

Neighbourhood Plan Project Management Group

Notes of the Meeting held at The Friends (Quaker) Meeting House, East Gardens, Ditchling

on Wednesday February 18th 2015

Present: Richard Flack, Tom Dufty (chair), Craig Mayhew, Mike Burr, Don McBeth, Tony Gedge. Paul Farrands & Shirley Crowther representing The Ditchling Society

1. Apologies in advance: Amy Tyler-Jones (SDNPA), Trevor Kirby, James Standing

2. Declarations of interest: Item 8: Tom declared an interest in being a former Chairman and current member of The Ditchling Society. Mike declared an interest in being a current member.

3. Correspondence received/pending:

3.1. Land Availability; Tom reported that following the article in the February Dialogue he had received a letter from the owners of Grimwade Farm in Spatham Lane proposing it as a site for potential development comprising semi-derelict and unused brownfield agricultural buildings and 1.8 acres of unused land. He had responded with thanks and that its suitability for development would be assessed in due course.

3. 2) SDNPA CIL Officer: Tom reported that the CIL officer would be coming to the PMG meeting on April 1st and giving a presentation. Action: Mike to provide projector etc

3.3) Hassocks Neighbourhood Plan: Tom reported that he had written to the Hassocks Neighbourhood Plan Chairman expressing concern that no contact had been made with our PMG prior to its assessment of the suitability of Hassocks development sites – particularly those directly on the border of our plan area. He had reminded them of the 'duty to cooperate' provisions and had asked for a meeting. A reply was awaited.

4. CDF unused grant repayment: Tom confirmed that the unused portion of the CDF grant had been repaid to the government.

5. Memorandum of Understanding: Tom confirmed that the Memorandum had now been signed by himself and the three Parish Chairmen. In answer to a question from Tony he said that despite what might be implied in the Memorandum Streat Parish would not be asked to contribute any funds towards the development of the plan. Tom reported that Ditchling Parish Council had agreed to provide funds for the production of a newsletter prior to the start of a new CDF grant programme in April when it could then recover the expenditure.

5.1. Action: Tom to send the signed MoU to Amy

5.2 Tom to apply for a new CDF grant in April

6. 'Streetlife' & Newsletter: Tom reported that Edwina had signed the PMG up for the Streetlife website (a form of chat line) on the basis that it was a good communication forum and was encouraging its members to join up. It became clear that PMG members did not fully

understand what it entailed and what would be expected of them.

6.1. Action: Edwina to expand and clarify its purpose and the role of the PMG members.

6.2. Tom reported that Edwina had recommended that it was time for a new newsletter to update residents on what was happening. The PMG agreed.

6.3. Action: Tom to draft and put Street Reps on notice & **Edwina** to produce a newsletter

7. Special Interest Group meetings: Tom reported that he had contacted Notcutts Garden Centre (reply awaited) & Mid Sussex Golf Club (potential dates March 11, 12, 13)

7.1. Action: Paul to let Tom know which date he can manage

7.2. Tom reported that Rob Mills had suggested a meeting with the Monday Group and the Jubilee Trust.

7.3. Action: Tom to arrange meetings (n.b. Traffic Focus group to be represented at the Monday group meeting)

8. Special Interest Group Engagement: The Ditchling Society (Shirley Crowther) Shirley Crowther said that the society had intended to issue a residents' questionnaire last year to elicit views on the future of the parish but had deferred doing so because of the imminent NP issue. She described how the society is issue-focused, campaigns for improvements, for conservation of the built and landscape heritage and for the welfare of the community. Its role differs from that of the parish council in that it is non-elected and voluntary and is therefore not circumscribed by procedures and protocols required of a democratic body. It can lobby and campaign and select what it wants to get involved in. And it also has access to residents with relevant expertise in the issues it runs with. It has circa 300 members and its remit, currently, is for Ditchling Parish only. The society appreciates that there are plenty of issues that need to push forward with that don't, formally, fall within the remit of a neighbourhood plan. How are these to be addressed? How can the parish make the most of being a gateway to and in the National Park? A particular concern to the society is how those things that will appear in the plan policies become a reality. What is the delivery mechanism/process? How will the parish retain sustainability? Saying it is one thing but making it happen is another. The primary difficulty it encounters is finding sufficient numbers of residents with the time to commit to progressing its agenda and actually doing things.

