



## **Harrogate District Local Plan 2035**

### **Local Plan Options Consultation**

#### **Comments from Weeton Parish Council**

Our main area of comment is around the alternative proposals for housing contained in options 3 and 4 as they directly affect the villages we are responsible for. However, as residents of Harrogate, we are conscious of the implications of the development plan on the wider area and the need to find an approach which considers both our local and wider community.

The focus of our comments is therefore on the implications of housing provision within options 3 and 4 but we have also presented thoughts on the other options.

Clearly the consultation we are commenting on is around a series of 'broad principles' which lack any detail. This lack of detail makes it difficult to comment with clarity.

The scale and location of development is fundamental to how we feel about the proposals.

The lack of any specific numbers of proposed housing in our specific villages and the lack of any thought about how they may be accommodated makes it difficult to either support or object to the options being presented.

Our understanding is that there is no further consultation proposed following this current period. Whichever option or compromises are developed for inclusion in the development plan should, in our view, be discussed and consulted with the parish to ensure that the detailed proposals meet our needs, are positive and can be supported by the community. If there is anything other than a minor allocation of new housing to our parish we would wish to have time to develop a local approach to development so that the community as a whole can be involved in determining how best to develop our villages in a sustainable and sympathetic manner.

We would object most strongly to any pre-determined development proposals which are imposed on us without our detailed involvement.

#### **General comments on the housing options.**

**Option 1.** Concentrating all growth in the main urban areas is likely to reduce their attractiveness and does not provide accommodation for those who would not wish to be town-centre based. Many rural villages including Weeton and Huby may benefit from some growth to create more sustainable communities with a broader mix of housing including starter homes, housing for the elderly and retirement, single person homes and housing for young families.

**Option 2.** Although this option shows a better spread of development than option 1 it would appear to ignore sustainable transport links and is likely to result in increased car use and associated congestion within the surrounding villages and on all the road routes into Harrogate Town Centre.

**Option 3.** We would broadly support this option as it provides a spread of development in the main centres, in most villages and along the key transport routes whilst avoiding areas of greenbelt for the larger allocations of new housing. We are not opposed in principle to some development within



Weeton Parish particularly where it meets our needs to support developing a more sustainable community with a broader range of housing types.

We can also see that the more the surrounding villages can accommodate some of the identified need for housing, the more the impact is shared.

However within this option ***it is the extent of any housing in our area which is key to whether we can support the proposals.*** If development in our area retains the character of our villages and does not place greater pressure on the already struggling infrastructure, then we would not be opposed to a small proportion of the new housing being located within our Parish. Weeton and Huby have some strong elements of infrastructure but also some weaknesses - which makes development on anything other than a small scale difficult.

Our main priority as a council is to ensure that our community is sustainable in terms of infrastructure and population whilst protecting the natural and built environments which make our area attractive.

**Option 4.** Without a more detailed proposal to comment on (ie what proportion of the possible 1200 homes could potentially be allocated to our Parish?) it is difficult to do anything but object to this option in fear of the possible scale of development proposed.

Firstly we are concerned about the strategic impact/effectiveness of this option – and whether in fact it would provide housing for Harrogate people. In practice Huby and Weeton have always been attractive to Leeds-based commuters which means that any development may be of less benefit to helping meet Harrogate’s needs and of more benefit to Leeds commuters looking for a rural but convenient location to live. This is of particular concern given the historic lack of any planning control over the type of residential development in our area and the lack of any ability to provide affordable housing for local people which is sustainable in the long term.

Secondly any large scale development would radically change the character of these rural communities.

Thirdly the infrastructure demands are significant and challenging. We strongly believe there are other areas which are much more readily suited to development on a larger scale.

Our more detailed reasons for objecting to significant development within our Parish are as follows:

- There are currently around 350 houses in Weeton and Huby which form a small, strong and active local community. We would object to any development which would significantly alter the character of our community. Any large scale development would dwarf the existing community and would have the feel of a ‘new town’ development where the original communities would be completely lost.
- Visually the existing villages have been developed in a linear pattern along a small number of lanes and side roads off the main A658 and are mainly of a rural character. Any significant scale housing development of the type required to meet the housing need identified would have to meet the minimum of 30 houses per hectare criteria and would therefore require development of a completely different character to the existing villages. Any significant new development would have an urban feel in contrast to the existing rural character and would be inappropriate feel if extensive.



