

Neighbourhood Plan Project Management Group

Notes of Meeting Wednesday April 22nd 2015

Agenda

Present: James Standing, Tom Dufty (Chair), Trevor Kirby, Craig Mayhew, Don McBeth, Tony Gedge, Richard Flack

Advance Apologies: Amy Tyler-Jones, Phil Smith, Edwina Rowling

Declarations of interest: None

Correspondence received/pending:

1. Tom had written to the Vicar proposing an SIG meeting with his church suggesting dates. None were appropriate. The Vicar had said he would revert with alternative dates.

2. Amy T-J (Notification of updates to the SDNPA Local Plan etc): Having studied them Richard said that they were largely positive. It confirmed that the Project Team can investigate and amend existing settlement boundaries but that they don't disappear. It was agreed that we should review our existing boundary with a view to possibly extending it to include some small sites currently outside and then confirm with Amy. It needed to be done within the SDNPA framework. The SDNPA is developing a 'spatial strategy' with a presumption in favour of development within the boundary and against outside. There is no provision for a 'strategic gap' policy as such. A strategic gap is in effect a gap between settlement boundaries. This reinforces the importance of defining a settlement boundary.

3. The Plan also contains draft landscape and dark skies policies which are significant for conservation and helps to define what policies can be applied to control development in sensitive landscape areas.

4. The Plan places priority on the need for affordable housing but there is not much in that really helps deliver on that. (NB Out of the original 25 houses required in Ditchling 10 have been completed leaving a net 15 although it is open to us to include provision for more in our plan if thought essential. Pressure is likely to be on from above to build more in view of the housing shortage regionally and nationally.)

5. **Action:** James and Focus Group to re-view settlement boundary in its work

6. **Tom** to confirm to Amy that we will be reviewing settlement boundary

7. In subsequent general discussion James spoke opening up the possibility for self-build houses. How could the price of building new houses be reduced? Did the Parish Council own any plots of land where development could go straight to builders cutting out the developers in between? Does affordable housing qualify for Rural Exception site status outside a settlement boundary

without setting a precedent?

8. St George's Park Ltd has applied for planning permission for a 4th Care Home. It can't be counted towards our quota of new houses because it's not registered as residential.

Newsletter

Tom asked if members had had any feedback from residents on the latest newsletter. All confirmed positive feedback. Mike pointed out that didn't have a date on it.

Ditchling Rugby Club planning application

The Rugby Club had submitted an application for two pitches and a 40 car, car park on the south side of the Keymer Rd. The Rugby Club was offering its proposed car park for use as a village car park when matches weren't played. Was this the way to get the much needed additional off-street parking? However the Parish Council was currently in negotiation for a car park in a field on the north side of the Keymer Rd. Don confirmed that the PC had met with the Trustee of the land and was investigating the possibility of a 50 year lease. The Parish precept had been raised to pay for the administrative costs incurred as part of the negotiations. The Council had had the land valued and were still 'in negotiation' with the trustee. No formal planning application had been submitted. Members felt that the proposed PC car park was infinitely better sited and much more acceptable (environmentally and highways sight line factors) than the Rugby Club proposal. The Club's car park would not be available for village use at key times during the playing season. There was no need for two car parks.

Members questioned why the Club needed new pitches and where its members were drawn from? What community value did it have? Great concern was expressed about its future intentions. The plan to use the Cricket Club's pavilion seasonally sounded like a very temporary expediency in view of its distance from the car park and pitches and relatively small size. Would they subsequently apply to build a club house of their own? Would the cricket pavilion have room to store the equipment needed to maintain the pitches different from that required for cricket pitches. If not where? Would they subsequently apply to build new storage facilities? If the application were to be approved it should only be conditional on restrictions applying to what they could do in the future. Tom produced maps showing that the groundwater/surface water coming off the Downs and down the Beacon Rd crossed directly over the area of the proposed two pitches. Where would it go after the pitches were drained? Tom also produced a map showing two Mesolithic sites close to the area concerned. Any possible development would have to be preceded by an archaeological study of the area. Members expressed great concern over potential landscape damage and reduction of the 'strategic gap'.

Action: Tom to seek further clarification on some points and write objecting to the application

Mid Sussex IDP application

Reference the previous meeting's discussion with Gareth Giles SDNPA CIL officer there was some discussion over who should make the request for funding for a traffic project in our area to be included in Mid Sussex's Infrastructure Development Programme. It was agreed the request should formally come from Ditchling Parish Council and that the project for which funding was requested should be on the recommendation of the NP Project Team and be seen to be relevant to the interests of the whole neighbourhood plan area not just Ditchling Parish. It

was agreed that a sub group comprising some members of the traffic focus group and representatives of the three parish councils should meet to agree a project.

Action: Mike to convene a meeting

Conservation Focus Group progress update

The meeting finished without time to cover this item. However Richard stressed the importance of the Project team and the focus groups paying heed to the key word 'sustainability' in all their work which should underpin all their policy proposals. It was agreed that the Project team and focus groups needed a better understanding of the definition of sustainability.

Action: Tom to circulate the NPPF definition