

## Neighbourhood Plan Project Management Group

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

### Notes of Meeting Wednesday July 15th 2015

**Present:** Paul Farrands, Tony Gedge, Edwina Rowling, Richard Flack, Tom Dufty (Chair), Amy Tyler-Jones (SDNPA), Trevor Kirby, Don McBeth, James Standing, Phil Smith, Richard Townsend (Community Infrastructure Focus Group); John Hinze (CIFG)

**1. Advance apologies:** Mike Burr

**2. Declarations of interest:** None

**3. Correspondence received/pending:**

Tom reported that he had had a very positive response to a request for a meeting with Andrew Lee, SDNPA Director of Strategy & Partnership, on the subject of traffic & transport and a date was now being arranged for a PMG sub-group to attend in August, in Midhurst.

Tom reported that in response to a question he had raised Amy had told him that the proposed new houses on the site of the Royal Oak at the north end of Ditchling Parish, if approved, would not count towards meeting Ditchling Parish's strategic housing quota between now and 2030 because they would be outside the village settlement. The quota related only to houses built within the settlement. Furthermore Amy also confirmed that 'windfall' house development within the settlement would not count towards meeting the quota. Numbers in the Local Plan were based on the presumption that there would be sufficient windfall houses over and above the quota to fulfill the strategic requirement.

Tom reported that in response to a question he had raised Amy had confirmed that the Housing Focus Group could identify sites suitable for future potential development even if they had not that had not been put forward by their owners but that it must be made clear that they are not currently 'available & deliverable'. This could be a useful exercise if ever they were to become available in the future.

**4 Locality Grant:** Tom confirmed that a grant of £4,100 had been paid into the DPC bank account to finance NP expenditure over the next six months.

**5. Hassocks NP Site Assessment Consultation;** Tom reported that Edwina, James and he had attended the Hassocks NP development site assessment consultation exhibition the previous weekend. The third of its kind. Hassocks residents were being asked to rank fifteen available sites in order of preference. Of the fifteen two are on the Ditchling/Hassocks Parish border and one very close to it. After the second consultation exercise these three sites had been ranked approximately midway down the list of fifteen. One of these three sites is within the SDNP. Amy confirmed that the Hassocks Project Team must look at all sites outside the Park before

considering any sites within the Park.

An additional five sites had been identified as having potential for future development but were listed as 'not available' currently (see above). The Hassocks Project Team is challenging MSDC's draft Local Plan allocation (quota) of 600 new houses between now and 2030 and have conducted their own assessment of Hassocks's need as being 250 – 400 houses. Is the Local Plan allocation not a strategic 'given' that cannot be varied in a Neighbourhood Plan? In subsequent discussion it was agreed the Hassocks project team are relying heavily on the fact that the MSDC Local Plan has not been approved and that this gives them the space in which to conduct their own assessment. However they were running the risk of eventual rejection by the Independent Examiner. This needs to be watched as it has implications for how we present our housing quota to residents in future.

**6. Community Infrastructure Focus Group:** Phil Smith presented the Focus Group's draft report for discussion. Tom congratulated them on their work to date.

The group has had four meetings and it remains work in progress. The group wants to cover the issue of medical health provision in more detail including the pharmacy. It also wanted confirmation that it should include education provision. In discussion it was confirmed that the group should pursue both issues. The group had taken an all-embracing interpretation of 'community infrastructure' including private, voluntary as well as public provision. Their principal guidance has come from the SDNPA/LDC Local Plans and from the 2014 Household Survey. Their objective is to build on the strong community spirit existing in the 3 parishes. The evidence base has included the 2011 census in addition to the Household Survey. They are conscious that there is considerable room for overlap with other groups particularly Traffic & Transport and Conservation (e.g open spaces). In discussion it was agreed that collating the focus group reports was for the PMG at a later date when all had completed their work. Meanwhile they should continue without concern for overlap.

The SDNPA/LDC Local Plans are not terribly informative on the issues although this could be a good thing as it inferred a minimum of restriction on what they could propose. They had identified three policy 'responses' to the issues raised. Those requiring 1) Typical planning policies 2) Advocacy/lobbying policies (involving the need to talk to other organisations and get buy-in) 3) Delivery/implementation policies. They had, to date, developed a total of 6 specific policy statements reflecting these 'responses'. Were 6 policy statements too many, not enough or just right? The tenor of the meeting suggested that this was enough and that if one or two could be combined into 'umbrella' policies this would be preferable, since it was likely that education & medical health could generate more.

It is important that there should be creative thinking as to how existing buildings and land can be used for more diverse community benefit particularly for sport and recreation. There are access issues, for both young and old and the disabled. One policy proposal is for a 5 year sport and recreation development plan. Residents and 'stakeholders' should be involved in the plan. The role of Ditchling as a 'service centre' is clearly defined in the LDC Local Plan and its likely to develop. There needs to be a protocol to enable the 3 parishes to work together to maximise their interdependence. And there needs to a local volunteering plan, building on the potential of self-

help.

We must identify 'assets of community value' and recommend them to LDC for registration. They are vitally important and covered by a strict definition. Assets of community value are buildings or land whose current primary use or use in the recent past furthers the social well-being or social interests (cultural, recreational, or sporting interests) of the local community. These can be listed in the plan as recommendations to LDC. (If they come up for sale it makes provision for a 6 month window in which the community can make a bid). The CI focus group (and the Conservation Group) must list all those things that meet the definition and recommend them in the first instance to the PMG. Does this include shops (traditionally not) and the curtilage of buildings as well as the buildings themselves? They are different to the more general which are sometimes called 'community assets' which are facilities considered to be valued by the community but not listed by LDC as 'Assets of community value'.

The SDNPA draft plan aims to 'protect the vitality and viability of a community'. A useful if somewhat vague policy. We must be adept at maximising the benefits of tourism and Park membership to sustain our services and facilities year round for residents without destroying their peace and privacy.

**Action:** Phil's focus group to include education and medical health

Amy to investigate status of shops and the curtilage of buildings as assets of community value

Phil & Richard's focus groups to recommend 'assets of community value' to PMG

Tom to decide who is going to pick up hard infrastructure e.g drainage up

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## **7. Other Focus Groups' Progress**

The Conservation Focus Group has met five times

## **8. PMG Meeting August 5th Presentation Housing Focus Group Site Assessment & next steps**

In the context of the Housing Focus Group's site assessment work, general discussion took place on the subject of SDNPA's Rural Exception Sites draft Policy and affordable housing.

The draft policy is as follows:

Strategic Policy SD25: Rural Exception Sites

1. Proposals for new residential development of 100 per cent affordable housing outside of settlement boundaries as shown on the Policies Map will be permitted, provided they comply with other relevant policies and the following tests are all met:

- a) affordable housing is provided in perpetuity;
- b) the site has been selected through a site-specific sustainability appraisal process;
- c) the scale and location relates well to the existing settlement; and
- d) effective community engagement has been undertaken.

1. The size (number of bedrooms), type (flat, house, extra care etc.) and tenure (social and affordable rented, intermediate, shared ownership or other) of affordable homes for each

proposal will be based on up-to-date evidence of local needs. A suitable mix will be determined through liaison between the applicant, SDNPA, parish council, relevant housing authority and rural housing enablers, where applicable.

3. Occupancy conditions and local connection criteria will be applied to affordable housing to ensure local needs are met. Selection will be managed through a partnership approach with the Housing Authority and established community-led and legally constituted organisations or CLTs where applicable.