HOUGHTON PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting
held on Thursday 31st July 2025 at 18.30 at
Houghton Village Hall

Present: Parish Councillors: A Young (Chairman), A Dougall (Vice Chairman), P Chant, J Coombes, J Broomfield, K Ellwood, P Page.
County Cllr D Drew.

Members of the Public: 20
Minutes**:** Cllr Dougall

The meeting started at 18.30

Item Minute

1. Chairman's Welcome and Public Participation
Chairman welcomed all to the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence
Apologies were received from Borough Cllr A Johnston

3. Declarations of Interest
To declare an interest in any items of business on this agenda – **None**.

4. Test Valley Draft Local Plan Consultation
To consider a response to be submitted to the Test Valley Draft Local Plan Consultation. Cllr Dougall took the meeting through a draft response to the Test Valley Draft Local Plan. Members of the public present were also invited to ask questions, comment on and clarify points outlined in the draft response. Amendments to the draft were discussed and Cllrs resolved to submit the draft with amendments (see Appendix for final submission document) – Proposed Cllr Dougall, seconded Cllr Ellwood, all agreed.

5. Next Meeting
Full Council Meeting – Tuesday 9th September 2025 at 19.00 at Houghton Village Hall.

Meeting closed at 19.30

These minutes were approved and signed at the meeting held on 9th September 2025

Appendix

Houghton Parish Council's response to the Local Plan 2042 Revised Regulation 18 Public Consultation

At an Extraordinary Meeting of Houghton Parish Council held on 31 July 2025, Houghton Parish Councillors unanimously objected to the proposal of a strategic housing allocation of approximately 100 dwellings at land adjacent to Danebury School, Stockbridge (as outlined in pages 54-56 of the Draft Test Valley Local Plan 2042 Revised Regulation 18 published in June 2025) and resolved to urge Test Valley Borough Council to remove this site from the draft Local Plan as it is not suitable for any development.

HOUGHTON PARISH COUNCIL OBJECTS TO ANY DEVELOPMENT ON THIS SITE ON THE FOLLOWING GROUNDS:

Environment, ecology and biodiversity

- The River Test (possibly the most famous of the 205 chalk stream rivers worldwide), Stockbridge Marsh, Stockbridge Fen, and Stockbridge Down, are all Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). They do not exist in isolation of one another. Together, they form an ecologically integrated system which is dependent on low pollution, stable hydrology, and low human impact. Even incremental development undermines this balance and risks a long-term degradation and loss of biodiversity that no mitigation can ever truly replace.
- The local unique chalk stream environment is highly sensitive to disruption. Increased development risks undermining the natural drainage profile, accelerating the potential of flooding downstream and placing further pressure on settlements like Houghton. These changes would contradict National Planning Policy Framework's (NPPF) guidance on minimizing flood risk and protecting climate-sensitive landscapes. (NPPF Chapter 14 – Flood Risk, Drainage, Landform)
- This concern is echoed in the recent motion adopted unanimously by Test Valley Borough Councillors on 17th July 2025 to grant Rights for Rivers - including, crucially, the River Test. Amongst these rights is "the right to be free from pollution and contamination," and point 3 of the resolution

commits the Council to embed river rights principles across its policies relating to planning, development, land use, water management, and biodiversity. This reinforces the imperative for local planning decisions to protect the fragile chalk stream ecosystem and uphold flood resilience.

- The proposed development is sizeable and is on a hill running down to the River Test. The bottom of the site is literally yards away from the river. Pollutants and contamination resulting from run-off and spillages and inadequate drainage systems will be difficult if not impossible to prevent. Test Valley Borough Councillors should therefore apply the 'Rights for Rivers' motion they have just unanimously adopted to ensure that this site is removed from the draft local plan in order to protect the River Test as they have undertaken to do.
- Development here would cause substantial loss of biodiversity, impact native flora and fauna and threaten nearby Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), which are all interconnected ecosystems. It would also result in the erosion of best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land, raising concerns about food security and diminishing the ecological character that defines the Test Valley. (NPPF Chapter 15 – Paras 174–177)
- The Council recognises the land would reduce the Mottisfont Bats SAC (foraging habitat) but the impact of the ALAN (Artificial Light at Night) would expand that area further as well impacting the at-risk owl population.

Landscape and character.

