

## PRESTON PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

### STEERING GROUP RESPONSE TO LAND ADJACENT TO DUNGARVAN AMENDED PLANS

Ben Glover  
North Herts District Council  
Gernon Road  
Letchworth  
SG6 3TF

Tuesday 8 February 2022

Dear Mr Glover

**Reference: 21/02632/FP**

*Erection of 10 detached dwellings (1 x 2-bed, 4 x 3-bed, 3 x 4-bed and 2 x 5-bed) including garages, private amenities and creation vehicular access off Back Lane as amended by plans received on the 4th January 2022. Land Adjacent To Dungarvan, Back Lane, Preston, Hertfordshire SG4 7UJ*

The Steering Group has reviewed the additional documents and amended plans provided for this planning application and notes that some of the policies of the Preston Parish Neighbourhood Plan (PPNP) have not yet been properly addressed. These are highlighted here and the Steering Group requests that they are given due consideration and where necessary, conditions imposed before any planning consent is granted.

**Policy QL3: Local Distinctiveness:**

*The architecture of, and landscaping schemes in, all new developments should preserve and where possible enhance heritage assets, historic features, and rural character, thereby promoting community identity and preserving local distinctiveness.*

The Steering Group agrees that conditions must be imposed to ensure that the exact colour of bricks and other external materials used are appropriate to the Conservation Area and surrounding properties. The Steering Group is in agreement with the suggestion that the dwellings will not have chimneys in order to prevent heat loss.

**Policy HD1: Residential Development:**

*The Plan defines a settlement boundary for Preston Village, see map on page 35. Proposals for residential development within the settlement boundary will be supported subject to the following criteria:*

- *Their height, scale and massing reflect the character of the village and its rural setting;*
- *Within the conservation area they preserve or enhance its special architectural or historic interest;*
- *Their density and layout take account of other buildings in their immediate locality; and*
- *They incorporate vernacular materials and characteristic design features found within the village as appropriate to their scale and location within the village.*

*(Development proposals outside the settlement boundary will only be supported where they comply with national and local policies for development in the countryside)*

The Steering Group notes that this policy has not been addressed in either the original or amended plans for this application and that the specific criteria have not been met. This policy links to the other policies in the PPNP, particularly HD3, HD4 and EH2, therefore all of these policies need to be considered together when this application is being determined.

The housing density is much greater than that of other properties in the vicinity of the site, particularly as it is in the Conservation Area, and the Steering Group asks that the number of dwellings be reduced. This would yield a proportionate reduction in the noise, traffic and environmental impacts of this development, not just for this site but for the wider area.

The Steering Group points out that, if consent is granted, this development will have an adverse impact on the village and its infrastructure. Using data from within the settlement boundary for Preston, proposed in the ELP, in 2011 there were 109 dwellings in the village. Since then, 8 houses have been built and another has planning consent, making the number in the village 118 in 2021, an increase of 7.6% over 10 years. If this planning application is granted consent, alongside application 21/02076/FP for 21 dwellings which has recently gained consent, there will be an immediate increase of 31 dwellings in Preston. Both of these sites are within the settlement boundary so if this application is also granted consent, the number of dwellings would become 149, an immediate increase of 26%.

**Policy HD3: Housing Types:**

*Proposals for new homes should demonstrate the way in which they would address local housing needs. Proposals for or which include, two- and three-bedroom houses suitable for families, local people and first-time buyers will be supported.*

The Steering Group notes that nothing has changed with regard to this policy. It is still of the view that there is no need for more 5 bedroom homes in Preston and asks that these two dwellings are removed from the plans and are replaced with two 3 bedroom bungalows, suitable for downsizing and disabled people.

**Policy HD4: Tenure of Housing:**

*Development proposals for new dwellings should deliver a mix of homes, including an element of social and affordable housing, which takes account of the most up to date study of housing needs in the neighbourhood area.*

As no changes have been made to the mix and tenure of housing, this policy has still not been addressed. Should the number of dwellings be reduced, see Policy HD1 above, the housing mix will require proportionate adjustment to reflect the local need for smaller homes.

