

## **Neighbourhood Plan Project Management Group**

**Meeting: Friends (Quaker) Meeting House 7.30pm, East Gardens, Ditchling**

### **Notes of meeting Wednesday January 6th 2016**

Present: Tom Dufty (Chair), Phil Smith, James Standing, John Hinze (Comm. FG), Tony Gedge, Richard Flack, Sarah Nelson (SDNPA), Mike Burr, Trevor Kirby, Don McBeth, Michelle Warner (DPC Clerk), Marianne Hickman (Comm. FG), Sallie Collard-Watson, Paul Farrands, Craig Mayhew

**1.** Advance Apologies: Edwina Rowling

**2.** Declarations of interest: None

**3.** Correspondence sent/received/pending: Tom reported that he had received and circulated to the PMG the SDNPA's ' Authority Monitoring Report'. Sarah conformed that this was very important and set a latest timescale for submission of neighbourhood plans based on it being six months before the SDNPA's intended consultation on the publication version of its Local Plan. In effect this meant that all neighbourhood plans intending to allocate development sites must have been progressed to pre-submission stage by April 1st. We need to propose extensions to the settlement boundary where relevant and indicate the number of possible houses on each site. Action: James, Edwina & Tom

Tom reported that he had been copied into various email on the subject of preserving rural shops. He thought these had been circulated to all PMG members but evidently not. Action: Tom to circulate.

Tom reported that he had received the anticipated request to complete an End Of Grant Report from the Government. This represented completion of the second six month grant period. He would be working as soon as possible with Michelle (DPC Clerk) to complete it and return the outstanding funds. Action: Tom.

Tom reported and circulated a publication leaflet for a talk/seminar on the work of the Lewes Council's tree preservation officer on Jan 13th. He recommended it.

**4.** Cross analysis of focus groups' policies, resolution of differences and conflicts etc. with a view to pre-submitting our draft policies to SDNPA & LDC for comment

Tom thanked the focus groups and their leaders for the hard work they had put into developing their draft policy statements. He invited the leaders to explain where they saw potential conflicts or inconsistencies between their policies and those of other groups.

James said that the Housing group had some concerns vis-a-vis some of the Conservation policies, notably the latter's stated policy of needing to conserve Ditchling's three Housing 'Character Areas'. These were distinctly different from Conservation Areas which all agreed must be conserved and it came as a surprise to many residents on the Open Day that there were such things. The housing group's draft policy stated that maximum use should be made of development land to build small, low cost affordable housing. The 'Character Areas' were on the whole characterised by large houses with large gardens. If it was essential to conserve this 'characteristic' then it would preclude the building of small, affordable, houses with small gardens, should land in these areas become available. In subsequent discussion it was agreed that the conservation policies would be amended to remove reference to conserving the 'character areas' and that the housing policy would be amended to the effect that whilst the use of land should be maximised it was still important that the design and style (but not size) of new housing should be compatible with the surrounding area. All agreed that the primary objective was to provide the conditions and policies that would lead to a much wider mix of housing in the plan area than currently existed, Action: James to amend as appropriate.

Phil said that the Community Infrastructure group had looked at its draft policies in the light of other group policies. It recognised that a potential conflict could arise if an application was made for community land or a building to be registered as an 'asset of community value', under its policy, if at the same time it was identified as a suitable site for housing or if it conflicted with conservation policies. They had therefore written into their policies, where relevant, that "land or buildings specifically identified for future housing in the Neighbourhood Plan will be excluded from this policy and/or that it will not apply to land protected under Policy CONS12 (Protecting local Green Spaces) or Policy CONS13 (Protecting Important Gaps Between Settlements) unless proposals are consistent with Conservation policies". The same qualification applied to the policy that gives positive encouragement to the 'innovative' use of community land and buildings.

Mike said that the Business & Traffic groups had some concern that their support for an additional off-street car park down the Keymer Rd. might conflict with conservation policies and in particular retention of the strategic green gap. It was agreed that provision of this car park is essential not to satisfy residents' parking needs but to encourage visitors to come to the village and use its shops and services and therefore sustain them for residents year round. He reminded the PMG that Ditchling village is a 'local 'service centre' in LDC's plan. In discussion it was agreed that the car park is essential and has priority but that it is very important that it is landscape and conservation friendly. Action: Mike to amend as appropriate.

Richard said that the conservation group had taken on board the comments and would amend its policies accordingly. The group had yet to complete its local landscape survey and was in vital need of large scale maps and mapping ability. Sarah said that maps could be obtained from SDNPA. Don offered his help with 'mapping'. Action: Richard to follow up

**5.** Agreeing what additional work needs to be done to produce the draft plan with a view to meeting a target date for completion of end February.

The target remains of producing a draft plan for pre-submission by the end of February. It was agreed that the focus group leaders would meet with Tom asap to agree what more needed to be done. Meanwhile our agreed draft policies, as soon as amended, would be submitted to Sarah/Amy (SDNPA) for preliminary review who would also divide them between genuine 'planning' policies and 'aspirational' policies.

When the draft plan is complete a plenary session will be held with the 3 parish councils to outline