- A feature of Huby and Weeton is that it is bounded by greenbelt designated land. Any development of any significance would require the greenbelt boundary to be repositioned. Although we do not object to some relaxation of the greenbelt boundary to facilitate sustainable and sympathetic development, any significant relaxation of the boundary would involve compromising the original aims of the greenbelt designation. Retaining a distinct separation between the individual rural areas and Harrogate and Leeds is a long term desire which we would continue to support and we would therefore oppose any significant relaxation of the boundary around our Parish. Retaining a clear separation between Huby and Pannal and Poole is as important to us as helping to retain a clear rural separation between Leeds and Harrogate. In addition the preservation of the green landscape and agricultural land use around the villages is important to retaining the nature of the communities. The retention of the agricultural economy around our Parish is important and is an asset to Harrogate and should not be compromised.
- Huby is split by the A658 which is a busy link road. Over 800 cars have recently been recorded in a two hour period travelling in a single direction. Any significant new housing development would further increase traffic use. The traffic on the A658 creates a physical divide between housing either side of the road and is a significant risk and constant concern to all who live in Huby. Any exacerbation of the existing situation would both increase the daily risks to those who use the footpaths, cross the road or drive on it. Increasing the population of the village without taking measures to reduce the separation created by the A658 would be negligent.
- Weeton and Huby do not have access to a piped gas supply and relies on oil or LPG generally for heating. Any significant development would be environmentally and economically unsustainable without a reliable low cost energy source.
- Broadband provision in the Parish is extremely poor and would not support modern development.
- There is no school provision within the villages. The nearest local primary school is in North Rigton but safe and convenient access is difficult and spaces in the school limited. Any significant development would require a new school.
- Although convenient for the train the location of the parish on the A658 is not ideal for bus links to Leeds and Harrogate. Although convenient for train links the location does not provide access to other essential public transport services. Other alternative locations being considered within the options provide access to both train and bus services and would be fundamentally more sustainable.
- Weeton Parish Council has campaigned for many years for improvements to the train station. The village already suffers from a lack of car parking for train users and the resulting street parking, often by travellers from surrounding villages causes regular problems and complaints. Increased use of the train will inevitably lead to increased demand for car parking and parking controls. Positive measures to address this would be essential and without them we would strongly oppose any development.
- Both train platforms are elevated and are not fully accessible. Alternatives have previously been looked at but no solutions have been found. Our Parish should not be selected for development of any significance purely based on the existence of the train service when station access is so poor. Developing a rural/remote community which only provides access for the fully able bodied would be a poor strategy and not supported.



- There is no access to health facilities within Weeton or Huby. There is also a lack of any retail facilities. This lack of essential amenities would be a poor basis on which to develop a sustainable community.
- Given the housing need which the development plan is trying to address, any area where a significant number of new houses are proposed will need a full range of family friendly facilities. There are no safe play areas or areas of central common land to provide for the needs of young families and this again is a poor basis on which to develop a sustainable community.

**Option 5.** Given the short term needs to provide housing we do not see this option as being workable. The implications of this option are difficult to comprehend based on the minimal information provided. Without better developed proposals to address the short term housing needs whilst this option is progressed, it is difficult, within this consultation to understand the implications on Harrogate and our Parish. Developing solutions based on options 1 to 4 seem inherently more sustainable and capable of integration within the existing towns and villages. Creating a whole new community infrastructure which is truly integrated would be difficult and more likely to lead to the creation of a separate 'new town' which will have high infrastructure and social costs. It would also fail to provide opportunities for the many existing communities, such as ours, to develop and grow sustainably. Option 5 alone, without consideration for development elsewhere, would lead to stagnation in the other areas around Harrogate. Given the type of housing need required to be provided, a solution which locates it all in a single location could be poor social planning creating long term problems. Mixed housing types spread all around the area within existing communities will lead to a stronger better balanced place for us all to live.

## Conclusion

We would welcome a development plan which truly considered and addressed the needs of Weeton and Huby in a way which was sustainable and sympathetic with the qualities and scale of the existing villages.

We would strongly oppose development which was out of character, excessive and not supportable within the infrastructure limitations of the area. As drafted, we oppose option 4 as it would involve radical transformation of our Parish which would be neither sustainable or appropriate.

We would wish to have an in depth involvement in the development of the detailed proposals of any development plan of any significance within our area prior to it being formally approved.

We would encourage an approach which was broadly spread around the district and not focussed on trying to find a single, simple solution. We would therefore question whether any of the options alone provides a solution and would suggest consideration be given to a broader more complex option which amalgamated the best ideas from those currently being proposed.