8.1. In a wide ranging discussion on the issue of housing she said the society believes there is a pressing need for more diversity. Many more small houses need to be built both to accommodate those wishing to move out of large houses and downsize, thereby freeing them up for families, but also for younger people working in the plan area who currently can't afford houses in it. St George's Park and Dumbrells Court cater for those wishing to move into retirement complexes but these do not necessarily satisfy the 'downsizing' need. The society would support small scale developments comprising a mix of lower cost, small, houses and small houses for rent and/or shared ownership. We need to have younger people living in the area both for community diversity's sake and, more importantly, to sustain local businesses and economy. Although it cannot control prices the Neighbourhood Plan can provide policies on the form of houses needed. In this context "small" should be interpreted as 2 bed roomed houses.

As to locations the society has no particular sites in mind but young people and families and older should not be housed in sites isolated from infrastructure services and key facilities.

8.2. The society's remit currently covers Ditchling Parish only but it is prepared to consider broadening it to include Streat and Westmeston. This would make sense in the light of the neighbourhood plan policies applying to the three parishes.

8.3. The PMG retains no role after delivery of the plan. The three Parish Councils will have nominal accountability. The Localism legislation stipulates a regular formal review by PCs of progress and a regular updating of the plan in the light of changing national and local circumstances and to ensure compliance with the developing Joint Core Strategy. This is not the same though as the need for processes and a methodology for driving forward the actual implementation of the plan policies. However the PMG can write into the plan aspirational processes and a methodology for how it wants to see the policies driven forward and implemented although they wouldn't have legal force.

In an extension of the discussion Richard confirmed that “workable” policies related to specific development sites can become statutory. Also that we can make assumptions as to

the impact that developments outside our plan boundary will have on it and seek to influence them accordingly.

9. Focus Groups:

9. 1. Mike fed back the considerable progress the Traffic & Transport Group had made. The provisions in the Local Area Transport Strategy (LATS) of 2009 were still very relevant and appropriate for our needs. It is moribund solely because of the lack of local authority funding. Application of the 'new' TP3 criteria operated against the interest of rural communities and starved them of funding for traffic and transport projects. The Group was considering how funding could be obtained through the ESCC Matched Funding Scheme, whereby locally raised funds would be matched by the County Council. The other possibility was a loan arrangement such as had been the case in funding the North End build-outs. They were considering setting up a Charitable Trust for the purpose of collecting funds. They were also considering how the SDNPA, in its role as the overarching planning and conservation authority, could be encouraged to be more assertive in its dealings with ESCC over road traffic issues.

9.2. Richard said that the Conservation group had had its first meeting and had allocated topic responsibilities to be followed up 1) looking at what green spaces had to be preserved/protected in the parishes 2) how to preserve the strategic countryside gaps between the parishes and urban conglomerations – especially the Keymer, Ditchling gap. Allocation of further topics regarding Listed buildings and Landscape Value assessment were to come. The question arose as to whether a Recreation Ground could be classified as a 'green space' under the act.

9.3. Action: Tony & Paul to identify key green spaces in Streat and Westmeston

9.4 Shirley (The Ditchling Soc) to help identify green spaces

- 9.5. **Tom** to provide Shirley with the green space criteria
Richard to investigate the status of recreation grounds

Tony reported that the Community Facilities/Infrastructure group had met once. Philip Smith would be submitting a report on it. Tom reported that the Housing Group had met.

The Local Economy/Business Group had yet to meet.

Human Resources: Tom said that the PMG needed more people willing to help, particularly with helping Craig get the work of the Local Economy/Business Focus group started.

Action: All PMG members to try to identify willing volunteer(s)