

# Glaphorn Neighbourhood Planning Group

An Advisory Committee of Glaphorn Parish Council

## Reviewing and Re-stating the GNP Policies on Conflicts of Interest and Declaration of Interest

### 1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 As we approach the crucial and contentious stage of determining what should or should not be included in the Neighbourhood Plan, it is appropriate to review our policies on conflicts of interest. It is important at this critical stage that we are extra vigilant in ensuring that we each adhere to the spirit as well as the word of our policies.
- 1.2 Our over-riding requirement is to adhere to the Parish Council's Standing Orders.

*Declarations of Interests should be at the top of every meeting agenda.*

*At any time when the meeting agenda includes a matter giving rise to a conflict of interest for a member, that member must not take part in any discussion or influence the debate. In accordance with Parish Council Standing Orders, the person or persons should leave the room.*

### 2. Defining Conflicts of Interest

- 2.1 Conflicts of interest were defined at the outset of the GNP Group's work in June 2016 as

*1. Ownership of land or buildings which has potential for future development or change of use within the planning system and where there is an intention to seek planning permission or propose that land or building be designated for development within the Glaphorn Neighbourhood Plan. Ownership shall include the individual member and any close family members.*

*2. Membership of any clubs, societies or associations (local or national) which might have an interest in any potential proposals in the neighbourhood plan.*

*3. Any commercial interest in a business which might (or could be perceived to) be a potential beneficiary of proposals within the neighbourhood plan. Commercial interest includes full or partial ownership or significant shareholding (more than 5%) in a business. This applies to the individual and any close family members.*

*4. Any other matter about which there is a potential conflict of interest. This might include your employment / occupation if relevant to a potential conflict of interest.*

- 2.2 The Parish Council's Standing Orders prohibiting participation in discussion and decision taking apply to any Conflicts of Interest defined as 1 to 4 above.

### 3. Defining Conflicts of Interest tightly to the Specific Work of the GNP Group

- 3.1 In January 2017, the GNP Group adopted a further paper on "Dealing with Conflicts of Interest – Real and Perceived"

*The main function of the GNP Group is to be the channel for assessing and expressing Community views on the content of the Neighbourhood Plan. Members of*

*the Group must clearly contribute their own common sense and expertise but above all else it is the role of the Group to retain confidence in the integrity and transparency of the process - after all this will be tested at the end by the referendum.*

*To retain the confidence of the community (and would-be developers), we must err on the side of caution when assessing whether we, as individual members, have any conflicts of interest. This is as much a matter of perception as fact.*

*The Group adopted some firm and clear guidelines on Conflicts of Interest for its work, namely:*

- 1. Members will act at all times in a manner which preserves the integrity and transparency of the process of compiling the NP and fulfil their primary role of being a conduit to assess and express the views of the Community they serve.*
- 2. Members must declare any pecuniary interest (defined in paragraph 2.1 above) and not take part in meetings when a relevant matter is considered.*
- 3. Members should exclude themselves from involvement in any matter where their personal views are so firmly held that they cannot reasonably appraise the relative merits of proposals.*
- 4. Members should exclude themselves where they have or could be perceived to have an interest not only about a specific proposal but matters which involve choices and assessment of relative merits (e.g prioritisation of site A for development over site Z). Specifically this is expressed as:*
  - Any member with any planning matter outstanding or putting forward a site proposal for inclusion in the NP cannot be involved in evaluation of proposals for development of sites within the village environs or decisions on their inclusion or otherwise in the NP.*
  - Any member who owns or occupies property immediately adjacent or directly affected by any proposal for site development cannot be involved in evaluation of that proposal or decisions on its inclusion or otherwise in the NP.*
  - Any member who owns or occupies property immediately adjacent or directly affected by any proposal for designation of a site as being sensitive and thus requiring protection from development shall exclude themselves for consideration of this aspect of NP policy formulation.*
- 5. Membership of clubs, societies, or other organisations (including voluntary posts) shall preclude a Member from any decisions relevant to that organisation (e.g allotment holders shall not participate in matters relevant to that land; school governors shall not participate in any NP matter directly affecting the school(s)). NB As the Glapthorn NP Group is formed as a Committee of the Glapthorn Parish Council then members of the NP Group are not restricted by their Parish Council interests.*

- 6. Any member shall exclude themselves from specific decisions on design / development criteria or conservation of village character and views which directly affect his / her own property because of proximity to the matter being considered.*
- 7. Members must recognise that many matters inter-relate and any one policy might impact upon other policies and affect the overall balance or content of the NP; thus in considering the plan as a whole or any individual policy, members should take into account both the spirit as well as content of items 1 to 6 above when deciding when a declaration of Conflict of Interest is necessary.*

#### **4. Actions Now Needed**

##### **4.1 The GNP Group is invited to**

**re-affirm all the above policies, and**

**in particular, to ensure strict adherence to declarations of interest and avoidance of conflicts of interest at the forthcoming meetings to consult the public and then determine the final recommended content of the NP.**

**20<sup>th</sup> October 2017**