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1 February 2024

Dear Gary

HAWKHURST PARISH COUNCIL – NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN PROPOSAL

Thank you for inviting me to support you on the review of your Neighbourhood Plan. I would be delighted to work with you on this project.

About me

I am an independent qualified (Masters in Urban and Rural Planning, AssocRTPI) planning consultant with an extensive track record in supporting neighbourhood planning groups. I have worked on over 100 neighbourhood plans across the country. My experience is very broad including support for small rural parishes, market towns, large towns and urban areas including in London. I have experience of working with both town and parish councils and neighbourhood forums on their plans.

In 2019, the Warnham Neighbourhood Plan I drafted was awarded the Excellence in Planning Award by the Royal Town Planning Institute. Within the last few months, a number of plans I have provided the lead on have successfully passed Examination and have either completed or are awaiting referendums. These include: Pembury (Kent), Ware (Herts), Maulden (Herts), Tiverton (Devon) and Ewhurst and Ellens Green (Surrey). I am currently supporting a number of local councils on their neighbourhood plan reviews including the Caterham, Chaldon and Whyteleafe cluster neighbourhood plan (Surrey), Much Wenlock (Shropshire) and Staplehurst (Kent).

I take a thorough but flexible approach to neighbourhood planning, working with each group to understand their particular skillsets and where my support can be used to greatest effect. I can provide a full range of services – including engagement, events and workshops, evidence gathering and policy writing. I am also able to prepare GIS mapping for groups I work with for inclusion in their plans. I have particular experience of planning in Tunbridge Wells, having supported parishes including Pembury, Capel, Staplehurst, Sandhurst and Southborough. I have a good working relationship with Tunbridge Wells Borough Council (TWBC) planning officers.

Aside from neighbourhood planning, I am the retained Planning Consultant for the Kent Association of Local Councils and write and deliver all their planning training as well as sitting on their Planning Executive. I also support local councils on responding to planning applications.

Testimonials

The following can be contacted for feedback on my support:

- **Pembury Neighbourhood Plan:** I supported the Plan through the entire process and it passed referendum in Autumn 2023. The Examiner commented: *"I congratulate Pembury Parish Council on producing this locally distinctive neighbourhood plan. The plan will sit comfortably alongside the new Tunbridge Wells Borough Local Plan when it is finally adopted and it has allowed the local community to be able to shape the development that will take place in the parish over the next few years including the major developments which will be taking place to the south of the village".*
Contact: [REDACTED], Parish Clerk, [REDACTED] (01892 822122)
- **Caterham, Chaldon and Whyteleafe Neighbourhood Plan:** This is an example of four local and village councils working together to produce a collective neighbourhood plan. In particular there was a focus on defining and preserving local character, including both built heritage and local views. The Plan successfully passed its Referendum and I continue to support the group in monitoring the effectiveness of the policies. I am currently supporting the group in reviewing their Plan.
Contact: [REDACTED], Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, [REDACTED]

Supporting the Review of the Plan

I have described below how I can support the Hawkhurst Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group on Phases 3 and 4, noting that some tasks may already be further advanced than others. The full scope of support is to be agreed as I understand not all tasks will necessarily fall within the initial contract and would need to be discussed and agreed:

Phase 3: Evidence collection, analysis & initial policy determination - I will advise and assist in the successful completion of Phase 3 of the project.

Plan Framework: I can provide feedback on your framework/template for the Plan to ensure that it is set out in an effective and engaging way, including the required sections to meet both legislative requirements and community needs. Many of the plans I have worked on have been commended by the Examiner for their layout and presentation.

Drafting non-policy content: I can advise on this content, comprising introductory sections, vision and objectives, planning policy context, and the justifications for the individual policies. I would also recommend including a section on delivery of the Plan, with associated infrastructure priorities, non-policy projects, a policy monitoring framework and indication of next steps for instance maintaining dialogue with the TWBC and keeping a watching brief on national legislation and implications of this.

Review existing Plan evidence: I will support the review of your existing evidence base and provide detail as to where additional information might be required and how to source this. For some topics, it can be helpful to host a workshop, with maps and other information, to gather first-hand information from the community. For example, this can provide an understanding of walking and cycling activity locally, important key local views and green spaces. Equally, there might be merit in undertaking a local walkabout to gather information to support specific policies, for instance on design, biodiversity and local movement.

Develop specification for Housing Needs survey and commission it: Assuming the Locality support continues beyond the end of March 2023, there is free Technical Support available for the preparation of a Housing Needs Assessment. This desk-based piece of work would be undertaken by consultants and follow the government-endorsed methodology. It draws on trend data such as population forecasts, inward outward migration to set out likely need across the plan period. It is therefore considered robust in policy terms as it is not simply a snapshot of current need. That said, there is often merit in commissioning a Local Housing Needs Survey, which would include a household survey and provide an assessment of current need. The two together can be very helpful in supporting a policy on Housing Mix and Affordable housing provision.