**Policy HD5: Sustainability and Energy Efficiency:**

*Proposals for the provision of measures for water conservation and landscape schemes that improve biodiversity will be encouraged. Proposals with a low carbon footprint will be encouraged. The provision of electric car charging points for all new homes will also be supported as will proposals that enable residents to work from home. Prior to occupation, each residential property shall incorporate an Electric Vehicle (EV) ready, domestic charging point.*

The Steering Group is pleased to note that the developer is prepared to accept a condition on the installation of solar panels, within the constraints of the Conservation Area. Although the covering letter refers to condition 21 of the extant planning permission, 20/01564/FP, the Steering Group believes that the wording should be amended so that a feasibility study is undertaken prior to the commencement of building, rather than prior to first occupation.

While some rain water harvesting is planned, the Steering Group is also of the view that not to use grey water for flushing toilets is short sighted. If grey water was used to flush toilets the demand on mains water would be further reduced, enhancing the water saving measures already in place. If this is implemented, it will be a step towards meeting North Hertfordshire's climate change target of becoming carbon neutral by 2030, only eight years from now.

The Steering Group notes that there is still no provision to meet this point:

*..... as will proposals that enable residents to work from home.*

This should be addressed as working from home, either permanently or for part of the week, is now normal working practice for many people. PPNP Policy TC2 is relevant to this comment.

**Policy HD8: Flood Risk and Drainage Provisions:**

*Development proposals in locations at the highest risk of flooding will not be supported. Where any development proposal can be demonstrated to be necessary in such areas the development should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing the risk of flooding elsewhere.*

*In other parts of the neighbourhood area beyond the locations at the highest risk of flooding, development proposals will be supported where they do not increase flood risk elsewhere in the neighbourhood area, and within Castlefield, Templars Lane, Chequers Lane, Church Lane and Butchers Lane in particular.*

*Major developments should incorporate sustainable drainage systems within their design and layout unless there is clear evidence that this would not be appropriate either within the neighbourhood area or on the site concerned.*

The Steering Group has reviewed the Drainage Strategy Technical Note provided with the amended plans. It is essential that, when received, the response by the Local Lead Flood Authority is taken into account and strongly worded conditions imposed, if planning consent is granted, in order to protect the residents of this site and the wider population from the risk of flooding at any time in the future.

There is still no indication as to who will be responsible for the maintenance of the SUDS system. The Steering Group asks that this should be agreed with a condition on planning consent to ensure there is clarity and transparency if any issues arise after completion of the development. Any drainage or sewage issues would have an adverse impact on the wider community.

**Policy EH2: Conservation Areas and Heritage Assets:**

*All development proposals, including new build, must demonstrate how the particular environment of Preston has been taken into account during conception and evolution of the design. Proposals that do not positively contribute to the local character must explain why and demonstrate the reasons behind the alternative approach.*

**Bullet Point 4**

*Where a site on which development is proposed includes or has the potential to include heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment undertaken by an appropriately qualified specialist so that the impact of the proposed development on the significance of the heritage assets can be assessed and, where necessary, carry out a field evaluation.*

The Steering Group is pleased that the Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation has been approved by the Council's archaeologist. While works on site have been carried out, there is no indication as to what actions will be undertaken as a result of this field work. The Steering Group wants conditions imposed on planning consent so that that on-going work is monitored appropriately to ensure that the long term historical records for the area are accurately updated.

**Bullet Point 5**

*The design of any new build should have regard to prevailing scale, massing and density of properties in the Conservation area and be in harmony with the character of the location in which it is being constructed. Materials used should be complementary and similar to neighbouring properties.*

Not all the comments included in its first submission have been addressed. The Steering Group points out that these are all valid and need to be fully considered in the course of determining this application. These comments made to bullet point 5 of this policy are particularly relevant:

*The application documents indicate that the proposals meet the requirements of this policy for development within the Conservation Area but the Steering Group is of the view that these proposals do not reflect the character and rural setting of this location on the edge of the village. The density is too high and the architecture of the dwellings is not inspiring and does not preserve or enhance the Conservation Area.*

In addition, there is a clear link between these comments and those made on policy HD1 above. All these policies are interlinked and should be considered together.

**Policy EH5: Tranquillity and Dark Skies:**

*Proposals for development should respect the tranquil character of the neighbourhood area. Proposals which would generate an unacceptable detrimental impact on its tranquillity through noise, generated traffic or light pollution will not be supported.*

There is no indication in the covering letter that this policy has been addressed. The Steering Group asks that the points it made in its original submission be given due consideration and that a condition be imposed to ensure that there is no external lighting on site. A similar request has already been agreed by the developer in application 21/02076/FP which was granted consent on 27 January 2022.

