

Steering Group Terms of Reference

1. Purpose

- a. The main purpose of the Steering Group is to oversee and co-ordinate the preparation of the Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) for Houghton.
- b. The Steering Group will work with the local community, working groups, the Parish Council and local authorities to ensure that the Plan is truly representative of the ambitions of Houghton. The Group will maximise support for the approach taken in the NDP by ensuring high levels of community engagement throughout the plan-making process.

2. Principles

- a. That the Steering Group will undertake the process in a democratic, transparent and fair fashion, encouraging widespread participation and giving equal consideration to opinions and ideas from all members of the community
- b. All decisions made shall be fully evidenced and supported through consultation with the local community.

3. Roles and Responsibilities

In order to achieve this, the Steering Group will carry out the following roles:

- a. Be accountable for steering and providing strategic management of the NDP for Houghton;
- b. Produce, monitor and update a budget and project timetable;
- c. Produce a consultation and engagement strategy, showing how the public will be involved throughout the process;
- d. Identify sources of funding;
- e. Regularly report back to the Parish Council for endorsement of decisions taken;
- f. Consult as widely and thoroughly as is possible to ensure that the draft and final NDP is representative of the views of residents.
- g. To undertake analysis and evidence gathering from a wide range of sources to support the NDP production process;
- h. Actively support and promote the preparation of the NDP throughout the duration of the project;
- i. Liaise with relevant authorities and organisations to make the NDP as effective as possible;
- j. Agree, subject to ratification by the Parish Council, a final submission version of the NDP.
- k. Work with partners as required to:
 - i. Coordinate the implementation of any actions specified;
 - ii. Identify responsibility for monitoring and reviewing progress.

4. Membership

- a. The Steering Group will be made up of a cross-section of residents from Houghton, including Parish Councillors. Effort will be made to seek representation from under-represented sections of the community.
- b. Membership of the Steering Group will include a maximum of 2 Parish Councillors and a minimum of 2 Parish Representatives, elected at the first meeting or co-opted thereafter.
- c. No more than 2 members will have a formal connection to the Parish Council.

5. Decision Making

- a. The Steering Group has full delegated authority from the Parish Council to deliver its plan making functions up to and including publication of the Consultation Draft Plan. The Group will report to the Parish Council setting out progress on its work. The Parish Council will approve the Submission Draft Neighbourhood Development Plan prior to publication for consultation and independent examination.
- b. The plan-making process remains the responsibility of the Parish Council as the qualifying body. All publications, consultation and community engagement exercises will be undertaken by or on behalf of the Parish Council with appropriate recognition of the Parish Council's position given in all communications associated with the project.

6. Meetings

- a. Steering Group meetings will take place initially monthly and subsequently as required.
- b. Where possible, all meetings should be held within the Parish. The dates of future public meetings will be made available.
- c. The Steering Group will elect a Chair, Treasurer and Secretary from its membership to remain in those positions until the project is completed. If these positions should become vacant, the Group will elect an alternate.
- d. The Secretary shall keep a record of meetings and circulate notes to Steering Group members in a timely fashion. Minutes of public meetings shall be made available. Minutes of other meetings will be made available upon request.
- e. At least 7 clear days' notice of meetings shall be sent to members via email (or an alternative agreed communication method).
- f. Decisions made by the Steering Group should normally be by consensus at Steering Group meetings. Where a vote is required each member shall have one vote. A minimum of 3 members shall be present where matters are presented for decisions to be taken. A simple majority vote will be required to support any motion. The Chairman shall have one casting vote.
- g. If members have a conflict of interest they must declare it and leave the meeting while this matter is being discussed or decided.

7. Working Groups

- a. The Steering Group may establish working groups, including others from the community, to aid them in any NDP related work.
- b. Each Working Group should include at least one member of the Steering Group.
- c. Working Groups do not have the power to authorise expenditure.
- d. Members of the community will be encouraged to participate in the process at all stages.

8. Finance

- a. All grants and funding will be held by Houghton Parish Council, who will ring-fence the funds for NDP work and only use the funds in accordance with the Steering Group's purposes.
- b. A full record of income and expenditure will be kept and will be made available to anybody upon request.
- c. Steering Group members and volunteers from any working groups may claim back any previously agreed expenditure incurred during NDP related work.

9. Conduct

- a. It is expected that all Steering Group members abide by the principles and practice of the Parish Council Code of Conduct , including declarations of interest.
- b. Whilst members as individuals will be accountable to their parent organisations, the Steering Group as a whole is accountable to the wider community for ensuring that the NDP reflects their collective expectations.
- c. The Steering Group will achieve this through applying the following principles:
 - i. Be clear and open when their individual roles or interests are in conflict;
 - ii. Treat everyone with dignity, courtesy and respect regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or religion and belief; and
 - ii. Actively promote equality of access and opportunity.

10. Changes to the Terms of Reference

- a. This constitution may be amended with the support of at least two-thirds of the current membership at a Steering Group Meeting and with the approval of the Parish Council.

11. Dissolution

- a. The Steering Group will be dissolved once its objectives have been attained and/or when at least two- thirds of its members and the Parish Council consider its services are no longer required.
- b. The Steering Group will then dispose of any remaining funds held in accordance with any conditions imposed by the grant funders and for an appropriate charitable purpose in the best interests of Houghton Parish.

Steering Group Members:

Name	Signature	Date
Alan Young	_____	_____
Sue Otten	_____	_____
Llyn Adams	_____	_____
Robert Marshall	_____	_____

Houghton Parish Council

Philip Page (Chairman)	_____	_____
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