Decide whether any other bespoke survey/assessment is to be undertaken (eg Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) or Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA)): Depending on the outcome of the evidence review, further reports may be worthwhile to commission – an example might be a Biodiversity Report from the Kent Biodiversity Record Centre or the development (or updating) of a Design Guidance tailored to the Parish (Technical Support available for this). In terms of the SEA/HRA, once the Plan is in a suitable state, I will support you in working with TWBC officers to have the Plan screened for the need for these reports. The general rule of thumb is that they are not required if a Plan is not allocating sites. Should they be required, against there is Technical Support available to complete these reports.

Other supporting data and analysis: I will support you in identifying and analysing data sources that will help the Working Groups in understanding the key issues locally, which in turn will influence the policy development. The 2021 census data is now largely available at the parish level (certainly it's fully available at ward level). The evidence base for the TWBC Submission Local Plan will also be relevant alongside data from other public bodies. Some of this data might helpfully sit within a Parish Profile as part of the Evidence Base.

Identify those emerging issues or themes likely to require a renewed policy stance: In the context of the findings of Stage 2 of the review, national and local policy change, and the refreshed Parish Profile, it will be possible to understand which existing policies remain relevant and sound (albeit conformity to amended national and local policy will need consideration), where policies need to be amended to reflect changing circumstances and where there might be gaps that a new policy could fulfil. Where issues sit outside the scope of planning policy, there may be merit in identifying non-policy projects.

Further develop and refine the issues, vision, aims and objectives as a result of engagement and evidence gathering: I will support the group in considering whether or not a refresh is required. Depending on the extent of new challenges/opportunities emerging locally, the group could consider hosting a visioning workshop with the wider community. I can fully support this as required.

Develop “first cut” of Plan policies and proposals: I am extremely experienced in drafting policies across the whole range of issues, to reflect the findings of the evidence and aspirations of the community. All policies will be supported by robust evidence, be compliant to the adopted Local Plan (and in synchronicity to the Submission Local Plan) and in accordance with the most recent version of the NPPF. Where necessary, policies will supported by appropriate mapping.

Informal consultation: Give the public and stakeholders an indication of what the evidence has yielded the policy implications, and seek feedback: Prior to finalising the draft policies, it is good practice to share back the findings and proposed policy options with the community. This can provide an opportunity to ensure that the scope of the plan is fully captured. It will also gain buy-in from the community to the vision, objectives and proposed policies and projects stemming from that, and provide an opportunity for further feedback. I can assist you in the running of this activity, which might take the form of a drop in event(s). It is helpful to gain information feedback from TWBC at this point, before finalising the document in readiness for the Regulation 14 consultation.

Phase 4: Finalise policies and write the draft Plan - I will support this phase as follows:

Further develop the writing/editing of the draft Plan: I will assist you in finalising the Plan and policies bearing in mind the feedback gained from the community and other bodies at the information event described above. All policies will be carefully crafted, compliant with strategic policy and contribute towards sustainable development. The policies will be tailored to the parish to add additional local detail to existing policy. The steps leading up to this stage will ensure that the Plan is underpinned by an appropriate alignment of evidence, community feedback, vision, objectives and policies.

Phase 4 consultation: Pre-submission consultation conforming to Regulation 14: This consultation is organised and run by the Parish Council / Steering Group and I will support you in developing a strategy to promote the consultation and maximise awareness and response. This might include hosting presentations, design of posters/banners, creation of a simple feedback survey, providing contact detail for the statutory consultees and draft template emails.

Phase 5: Making the Plan: This sits outside the scope of the initial contract and a further proposal would be developed to fulfil this aspect of the process (and any items in Phase 4 that fall outside the initial phase). This will include my support to the Steering Group in analysing comments received at the Pre-Submission Consultation, amending the Plan accordingly, preparing the supporting documents (Consultation Statement, Basic Conditions Statement and SEA/HRA if required) and submitting the information to TWBC. All documents will meet the accessibility requirements as stipulated by TWBC. I will support you in selecting an Examiner, responding to any queries raised during the examination and making any required modifications to the document so that it can proceed to referendum.

Costs: I understand that the initial contract (to commence in February 2024) is to supply 10 days of service at £550 per day (thus a fixed price contract of £5,500). VAT is charged, but can be reclaimed by the Parish Council. Provision is not made for printing of materials, room hire and other such project costs.

I very much look forward to discussing the project further with you,

Yours sincerely



