

Highnam Neighbourhood Development Plan

2011-2031

Introduction

Government initiatives, under the Localism Agenda, now enable communities to produce their own vision of how they would like their area to develop.

The Neighbourhood Plan must have regard to national policy and guidance, including the National Planning Policy Framework, which provides the Government's overarching approach to planning. It must also be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan – in Highnam's case, this means the saved policies of the Tewkesbury Borough Local Plan to 2011. It is also relevant to note that various relevant information was taken account of during the plan-making process, including that relating to the first draft Tewkesbury Borough Plan and the emerging Joint Core Strategy. The Neighbourhood Development Plan is the final part of this planning structure. Once it has gone through all its stages, including a referendum of the Parish, it will become a Statutory Document, reflecting the views and aspirations of the Parish and it must be taken into account in determining Planning Decisions in the Neighbourhood Area during the plan period, 2011-2031.

Place Setting

The Parish of Highnam is situated in the County of Gloucestershire, 3 miles to the West of the city of Gloucester and separated from it by the River Severn. The Parish is bounded on the South by the Severn, on the North by the smaller River Leadon and to the west by Highnam Woods (See map 1 Location Plan). The Parish is crossed by the A40 trunk road with the B4215 branching off and continuing towards Newent. The Gloucester to South Wales railway passes through the southern part of the Parish but there is no station.

Originally, the location of the Roman river crossing of the Severn was near Over, and much later the higher ground was occupied by the residence of the Bishops of Gloucester, and a vineyard, bounded by the Severn and the Leadon. To the northwest, the principal settlement was at Lassington which had Parish status, and further south there was the estate associated with Highnam Court. Post-Reformation, the status of Lassington and Over diminished in importance. Highnam Court became the principle landholding, and in the 1840's and 1850's the estate was remodelled with the addition of Holy Innocents Church, the Old Vicarage, the village school (now part of the Community Centre) and a scattering of estate housing, principally around Highnam Green.

The core housing estate in the village of Highnam itself, known as Maidenhall was first started in the late 1930's, but was primarily built in the late 1940's to early 1960's. In the early 1970's the village started to expand with a sequence of housing estates within the enclosing ring and discipline of Oakridge. This gave the village the structure it has today with the bulk of the village northeast of the B4215, the church and the Community Centre separated to the south, Highnam Farm and its Business Centre and a commercially run Golf Course to the West. Lassington now consists of the church tower of St Oswald's, its nave having been demolished in 1975, two farms and a scattering of dwellings. Over largely consists of a housing estate built on the site of the now demolished Over Hospital ; the canal basin of the Gloucester-Hereford Canal which currently houses the offices of the Canal Trust and an up market restaurant/hotel; traveller sites, a pub/restaurant and some industrial

development along the A40(T). The village of Highnam is host to a Primary School, a Doctors' Surgery, a Day Nursery and a Post Office and Stores¹.

The Parish landscape as a whole is characterised by good quality agricultural land particularly towards the Severn, with a Listed park and garden associated with Highnam Court. Public access woodland on the East flank of Lassington Hill which slopes down to the River Leadon is an important landscape feature, as is the broad sweep of Highnam Woods which are managed as an RSPB Reserve and which enclose views to the west of the Village, with Rodway Hill Golf Club in the foreground.

Demography

Of the 1935 people registered as resident in the Parish, 1250 are of working age, the remainder being made up of 335 people over retirement age and 350 children under the age of 16. With the exception of the retired populations, which is greater than the national average (17.4% compared to 16.3% nationally)², the demographic groups are almost exactly the national average for England.

Of the 1935, 1013 (70.3% cf 69.9%) are regarded as being "economically active" (either working or seeking employment) and 427 as "economically inactive" (29.7% cf 30.1%)(Students, home makers or retired). Of the economically active 38.2% are employed full time (cf 38.6% nationally) 18.1% are employed part time (cf 13.1%) 9.6% are self-employed (cf 9.8%)

Highnam is a relatively prosperous Parish. Gross and net weekly household income is above both the national and county averages at £720/£490 respectively (cf £673/420).

Of the 1250 people of working age only 85 are recorded as DWP benefit claimants (6.8% cf 13.9%) and only two households are registered as experiencing multiple deprivation. (0.3% cf 0.5%) In addition to this 51 people are in receipt of housing benefit (6.7% cf 20.7%), 30 people are in receipt of income support (2.4% cf 3.2%) and 51 people are in receipt of pension credits (15.1% cf 24.4%)³

Skill levels are above average with 40.6% having Degree level qualifications (cf 29.9% nationally) and only 10.9% with no qualifications at all (cf 22.5% nationally) The generally high level of skill is reflected in the type of employment where Highnam has 51% of its people working in managerial or professional occupations (cf 41.1% nationally) and only 4.1% working in elementary occupations (cf 11.1% nationally).

