamlet falling within tier 4 of the settlement types referred to in JLP policy TTV1. If that position were to be accepted there may be scope for the plan to express support for both sites to come forward for consideration as exception sites under policy TTV27.
11. The owner of **site 3** is understood to wish to propose 3 dwellings on the site with 2 being affordable, and the owner of **site 29** is proposing 6 self build dwellings with 5 being affordable.

### Summary

12. Below is a tabulation showing my recommended site choices for consideration by the group at the next meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> January.

Staverton Neighbourhood Plan – sites recommended for consideration								
Settlement	Site no	Site name	Allocated sites (DEV8)		Exception sites (TTV27)		Held in reserve for future reviews	
			Total dwellings	Affordable homes	Total dwellings	Affordable homes	Total dwellings	Affordable homes
Staverton	7	Westpark Cottages			3	2		
	8	East of Southford Lane					At least 11	At least 3
	13	Beside Dodbrook Cottages			4	3		
	15	Adjoining Staverton Mill	At least 11	At least 3				
<b>Sub total</b>			<b>At least 11</b>	<b>At least 3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>At least 11</b>	<b>At least 3</b>
Woolston Green	1	Beside Landscope Church					At least 11	At least 3
	4	Next to Beara House			1	1		
	26	At The Stables	1	1				
	28	At Beara Farm	14	5				
<b>Sub total</b>			<b>15</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>At least 11</b>	<b>At least 3</b>
Memory Cross	3	At Memory Cross			3	2		
	29	At Hillcroft			6	5		
<b>Sub total</b>					<b>9</b>	<b>7</b>		
<b>TOTAL</b>			<b>At least 26</b>	<b>At least 9</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>At least 22</b>	<b>At least 6</b>

13. The totals in the table above appear to fall short of the JLP figures for Staverton and Woolston Green. Shortfalls could be helped if the site at Staverton Mill is able to be counted and if exception sites, including those at Memory Cross, were to be included. It may alternatively be possible to increase numbers at site 15 to help make up the shortfall in Staverton.

14. It is hoped that South Hams planners will be able to make comment to help the group prior to their meeting on 19<sup>th</sup>.

**Lee Bray, Planning and Regeneration Consultant  
13<sup>th</sup> January 2021**