- The Comments in the Housing Site Selection Topic Paper Appendix 2 the Council recognises that "The site is adjacent to existing residential development to the north east. It lies on rising land on the west side of the river valley. Part of this site was considered through the landscape sensitivity assessment, which indicated the northern part of the site to have an overall landscape sensitivity of moderate to high, with areas west of the Roman Road properties and slightly south of Danebury School up to Houghton Road being of moderate overall landscape sensitivity." Whilst the site may come under the new definition of a Grey Site, the site is large and extends significantly outside the settlement edge into the open countryside, to the west and south.
- The landscape is a major part of the character of Stockbridge and, unlike Danebury School which is quite well hidden, any significant development on this site is going to be seen and will damage this valuable and precious landscape and change it forever. Houghton Parish Council does not accept that any amount of proposed landscaping and tree planting can sufficiently mitigate the significant damage done.
- ALAN would also impact the homes close to the site as well as across the valley due to the elevated nature of the site

Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

- Stockbridge High Street is founded on a 2,000-year-old Roman chalk causeway, a feature of exceptional archaeological significance. This ancient infrastructure, originally laid to cross the braided channels of the River Test underpins the town's linear form and contributes to its designation as a Conservation Area, and as such, it is protected for its historic character and setting.
- The proposed development presents a serious and cumulative threat to this sensitive environment, particularly to the setting of numerous Grade II and Grade II* listed buildings, including:
    - Stockbridge War Memorial (Sir Edwin Lutyens, Grade II)
    - Lutyens Memorial Cross in Winton Hill Cemetery (Grade II)
    - King's Head House, Old St. Peter's Church, The Grosvenor Hotel, and Stockbridge Town Hall — all Grade II* listed buildings
- Of particular concern is the impact on Marsh Court, a Grade I listed Arts and Crafts house designed by Edwin Lutyens between 1901–1905, with Grade II* listed gardens by Gertrude Jekyll. This nationally significant heritage asset occupies a prominent position within the wider landscape setting of Stockbridge and is highly sensitive to change.
- There are six listed buildings close to the site (near and at the crossroads). The impact on the Houghton and Bossington conservation areas including the nearby Houghton Lodge also needs to be considered.
- The cumulative impact of development in this area risks undermining the historic integrity of these assets.

Flooding

- Part of the site is within an area at risk of flooding from surface water, this relates to areas on the eastern boundary of high, medium and low risk. Part of the site, towards the east, is indicated to potentially be susceptible to groundwater flooding.
- The Houghton Road next to the site is already prone to flooding during times of heavy or prolonged rain. This will be significantly exacerbated if development is allowed on the site. It would mean that many houses along with associated outbuildings, driveways and access roads would be built on the hill that drains down towards the Houghton Road and the River Test. Run-off from roofs, and concreted and tarmacked driveways and roads would mean water flowing down the hill in greater quantities and at greater speed significantly adding to risks of both flooding and pollution. Climate change is only likely to exacerbate this problem.
- Flooding of the road alongside this site will add to the traffic problems.

- It is likely that contaminated water entering the River Test having run down the site will endanger the precious ecology of the river, which is not just one of this country's but is one of the world's most iconic and precious chalk streams.

Water Supply and Water Quality

- Local water quality and supply is already under significant pressure.
- Since February 2025, some Longstock residents have been forced to supplement tap water with bottled water, due to elevated nitrate levels in the local drinking water supply - a situation that highlights the environmental stresses the community is already facing. The prospect of an additional 100 houses raises serious questions about the sustainability of local water infrastructure and the risk of exacerbating existing pollution.
- Extreme weather is becoming more common, whether it is heavy, prolonged rainfall or extended periods of drought. The multiple planned developments up and down the Test Valley will need a vast quantity of water and there is already considerable abstraction from the River Test. This large development will put further strain on an already stretched system.

Highways and traffic

- If it goes ahead, a development of 100 houses is calculated to create an extra 400 vehicle movements a day, adding to existing problems of traffic flow and traffic congestion through and around Stockbridge (which are keenly felt at various times of the day).
- The traffic is likely to be significant given there are limited job opportunities in Stockbridge itself and therefore work is likely to be elsewhere (Andover 8.5m, Winchester 10m being the closest towns). Others are likely to work in Romsey or Southampton which will mean that there will be a significant increase in traffic on the Houghton Road, which is already treated as a cut-through by numerous drivers with lorries and delivery vans, etc. often driving at speed through what is a narrow and winding country road.
- Stockbridge acts as a hub for local villages and consequently traffic will also be impacted by the proposals in the surrounding area: Broughton 45, Chilbolton 65, Grateley 80, etc.
- There will be increased traffic on the A30 and the proposed access points could be hazardous.
- There may be a need for a new bridge (wider to take more traffic)
- There has been talk of an exit onto Houghton Road (which is essentially a country lane) which will cause further congestion at the crossroads.
- Many people living in Roman Road find it difficult walking up and down the steep hill into and from Stockbridge and already use cars even just to travel to and from Stockbridge.
- Elderly or disabled residents will not be able to travel in and out of Stockbridge and there will be considerably more car journeys even for short journeys further adding to existing congestion, parking and vehicle pollution problems.
- The Council already recognises the limited bus services through Stockbridge.