The Steering Group also requests a condition to restrict individual household lighting to protect dark skies and nocturnal wildlife, while at the same time ensuring the safety of prospective residents.

**Policy EH7: Protecting and Enhancing the Local and Natural Environment:**

*Development proposals should maintain and where practicable enhance the elements of the natural environment as identified in Appendix C2 (pages 68 to 84). Where appropriate development proposals should also incorporate measures to ensure their connectivity to the wider habitats in the neighbourhood area.*

*Where significant harm to biodiversity arising from a proposed development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated or as a last resort compensated for, any such proposals will not be supported.*

The Steering Group accepts that there will be some biodiversity net gain on this site but is of the view that the developer could go further and should meet the 10% biodiversity net gain which will be required by the Environment Act. By the time the proposed development is completed, it will be close to the Act being enacted in 2023.

The Steering Group agrees that a condition should be imposed to ensure the erection of either a 1.83 or 2.13 metre fence between the development site and Preston Primary School prior to any work starting on site. This condition should clearly indicate that the on-going maintenance of the fence is the developer's responsibility.

**Policy EH8: Hedgerows, Trees and Verges:**

*Where appropriate and relevant to the site concerned development proposals should retain and maintain existing trees and hedgerows within the site and along its boundaries. If their removal is necessary, they should be replaced in an appropriate location with trees of no less arboricultural or amenity value*

*Where the boundary of a new development has existing hedgerows and trees these should be protected to give it a green and soft edge, with additional landscaping and planting to minimise the visual impact of the new development. Landscaping should be incorporated in the design of all new development to mitigate the visual impact of development and ensure that the development is sensitively incorporated into the existing village context. Landscaping schemes should include predominately native species.*

Hertfordshire Highways has agreed that the development site will be accessible for high sided vehicles if overhanging tree branches are removed or reduced to below 5.2m within the swept path analysis area. It is not clear whether it has been pointed out to Highways that all the trees within the site, along its boundary and opposite the site are within the Preston Conservation Area. This includes an oak tree at the entrance to the site which has a Tree Preservation Order.

Before any work is undertaken on any tree, the Council's Tree Strategy Officer must be consulted to preserve and protect all the trees. Highways may need to re-assess the situation for high sided vehicles and if necessary the site access could be moved to avoid potential damage to the oak tree. The Steering Group understands that the developer has agreed that no work will be undertaken on the oak tree but this needs to be formalised if planning consent is granted.

**Policy TC1: Safe and Sustainable Transport:**

*Residential and community development proposals will be supported where amenities in the village can be readily and safely accessed by pedestrians and cyclists. In addition development proposals should conform to the following criteria:*

- a) development proposals should not generate an unacceptable increase in traffic volume and movements within or through the village and*
- b) development proposals should not generate unacceptable highway safety risks and*
- c) development proposals should provide a minimum of 2 off-road parking spaces per new residential unit with 2-3 bedrooms and a minimum of 3 parking spaces for 4+ bedroom residential units.*

The Steering Group notes that the concerns it raised in its original submission have not been addressed. The provision of TRICS data does not address the concerns of local residents about the inevitable increase in traffic on narrow rural lanes and the issues at drop off and pick up times at Preston Primary School. The Steering Group requests that the developer gives serious consideration to measures which could be put in place to ensure the safety of all road users.

The Steering Group acknowledges that the developer has confirmed that the grasscrete area which is used for parking for the school will remain in situ. It would like a condition imposed to ensure that any damage is made good prior to the developer leaving the site.

**Policy TC2: Broadband and Mobile Coverage:**

*Provision of facilities to support the delivery of efficient and effective landline, broadband and mobile coverage throughout the parish will be supported provided they are sensitively designed and located in accord with other policies in this Plan.*

The Steering Group notes that no consideration appears to have been given to the issues it raised regarding broadband and mobile phone provision and that the comments in its original submission remain relevant and must be taken into account when determining the outcome of this application.

The Preston Parish Neighbourhood Plan is now part of the Statutory Development Plan for North Hertfordshire until 2031 so must be taken into account by NHDC when this planning application is assessed.

The Steering Group would like the points raised here and the content of its first submission to be fully addressed prior to planning consent being granted.

Yours sincerely

Preston Parish Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group:  
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