

HELMDON PARISH COUNCIL PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING

Minutes of a meeting of the **Planning Committee** of Helmdon Parish Council held in the Committee Room at the Reading Room, Church Street, Helmdon at **7:30 p.m. on Thursday 20th November 2025**

Present: Cllrs Marchant (Chair), Shepherd, Hart, Minshall, and Plunkett.

In attendance: Cllr Moody.

1. **Apologies for absence** – None.
2. **Declarations of Interest** – None.
3. **To approve and sign the minutes of the meeting held on 15th July 2025** – It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes be approved and duly signed.
4. **Open Forum (15 minutes maximum)** – None.
5. **To consider a response to the West Northants Council consultation on the new Infrastructure and Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD - <https://westnorthants.citizenspace.com/planning/infrastructure-and-developer-contributions/>)** - It was **RESOLVED** to recommend the following response to the full council:

The Planning Committee recommends the following response to the Consultation on Infrastructure and Developer Contributions:

Response to Section 7 Sustainable Drainage Systems

The Parish Council notes that the local authority is making provision for securing the transfer of land to enable access for it to maintain SuDS. However, WNC should also place a obligation on the developer to make a financial contribution to cover the ongoing maintenance of the system. It must also ensure that the SuDS is actually inspected and built as planned – this should be chargeable under the fee structure stated elsewhere in the document.

Response to Section 9 Open Space

The Parish Council seeks confirmation that if it takes over the Open Space, it will receive the payments stated instead of the Council. (WNC)

Response to Section 10 Sports Pitches

We would query whether 4km is appropriate in the case of rural sites where provision is often further away (10.3.3)

Response to Section 11 (Affordable Housing) and Section 4 (Securing Developer Contributions)

The Parish Council welcomes the opportunity to comment. However, we have identified two critical policy gaps regarding Rural Exception Sites (RES) and 100% Affordable Housing schemes that, if left unaddressed, will have a detrimental impact on the sustainability of rural communities.

A. Objection to Section 11.6 (Clustering) regarding Single-Tenure Sites

We strongly support the objective in Paragraph 11.6.1 to create "*mixed and sustainable communities*" and the requirement that affordable housing be "*integrated in modest groups... rather than concentrated in one particular area*". We also support the guidance in Paragraph 11.6.2 limiting clusters to between 5 and 12 units.

The Issue: The current wording assumes a mixed-tenure site where market housing serves to separate the affordable clusters. The SPD is silent on how this applies to 100% affordable schemes, such as Rural Exception Sites. On a 100% affordable site, a developer may argue that "clustering" is impossible because there is no market housing to place between the groups. This creates a loophole allowing a single, large block of mono-tenure housing. In a small rural settlement, this might constitute a separate estate, violating the "mixed community" principle of Paragraph 11.6.1.

Proposed Amendment: The SPD could be amended to state:

"For 100% affordable schemes (including Rural Exception Sites), the design must explicitly avoid creating large, mono-tenure blocks that are disproportionate to the village scale."

B. Objection to Section 11.5 (Viability Assessment) regarding Local Infrastructure

We note that Paragraph 11.5.2 allows applicants to submit a viability appraisal if obligations render a development unviable. Paragraph 11.5.5 suggests that where viability is an issue, the Council may investigate reducing costs associated with planning obligations.

The Issue: 100% affordable housing schemes are typically exempt from CIL. Therefore, the Parish Council receives nothing in CIL receipts to mitigate the impact of population growth on village assets (transport, sports facilities, village halls, playgrounds, etc.). We are entirely reliant on Section 106 contributions for this mitigation. Housing Associations often argue that low grant rates make schemes marginally viable and use Section 11.5 to strip out "non-essential" contributions. If a developer uses the viability argument to remove S106 contributions for community facilities, the Parish Council is left with the financial burden of a population increase without any funding to upgrade local amenities.

Proposed Amendment: Section 11.5 must be strengthened to protect host communities. It could state:

"Where a development is exempt from CIL (e.g., affordable housing relief), Section 106 contributions required to mitigate the direct local impact of the development (e.g., contributions to existing village halls under Section 21.1.3, open space

maintenance, or transport and waste infrastructure) shall be prioritised and considered non-negotiable. 'Viability' cannot be used as a justification to leave councils and communities with unfunded liabilities or inadequate infrastructure."

Response to Section 18 (Education)

18.2.2 In a rural location children often travel more than 3 miles to their nearest secondary school and 18.2.2 should reflect this.

6. **To note that it is likely that the Parish Council (PC) will receive an application for a development of affordable housing soon, and to consider referring the application to the full PC to make a response rather than using delegated powers of the planning committee** – It was **RESOLVED** not to use the Planning Committee's delegated powers to respond to the consultation when it arrives. Instead, the committee will review the application as normal and make recommendations to the following Parish Council meeting.

7. Close

Signed..... Date.....