Types of Employment

Highnam has a higher proportion of Public Sector Employees at 35% of those employed, than the national average of 28%.⁴ This is probably accounted for by the proximity of Gloucester and Cheltenham where large Public Sector employers such as GCHQ, the NHS and Gloucestershire County Council are located.

The largest employment category is Health and Social Work at 14% followed by Retail 12% and Public Sector/Defence at 11%. Few of these people are employed within the boundaries of the Parish, the figures reflect Highnam's status as a dormitory for commuters, mainly to the nearby large centres of population, Gloucester and Cheltenham, and some further afield. These major population centres offer a wide range of employment opportunities of all types. This conclusion is supported by the finding that only 4.4% of people travel less than 2km to work (cf. 20% nationally) and 6.7% travel more than 40km, exactly the national average.⁵

The proportion of people working from home is relatively high at 5.6% (cf, 3.5% nationally).⁶

Plan Content and Status

The Neighbourhood Development Plan for Highnam covers the whole of the civil parish. Its boundaries are clear and well established. The Plan provides a vision for the future of the parish, drawn up following extensive consultation. It sets out the Parish's objectives, together with the policies required for their realisation. Objectives and policies were formulated following analysis of the natural environment of the Parish, of the social and economic needs and characteristics of its settled population and of the responses of residents and other interested parties to consultation. Care was taken to include all residents, including minorities and the disabled.

[Map of Neighbourhood Area](#)

[Insert Map from Appendix C of Basic Conditions Statement](#)

Plan Development

Highnam Parish Council decided in September 2013 that it would be in the interest of the Community to formulate our own Neighbourhood Development Plan and a sub-committee of the Parish Council was established to take it forward. The committee was formed of two Parish Councillors plus volunteers from within the community, with people joining, and a couple leaving, during the period that the work was carried out. Assistance was also given at all stages by the Parish Clerk.

Assistance and guidance was purchased from the Gloucester Rural Community Council (GRCC) and a grant obtained from LOCALITY to fund the project. Assistance and some additional funding was also provided by Tewkesbury Borough Council and one of their officers attended many of the committee's meetings.

To start the process the GRCC gave a public presentation on Neighbourhood Planning which was well attended, and led to volunteers joining the committee

It was agreed by the Committee that the area of the Plan should be the whole Parish of Highnam and this was proposed to Tewkesbury Borough Council. Following the correct statutory procedures, including a consultation period, this was approved.

There were three main public consultation events: to launch the project, to report back on the results of the survey, and to offer the draft plan to the Community. Feedback from these Community Consultations was considered by the Committee and reflected in the plan. In addition a detailed survey was conducted throughout the Parish with forms being delivered to every home and volunteers calling to collect them, some 1360 forms were distributed and 752 returned, a 55% response. Regular updates on progress were given to the Parish Council, posted on the Parish Council Website and published in the Parish magazine. A full timeline of all events, meetings and other activity is available on the Parish Council Website.

The members of the team also carried out considerable local research, interviewing local business and land owners, visiting the School and Surgery, collecting transport data and much more. Details are listed in the Evidence Base.

The Neighbourhood Plan is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the saved Tewkesbury Borough Local Plan.

The Vision

Highnam wishes to maintain its character as a self-contained community where people of all ages enjoy good quality of life.

To achieve this Highnam will:

- Remain a separate and distinct community from Gloucester and not become a suburb.
- Maintain and develop its own range of local facilities, services and employment opportunities
- Develop in ways appropriate to the needs of the local community
- Ensure that development reflects the nature, character, scale and density of the community.
- Maintain its relationship with its landscape setting.

In order to achieve this vision the following Objectives, and Policies for their achievement, have been identified.

Housing

Objective To ensure that future residential development includes a wide range of housing types and tenures, with provision for a mixed community including the increasing older segment of the population.

Policy H1a. Within residential developments, the inclusion of sites for-self-build and/or live/work units is encouraged.

Objective To ensure that the design quality and environmental performance of new development reflects current and future best practice standards.

Policy H2a. The design and visual character of any new development in Highnam should make a positive contribution to forming a sense of place: demonstrating both design quality and sensitivity to the existing environment. Density of any new development should reflect that of the existing settlement⁷ though exceptions can be considered for specialized homes for the elderly, including care provision.

Policy H2b. New housing development is encouraged to have regard to building performance, space standards and green energy systems.

Transport

Objective To ensure that development does not exacerbate current problems with the flow of traffic and pedestrian safety within and through the Parish, especially at peak times, and if possible, contributes to their alleviation.

Community Action. The Parish Council will support Park and Ride proposals at the junction of the A40 and A48 inasmuch as they would help to alleviate congestion on the A40.

Objective To maintain and improve public footpaths and cycle paths both within the Parish and to the surrounding areas in order to provide alternative means of movement within and through the area.

