

## Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Terms of Reference

### 1. Purpose

- a. The main purpose of the Steering Group is to oversee the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan for the settlement of St Margarets and Stanstead Abbotts (Including part of Great Amwell, as agreed with Great Amwell Parish Council), in order that this will then progress to Independent Examination and a successful community referendum and ultimately be adopted by East Herts District Council to become planning policy.
- b. The Steering Group will engage the local community to ensure that the Plan is truly representative of the ambitions of the residents of the settlement. The Group will maximise support for the approach taken in the Neighbourhood Plan by ensuring high levels of community engagement throughout the plan-making process. However, the Neighbourhood Plan must be consistent with the East Herts District Plan and whilst our efforts to produce such a plan may be controlled at times, we will consult with local residents' as much as is feasible throughout the development of the plan.

### 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:

- Be accountable for direction and strategic management of the Neighbourhood Plan;
- Produce, monitor and update a project timetable;
- Produce a consultation and engagement strategy, showing how the public will be involved throughout the process;
- Report back to the Parish Councils via the Neighbourhood Plan Management Committee for endorsement of decisions taken at the monthly Steering Group meetings;
- To undertake analysis and evidence gathering to support the plan production process;
- Actively support and promote the preparation of the St Margarets and Stanstead Abbotts Neighbourhood Plan throughout the duration of the project;
- Identify sources of funding;
- Liaise with relevant authorities and organisations to ensure the plan is acceptable to all relevant authorities.
- Gather data from a wide range of sources to ensure that the conclusions reached are fully evidenced and that the aspirations and issues of the residents are understood.

- In accordance with the law, the steering committee will only collect a limited amount of information about individuals that is necessary for correspondence and information provision. The Steering committee do not use profiling, we do not sell or pass your data to third parties. The steering committee do not use your data for purposes other than those specified. The steering committee will make sure your data is stored securely and will delete all information deemed to be no longer necessary. e.g. within six months after the NP receives final stage of approval.
- Consult as widely and thoroughly as is possible to ensure that the draft and final NP is representative of the views of residents.
- Agree, subject to ratification by the Parish Councils, a final submission version of the St Margarets and Stanstead Abbots Neighbourhood Plan;

#### **4. Membership**

- a. The Steering Group will be made up of a cross-section of volunteers from the community, including Parish Councillors. Effort will be made to seek input from under-represented sections of the community.
- b. Membership of the Steering Group will be open to the public indefinitely. New members who are keen to be involved must be able to demonstrate what they can bring to the group. The management committee will consider and approve new memberships subject to missing skills set where required and where there is a vacancy to assist with the neighbourhood planning.

#### **5. Decision Making**

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

#### **6. Meetings**

- a) Steering Group meetings will be targeted to take place monthly with certain exceptions ie: Summer/Christmas holiday breaks.
- b) Where possible, all meetings will be held at different places within the Parishes. The dates of future meetings will be made publicly available via the Neighbourhood Plan website, relevant Facebook group pages and notice boards. Where Zoom sessions are necessary, (especially under current Covid conditions) the Secretary will provide access codes upon request. All 'users' to clearly identify themselves through this medium and the Chair reserves the right to remove anyone who is not willing to do so.
- 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 representative.
- d) The Secretary shall keep a record of meetings and circulate notes to Steering Group members and the Parish Council representatives in a timely fashion. Public meetings will be recorded for minute taking purposes. Once the notes have been approved, the recording will be deleted to meet GDPR guidelines. Minutes shall be made publicly available.

- 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 will normally be by consensus at Steering Group meetings. Where a vote is required each member shall have one vote. A minimum of five 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) Meetings are open to all members of the Parishes to attend where a key decision is required. All groups and interested parties will be encouraged to participate at such meetings. The agenda will include an item to receive any representations from members of the public. This item will last no longer than 15 minutes unless agreed by the Chairman, with a maximum of 5 minutes allowed per speaker. Only members of the Steering Committee Group are permitted to vote.

## **7. Communication**

- a. The Communications sub-group will create and draft all publications for updating the Parish Councils and local community. Once approved by the Management Group, these will be submitted for release to the relevant areas ie: Facebook groups, websites, notice boards, leaflets etc. to ensure all our community remains fully informed.
- b. At no point should any information be released without prior approval of the Neighbourhood Plan Management Committee to ensure information is accurate and appropriate.

## **8. Working Groups**

- c. The Steering Group may establish working groups, made up of volunteers from the community to aid them in any Neighbourhood Plan related work.
- b. Each working group should have a lead person from the Steering Group.
- c. Members of the community will be encouraged to participate in the process at all stages.

## **9. Finance**

- a. All grants and funding will be applied for and held by the lead Parish Council (Stanstead Abbots P.C) who will ring-fence the funds for Neighbourhood Plan work.
- b. The Steering Group will notify the Parish Councils, advising them of any significant planned expenditure before it is incurred.
- c. Steering Group members from any working groups may claim back any previously agreed expenditure incurred during any Neighbourhood Plan related work.

## **10. Conduct**

- a. It is expected that all Steering Group members abide by the principles and practice of the Parish Council Code of Conduct including conflicts of interest, particularly with regard to development.
- 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 Plan reflects their collective expectations.
- c. The Steering Group will achieve this through applying the following principles:
  - Be clear and open when their individual roles or interests are in conflict;

- Treat everyone with dignity, courtesy and respect regardless of their age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or religion and belief; and
- Actively promote equality of access and opportunity.

## **11. 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 Councils.

## **12. 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 councils, 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 in the best interests of the Parish Councils.

*Revised February 2021*