



**Notes on the Ditchling, Streat & Westmeston Neighbourhood Plan  
Project Management Group meeting 26/02/2014**

1) Apologies from Nicola Meakins

2) The presentation given to the street reps on the 6th of February was seen as a great success. As a result several street reps were present to observe this meeting.

The first leaflet has been distributed around the parishes

There are still six outposts not covered by street reps, but the good news is that both Streat and Westmeston are now mostly covered.

**3) Strategic Environmental Assessments, Environmental impact Assessments and Screening assessments.**

Andrew Triggs from the South Downs National Park Authority clarified, where necessary, and answered questions on an Environmental Studies report prepared by Nicola Meakins outlining the various assessment and screening processes that may be required in the formulation of a Neighbourhood Plan. Andrew emphasised that not all will be needed or relevant in the case of the DSW Plan. It will depend on its scope and content.

A copy of the report is attached to these notes.

**SEAs**

It should be possible to take into account environmental assessments that have already been conducted in Ditchling parish rather than duplicate. It was noted that Streat and Westmeston parishes had no such historic assessments to draw on.

In answer to a question as to whether the Steering Group can rely exclusively its own PMG professional Environmental Scientist (Nicola), to conduct the assessments, Andrew Triggs advised that it was important to ensure that she could not be subject, as a member of the Project Management Group, to any accusations of conflict of

interest. Once the scope and content of the Plan has been determined she will know whether she has cause to declare an interest in relation to any part of it. If that were to be the case the Steering Group could appoint an independent consultant to review and verify her work.

### **EIAs**

These will not apply in the formulation of the DSW Plan. They will apply if and when planning applications are submitted for houses built in accordance with the Plan, but this will be a matter for the developers and the Parish Council of the day

### **Seeking a Screening Opinion**

As early as possible we need to seek a Screening Opinion, from the SDNPA, as to whether we need a Sustainability Appraisal.

A key question ultimately needing to be asked and answered will be whether the Plan contributes to overall sustainable development?

A Sustainability Appraisal can include traffic implications.

If on the basis of having reviewed the information presented by the neighbourhood plan, the SDNPA decides that a SA is appropriate, then they will advise on next steps towards completion of the process.

**Action: Nicola Meakins** to progress the submission for a Screening Opinion with the aid of the PMG and Andrew Triggs.

### **4) Traffic**

Tom Dufty said that he had met with Mike Burr and Trevor Kirby to discuss how the PMG might take the traffic issue forward. They had proposed to Andrew Triggs and Tom Jones a joint meeting with representatives of both West and East Sussex County Councils to enlist their help in shaping the Neighbourhood Plan in a way that takes account of the traffic issue.

It was agreed to seek such a meeting.

**Action: Andrew Triggs and Tom Jones** to help Tom Dufty et al to arrange

Andrew Triggs mentioned the Local Transport Plan 3 covering 2011-2026, which is to plan and provide transport infrastructure which delivers sustainable economic growth in areas which have been identified as needing greater investment for regeneration and housing development. We need to understand its implications for

the three parishes. We also need to understand what resources are available and the prospects for implementation.

Any new housing development foreseen for Ditchling in the Neighbourhood Plan would need to be assessed for its potential impact on the highway network and for the capability to minimise its impact.

Andrew Triggs advised that it would be worth stating in the Plan what local opinion and aspirations are on the traffic issue but it won't have force of implementation behind it.

There is a duty to cooperate by planning authorities such as MSDC and LDC, who must assess the impact of local development on transport. It was suggested that Claire Tester head of Planning at MSDC and Edward Sheath Acting Head of Planning at LDC should be invited to discuss cooperation within the structure of the neighbourhood plan, at one of the PMG meetings.

The Ditchling Village LATS (Local Area Traffic Survey) was mentioned, the key objectives are as follows:-

1. Reduce the speed and volume of traffic
2. Reduce the volume of HGVs
3. Improve accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists
4. Improve Road Safety
5. Address Parking Issues
6. Reduce the need to travel and promote sustainable transport choices
7. Improve interchange between different modes of transport
8. Preserve and enhance the Ditchling Conservation Area
9. Improve air quality

## **5) E-mails**

Tom Dufty reported that he was pleased to have received several promising e-mails via the dedicated NP email address regarding the neighbourhood plan. Matters such as the composition of the steering group were mentioned, and also one from Claire Tester, currently Head of Planning at MSDC and former Clerk to Westmeston Parish Council who is a resident of Hassocks. She had offered to advise the PMG, in a personal capacity, on her experience of developing Neighbourhood Plans, whilst preserving her professional integrity on matters relating to MSDC. There was also one about whether schools are still required to provide after school care for children to enable parents to hold down full-time jobs.

## 6) Evidence gathering

There was a discussion about the nature and structure of the proposed questionnaire/s to be issued to households, businesses etc. Should we have two types of questionnaire, a general and specific topic related ones such as a housing questionnaire?

Should we update the 2009 housing survey carried out by DPC to assess the sort of housing needed?

**Action: Andrew Triggs** to talk to the LDC Housing Officer to discover if there is a likelihood of a new Housing Needs Survey being conducted.

It was agreed that there should be a General Questionnaire followed by a specific topic-related questionnaire(s), particularly on housing.

A question was raised about the SHLAA (Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment) and whether it had been updated yet to reflect the 2013 survey. Results for this will be available for the SDNP SHLAA survey in April and the Lewes District SHLAA in May

Questions were suggested such as “Is anyone in your household in need of accommodation in the area”. It was felt that an up to date housing needs survey is desirable.

The District Plan planned housing target for Ditchling Parish requires 71 new dwellings by 2030 of which all but 15 have been completed or committed. Streat and Westmeston parishes are not scheduled to take any. However this is directly related to the Housing Target of 4,500 new dwellings in the Lewes District Local Plan and falls far short of the District's actual Housing Need of 10,000 new houses.

It may therefore be reasonable to expect that there will be continual pressure on the Parish(es) to increase the number of new dwellings. It was noted that the DSW Plan could theoretically propose a higher figure than 15, pressure or no pressure from the District Council, if it had solid evidence to support the need.

Following a comment from an observer, it was noted that housing should grow proportionately with work and jobs available. It was suggested that a survey be taken on the turnover of employment in Tidy's Yard industrial estate.

Lastly it was suggested that the local school be included in a survey/questionnaires to ask how current pupils viewed the development of their villages for the future.

<http://www.beaconvillagesplan.co.uk/>

The content of a general questionnaire will be discussed at the next meeting.

**Action: Tom Dufty, Tony Gedge and Richard Flack** to draft a General Questionnaire.

**7) Date and time of next meeting,** Wednesday March 19th at 7.30pm in the Friends (Quaker) Meeting house.