Infrastructure Deficit

- The local infrastructure is already operating under strain:
    - Water supply and drainage systems are approaching capacity.
    - There are increasing difficulties in accessing GP and hospital appointments.
    - Public transport is extremely limited and, as stated, there will inevitably be a significant increase in car reliance, traffic congestion and vehicle emissions.
    - The narrow bridge and surrounding road network cannot absorb increased traffic demand. The Houghton Road is essentially just a country lane.
    - Severe parking shortages in Stockbridge already affect both residents and visitors alike. Parking during working hours has become extremely difficult and what is proposed will make this worse.
    - While Danebury School has capacity, the Council recognises the Primary School is already constrained
    - The plan also shows building on the school playing fields requiring them to be moved to a hill which would need to be flattened at presumably considerable expense and potentially at risk from post approval variation.
- Increased development in this context would further undermine the functionality and sustainability of the local infrastructure.

Damage to Tourism and the Local Economy

Stockbridge's and the local area's economic vitality is strongly linked to sustainable tourism - including fishing, walking, cycling, and nature-based activities. Introducing large-scale development risks disrupting this delicate balance, impacting local businesses and the long-standing stewardship of the environment by the community. The increased issues of traffic congestion in and around Stockbridge and the difficulties of parking are likely to deter people from visiting rather than encouraging them to do so.

Central Government Targets

- Houghton Parish Council recognises the need for at least 50% Affordable Homes and the desire to shift the balance in those areas where there balance is skewed to "unaffordable" houses but it is

disappointing that brown field sites in other parts of the County have been ignored in favour of green field sites across the Test Valley.
- Houghton Parish Council urges Test Valley Borough planners to identify alternative sites, focusing on the many brown field and windfall sites within the borough.

Previous grounds for refusal for development on this site still stand
An application in 2014 to build on land west of what was then known as Test Valley School was refused on the following grounds:
- There was no demonstrated need to be built in the countryside.
- The proposed school coach and car facility was contrary to policy laid out in the then TVBC Local Plan (2006) and it was not demonstrated that there was an overriding need for it to be located in the countryside.
- It had an urbanising effect on a prominent and elevated site and impacted on the wider landscape setting of Marsh Court house (Grade I Listed Building) gardens (Grade II* listed) and Stockbridge, which would have an adverse impact on the special character and setting of designated heritage assets.
- No legal agreement to improve highways to the detriment of both existing and future residents of the area.
- There were issues with the proposed affordable housing.
- There were issues with public open space, maintenance, etc.

The planning officer's report repeatedly stated it is an unsustainable form of development in the countryside. Houghton Parish Council maintains that for these reasons as well as those already stated, this land remains unsuitable for development.

Risk of further development on the site
- Following the recent site consultation, it is noted that the red line boundary presented appears to reflect a development area previously proposed for approximately 200 dwellings. This is at odds with the current suggestion of an allocation for 100 dwellings. The implication is that, should the site allocation proceed, an expansion beyond the 100-dwelling figure may already be assumed or facilitated by the extent of the red line.
- Page 31 of the Site Selection Topic Paper (Appendix 1) states that the 'promoted capacity' of the site was 300 dwellings suggesting that the landowner and/or developer was hoping for many more houses to be built on the site.
- It is further noted that, during the public drop-in presentation event held at Stockbridge Town Hall on 16th July, a representative of TVBC confirmed to a member of Houghton Parish Council that the red line corresponds to the previously submitted scheme for 200 houses. This reinforces the concern that the current red line boundary may not accurately reflect a reduced 100-dwelling proposal.
- The fact that the red line boundary appears to allow for greater development adds to people's concerns that any development on this site would be followed by further development and make matters even worse. If this site is kept in the draft Local Plan, it will be subject to more speculative development. This adds weight to our request that the site be removed from the draft Local Plan altogether. It is not a suitable site for development and there is a fear that any development on the site will lead to more causing further damage to the landscape, and environment and historic setting.

Summary
- Houghton Parish Council supports its community in objecting to the proposed strategic housing allocation of approximately 100 dwellings at land adjacent to Danebury School, Stockbridge. There is very strong feeling among parishioners that this should not go ahead and that the site should be removed from the draft Local Plan.
- The many reasons for removing this site from the draft Local Plan include the damage it would cause to the environment, the increased and real threat of pollution and flooding, the significant detrimental impact any development here would have to the landscape and character of the area and to the setting of a host of important heritage assets, the problems of traffic and congestion and the consequent impact this would have on tourism and local businesses, the problems of sustainability given the extremely limited level of public transport and the strain that this would put on the already overstretched local infrastructure, and the added pressure it would put on water supply and drainage and sewage systems.
- Crucially, this development will threaten the health of the River Test given that it would be on a hill with houses going down to the Houghton Road with a very strong likelihood of contaminated water, nitrates and other pollutants flowing or draining down the hill and into the River Test itself.
  Given that Test Valley Borough Councillors unanimously voted just a matter of days ago that the River Test has the right to be free from pollution and contamination and resolved to embed this right into council policies, particularly those concerning planning, development and land use, they need to make true on their pledge to protect the precious River Test and remove this site from consideration forthwith.