Policy T1a. New public paths constructed as a result of work relating to canal restoration should be linked to the existing network of paths used by the public.

Policy T1b. The protection and maintenance of existing footpaths and rights of way will be supported.

Policy T1c. The completion of an all-weather, wheelchair friendly, footpath around Oakridge in the interest of road safety and equality of access will be supported.

Business and Enterprise

The Community supports existing small scale local business and enterprise but would not wish to see the character of the Parish changed by large scale industrial development.⁸

Objective To support appropriate business start-up, expansion and home working.

Policy B1a. Proposals to extend Highnam Business Park up to around twice its current size (see Plan below) will be supported.

[Insert New Plan](#)

Policy B1b. The provision of offices and workshops in Over, at the site identified on the plan below, will be supported. The continued restoration of the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal in the Neighbourhood Area will also be supported.

[Insert New Plan.](#)

Policy B1c. The expansion of existing business units in Over, within the site identified on the plan below, will be supported.

[Insert New Plan.](#)

Policy B1d. The expansion of the farm shop and visitor centre at Over Farm, within the site identified on the plan below, will be supported.

[Insert New Plan.](#)

Policy B1e. The building of work/live units is encouraged.

Community Facilities

Highnam has a good range of Community Facilities, these should be supported, maintained and, where possible, enhanced.⁹

Objective To support appropriate expansion of facilities such as the Surgery and School to meet the needs of a growing population.

Policy C1a. The extension of Highnam Surgery and/or its car park will be supported.

[Insert New Plan.](#)

Policy C1b. The necessary expansion and alteration of Highnam Academy will be supported.

[Insert New Plan.](#)

Objective To support and enhance local facilities such as shops, the post office, the community centre and businesses as well as any sports clubs and other leisure facilities that provide a service to the Parish.

Policy C2a. The expansion of the village post office and shop will be supported.¹⁰

[Insert New Plan.](#)

Policy C2b. The Community Centre, as shown on the plan below, is a valued local resource and it will be protected from a change of use. Any change of use of a community facility will be resisted unless it can be demonstrated that it is no longer required, or that it can be replaced with an equivalent or improved facility elsewhere in the Neighbourhood Area. Prospective developers are encouraged to engage with community groups as part of any change of use proposals.

[Insert New Plan.](#)

Environment and Conservation

The community values the rural nature of the Parish with its extensive wildlife habitat and wishes to see this maintained and enhanced where possible. ¹¹

Objective To maintain and expand public green spaces in the Parish and develop their nature conservation potential.

Policy E1a. Land or buildings currently in use as recreational grounds will be protected from a change of use unless it can be demonstrated that they are no longer required; or that they can be replaced by equivalent or better provision; or that the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.

Policy E1b. The change of use of existing allotments will be resisted and the provision of new allotments will be supported.

Policy E1c. Highnam and Lassington Woods, shown on the accompanying plan, will be protected from adverse development¹².

[Insert New Plan.](#)

Community Action. Highnam Parish Council supports and where possible, will work with other parties, including the Herefordshire and Gloucestershire Canal Trust, towards the proposed establishment of a Country Park through the Leadon Valley.

Map of the Parish showing views to be retained as in Policy E2b

Sustainability

The sustainability of the Plan has been considered at all times by the Committee, using a matrix to compare policies against objectives.

Monitoring

The Parish Council will monitor developments during the plan period.

Evidence Base and Supporting Documents

The supporting documents and evidence base referred to in footnotes can be viewed on line at [www.highnamparish.org.uk/NDP/Neighbourhood Development Plan](http://www.highnamparish.org.uk/NDP/Neighbourhood%20Development%20Plan).

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¹ Full details of the School, Surgery, Post Office, Business Centre etc. are available in the supporting documents.

² Source: IMD 2010 (CLG), Working age Benefits (DWP Aug-12), Multiple deprivation (Census 2011)

³ Source: Income Support/Pension Credit (DWP Aug-12), Economic Deprivation Index 2009, Fuel Poverty (Department for Energy and Climate Change 2009), Housing/Council Tax Benefit (DWP 2005), Households below median income (ONS 2008)

⁴ Source: Census 2011 (tables KS601EW, KS604EW and KS605EW)

⁵ Source: Travel to employment centres (DfT 2011)

⁶ Source: Working from home (Census 2011 QS701EW)

⁷ The average density of housing in the settlements in the Parish is currently in the order of 14 dwellings per hectare.

⁸ Source: Answers to Questionnaire section G

⁹ Source: Answers to Questionnaire sections B and D

¹⁰ Source: Answers to Questionnaire section D

¹¹ Source: Answers to Questionnaire section F and feedback from school and public functions.

¹² Further support for this policy is provided in the Basic Conditions Statement.