

Project Management Group

Thursday December 19th 2013 Friends (Quaker) Meeting House 7. 30pm

Notes of the meeting

Apologies

Richard Flack
Craig Mayhew
Andrew Triggs

Introductions

Tony Gedge – Chair of Streat Parish Meeting

Declarations of Interest & Registers of Interests from those not previously submitted.

Any of these still outstanding should be completed and returned to Tom.

Street Reps

Three new reps have agreed to participate:
Jess Madison and Debbie Beck - Beacon Road
Sarah Duncan – Lodge Hill Lane
There are still some gaps to be filled.
PMG reps for Streat and Westmeston are also needed.

Communication & Engagement & preparations for Feb 1st Launch Date **Publicity article; Leaflet; website activation; logo**

Edwina reported that all would be in place for the public launch on Feb. 1st.

- * A leaflet was being produced for door to door distribution by street reps. etc.
- * Posters would be placed in strategic places around the village
- * The website will be live – Don to assist in completion of this
- * Ads announcing the launch will be placed in Ditchling Dialogue/Mid Sussex Times/Living Magazine
- * The logo has been approved

- * Sallie and Tom to help, and anyone else who would like to.

Information to be delivered to St. George's via the Residents Newsletter, and their notice boards. The wording for leaflets and posters should be reviewed and commented upon by all PMG members before issue.

Submissions to the Ditchling Dialogue need to be in by 5th Jan.

All publicity materials to be finalised after 6th Jan., when Streat and Westmeston will have been formally co-opted. [LDC Planners can give final approval by delegated authority immediately after 6th. SDNPA will need to wait until their meeting of their Planning Committee on the 16th]

Actions: Tom to email addresses for Mercedes Maddon of Mid Sussex Times and Graham Sharpless for The Beacon

Evidence Gathering – Progress updates

Evidence presented by Nicola on the natural environment: ecology, bio-diversity, sustainability etc.- comprehensive topic papers on:

- * Flood risk
- * Landscape
- * Statutory and Non-Statutory Designated Sites and Ecology

Data was gathered from the National Planning Policy Framework; Strategic Flood Risk Assessment for Lewes District, with Sequential and Exception Tests relating to areas in Ditchling – including land to the rear of Wintons Lane, land south of Folders Lane and land off Fragbarrow Lane; the Environment Agency; the East Sussex Landscape Assessment; the South Downs Landscape Character Assessment.

The Local Plan of designated sites needs to be added. Sites of Special Scientific Interest within the area need to be checked, and assessments of special areas of conservation.

Data from the Bio-diversity Record Centre can be accessed for a fee – the South Downs National Park should have access. Development can't go ahead on internationally designated protected sites, but this may not be the case with national SSSIs where the criteria is less stringent. The status of Ditchling Common could be upgraded if there were found to be particular assets on it.

Action: Mike Burr to pass on the National Park submission document.

Brighton, Hove and Lewes have applied to UNESCO to be approved as a Biosphere site.

Action: Tom to put Nicola in contact with Chris Todd.

Sussex County Council has audited the Country Park and Ditchling Common with a SSSI land condition report to decide if it is favourable or unfavourable recovering.

Action: Don to pass on details.

* Landscape: the crossover with ecology and history. Much of the information is concerned with values, conservation and the environment. Character Assessments have been made by Natural England and local authorities. Local Plans may be more detailed. Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty have been superseded by SDNP. The Historic Character Assessment will be an important document to consider. Should we be more concerned with those areas that are outside the National Park – i.e. North of Ditchling, Streat and Westmeston? We need to pay particular attention to them as they will be easier to develop, if necessary. A Historic Buildings map was presented.

Actions: Tom to discover who produced HCA.

Mike to produce a map of South and West parish boundaries, superimposed onto the SDNP boundary map.

* Flooding: there were queries related to Flood Risks – flash flooding was not taken into account in the SFRA. We should maybe employ a flood risk assessor to make recommendations. Proper drainage should be put in to new developments. Local evidence is important to our plan.

There is currently a lot of national and local publicity being given to fierce opposition by towns/villages to “unacceptable” development applications (e.g. Wivelsfield Green) which nevertheless have every chance of succeeding. In almost every case the commentary refers to the value that a Neighbourhood Plan would have had, had one existed, in providing alternative, sustainable and acceptable locations.

NIMBYism isn't an option but a NP is an important template, setting the direction and nature of future change that will be acceptable to the community and sustainable. There is a duty to co-operate with neighbouring parishes and Councils and vice versa to assess and address any potential negative impacts and realise potential gains.

Landfill sites and pollution incidents were also discussed – developers need to be aware of these.

What evidence do we need in the topic areas to address what issues?

Opportunities can be presented by the environment for sensitive and sustainable development

A questionnaire can ask these questions:

Can the current situation be improved?

Can residents get more from the environment we live in?

What do we want to gain? As opposed to what don't we want to lose?

Is housing style important?

Are more facilities, amenities required?

A bigger school?

Would you support this?

We can put in the plan things we don't currently have, but it's not a wish list of 'nice to have' items. They cannot be stand-alone items without evidence-based justification. If there are things we want to put in the plan they must be based on evidence that without them the social, economic and environmental development and welfare of the community will not be sustainable. We can also put in the plan infrastructure issues that need to be resolved (e.g. traffic) because of the threat that they pose to the sustainability of the social, economic and environmental development and welfare but again there has to be the evidence to support this.

We can also put in the plan those things that the community most values or are particularly special about the parishes that mustn't be lost or compromised whilst undergoing change. Its particularly powerful when evidence is available that external 'bodies' have endorsed the international, national or regional significance of these same things. The Sites of Special Scientific Interest are an obvious example; the factors that led to the designation of the Conservation Areas are another; Nicolas Pevsner's books on historic buildings; the factors that led to the inclusion of the parishes in the SDNP; Local history research etc etc

Action: Tony Gedge to discover what is known about Streat's history.

We need to investigate and understand the gains that the community can potentially obtain from closer interaction with the local environment and not just the constraints that the local environment poses. For example tourism and its potential beneficial effect on the local economy.

What brings people to the parishes?

What comments do tourists make?

How easy is it for residents and tourists to access the Downs?

How is the surrounding environment utilised?

We need to have answers to some of the current 'hot topics'. The SDNPA may have already covered them. For example what would be the landscape impact of future energy developments? Solar farms, mobile masts, wind turbines etc.? Fracking will be imposed if the area is deemed suitable.

What sort of info. do we need before we can make any policy decisions about housing? The SHLAA will provide information on current site possibilities.

What small sites are available and what do the current residents think of the development proposals?

In any plan, a link should be made between the 71 houses needed and the necessary infrastructure.

In 2014/15 the Community Infrastructure Levy will be introduced – 5% from developers. (?)

Action: evidence will be gathered by Nicola Meakins on the school, Tony Gedge on housing associations and Tom on the Medical Centre.

Meeting dates 2014

In future, meetings will be 3 weekly, on a Wednesday evening, unless something pressing crops up.

Street reps. need to be briefed in good time for the launch.