

The response from Honeystreet to the proposal of an NDO was first discussed and agreed at an informal meeting of village residents on August 25. Below is the letter subsequently signed by almost every resident of Honeystreet and delivered to Alton Parish Council in September, 2015. It is followed by the relevant entry in the minutes (087/15) from the Parish Council meeting on September 24.

To Alton Parish Council

Neighbourhood Development Order – Honeystreet Sawmill

We are all residents of Honeystreet. We welcome the proposed Neighbourhood Development Order in principle and would like to thank the Parish Council for taking the time and effort to make it happen.

Our concern is with the all-important vote which will, at the end of the process, decide the outcome. We believe it would not be acceptable for the vote to be subject to all three villages in the parish, since that would take the decision out of the hands of the villagers of Honeystreet where the development is actually taking place.

Of course those living in Alton Barnes and (to a lesser extent) Alton Priors will be affected by whatever happens at the sawmill site, particularly in terms of traffic. We completely accept that their views need to be not just taken into account but safeguarded, too.

That, however, is going to happen in any case. The process will be overseen by the Parish Council. And five out of the seven Council members live in Barnes or Priors. In addition, residents of those two villages can and must be fully consulted and involved by means of questionnaires, village meetings, the parish website and the like.

Our concern is the vote. Simple arithmetic shows that in a parish-wide referendum the numbers in Barnes and Priors, with almost 80 dwellings, are enough to swamp Honeystreet, with just 29 dwellings.

We could easily see a situation where Honeystreet votes overwhelmingly in favour of housing on the site but is outnumbered by the rest of the parish who want continued industrial use. And we are left with a storage facility or a scrap metal yard which this village has voted *against*.

It should be remembered that Honeystreet is a separate entity, which has produced its own Village Design Statement, accepted as policy by Kennet District Council and subsequently by Wiltshire Council. This proposed development is not happening in Alton Barnes. It is not happening in Alton Priors. It is happening in Honeystreet.

In our view the simplest option is for the referendum to be held here, with the safeguards for the other villages as described above.

Failing that, we would be ready to consider a compromise such as a weighted vote, or a bar to a decision if it does not have majority support from Honeystreet.

But we wish to make clear that we cannot take part in a process which could see a development imposed on us even though this village voted against it.

(Signed)

From the PC minutes 24.9.15

087/15 Honeystreet sawmill: The composition of the PC members for the Neighbourhood Development Order Steering Group was discussed and finalised. The Steering Group voting members will be Alex Oliver, Robert Carpenter Turner, Steve Hepworth, Ben Owen and Charles Reiss.

AO informed members of a recent meeting of Honeystreet residents. The main concern is that the future of Honeystreet sawmill could be decided by villagers in Alton Barnes and Alton Priors, rather than Honeystreet residents, if a referendum is conducted in all three villages (29 houses in Honeystreet as opposed to over 80 in Barnes and Priors together). A letter has been received by the PC, signed by almost all Honeystreet residents, requesting that the referendum be held only in Honeystreet. AO also informed members that he had been informed by a senior planning officer from Wiltshire Council that the PC has the authority to define the boundaries of the neighbourhood affected by the Neighbourhood Development Order. BO expressed concern that as there are few young people in Honeystreet, it is possible that affordable housing would not be considered a priority. SH considered that as the steering group is representative of all the villages, that would be a safeguard. After discussion, there was unanimous agreement that Honeystreet residents would have the vote in any referendum that occurs. It was asked that the PC's thanks to the residents of Honeystreet for clearly expressing their concerns was minuted. SH to contact Wilts Council formally to inform them that the PC will go ahead with the NDO and supply a map/plan of the site.
