

East Dean & Friston Neighbourhood Plan



Shaping East Dean, Friston, Birling Gap and Crowlink for the future



Minutes of a Meeting of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group held in the East Dean and Friston Village (Small) Hall on Monday 20th February 2023 starting at 6.30 pm.

NPSG Members Present: Cllr Michael Bustard (NPSG Chairman and Parish Councillor), Lesley D'Urso (NPSG Vice Chair and Residents' Association Chair), Cllr Grant Fowler (Parish Councillor), Cllr Chris Lees (Parish Councillor) and Jonathan Timberlake (NPSG Member).

In attendance: Debbie Picknell (Administration Officer).

Apologies: Cllr Hollie Milligan (Parish Councillor) and Gina Zelent (NPSG Member).

No members of the public were present.

- 1. Minutes of the previous meeting** - The Minutes of the meeting held on the 9th January 2023 were confirmed and signed by the NPSG Chairman.
- 2. Welcome and general matters from the meeting on 9th January 2023**

Michael Bustard welcomed back those members who were not at the previous NPSG meeting.

He informed the members that Peter Williamson had resigned from the Steering Group to focus on other projects and that PW had been thanked for his positive comments and contribution to the Steering Group.

MB advised members that Chris Lees had reported NPSG thoughts on his behalf to the Parish Council at their meeting on 2nd February 2023 which was to suspend the Neighbourhood Plan preparation.

It was stressed that these were the thoughts of members at the meeting on 9th January 2023 and that more time was needed to consider and discuss the next steps in more detail.

3. Village Design Statement (VDS)

The draft VDS was circulated to NPSG members on 19 January 2023 and everyone agreed that a proposal should be made to the Parish Council to have this document reviewed and brought up to date with the help of an external Neighbourhood Planning Consultant. Members agreed that there needs to be plenty of opportunity for consultation with the local community on the VDS and that the final draft should be incorporated into a Neighbourhood Plan design policy. MB reassured members that the current VDS is registered with the South Downs National Park Authority and is a valid document.

Members agreed that in order for the revised VDS to form a central document for any Neighbourhood plan then extensive consultation with residents on any revisions etc needs to be carried out.

It was also noted that the current VDS contained extensive information which involved much work by the authors.

4. Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP), Parish Plan (PP) or Parish Priority Statements (PPS)

MB read out a report of information gathered from local Parish Councils on their experiences on preparing or not preparing a NDP. MB advised members that 5 were for a NDP and 7 were against a NDP. One comment of concern was that a NDP would not necessarily protect them from overdevelopment. There were also a number of positive comments strongly supporting a Neighbourhood Plan.

Following in depth discussion the general view of the NPSG was that whilst it was awaiting SDNPA Local Plan revision consultation it should continue towards a neighbourhood plan as very little of importance to this Parish was likely to change.

Members had little knowledge of the purpose of Parish Plans and more recent Parish Priority Statements and wished to have a comparison between these documents and a Neighbourhood Development Plan. The general consensus was that a NDP that included a VDS policy would carry more weight as it would be a statutory document.

5. Topics covered in a Neighbourhood Development Plan

Members discussed topics that could be part of a NDP. They agreed topics such as identifying local green spaces, safeguarding special views, improving walking/cycling locally have been reviewed by the Parish Council and the South Downs National Park Authority who already have an award winning Local Plan in place.

It was noted that car parking and electric charging points had already been organised by the Parish Council without the need for a NDP.

Safeguarding local shops for the local community and promoting sustainable tourism in the area was discussed. Members agreed that a development design to reflect local character, wildlife friendly features and identifying historically important buildings can be incorporated into a VDS.

Following in depth discussion the general view of the NPSG was that whilst it was awaiting the revision of the SDNPA Local Plan it should continue with preparations towards producing a neighbourhood plan. Very little of importance to this Parish was likely to change due to any Local Plan revisions.

Jonathan Timberlake advised that he wished to continue work on identifying other non-designated historic sites in the parish with the East Dean and Friston History Group and also with the Residents' Association Environment Group carry out some biodiversity surveys and collate existing biodiversity information. He advised that this would act as background information for the Neighbourhood Plan and would be unaffected by South Downs National Park Authority Local Plan revision or the 2021 Census data for the Village Design Statement.

Lesley D'Urso emphasised that whilst the Local Plan covers all the South Downs National Park a Neighbourhood Plan is the way local residents set out their vision of how they want the Neighbourhood Plan area to develop over the next decade or so.

6. Communication

Members agreed that good communication with the local community towards the development of a Neighbourhood Plan is important with realistic expectations within the community of what a NDP can deliver. The Procedure towards a NDP was discussed and it was agreed that communication is vital in order to consult with residents about their priorities and any NDP has to be put to referendum and consultation is therefore paramount. Having a good communications plan is essential and can be developed whilst awaiting census information and consultation will be needed before completion which is a key component of the Neighbourhood Plan process.

It will be important to manage expectations from the outset.

7. Next Steps

Members discussed the best way forward. It was agreed that MB would reflect the Steering Groups wish to continue with the Neighbourhood Plan in his report to the Parish Council at their next meeting on 2nd March 2023 as follows:-

- Request that the Village Design Statement be reviewed.
- Propose that the first Neighbourhood Plan has one design policy being the amended VDS.
- Engage professional help with the design of the draft NDP/VDS.
- Prepared a communications plan when the draft NDP/VDS has been completed.

- Ideally aim to present the draft NDP/VDS for consultation at the Annual Village Meeting on Friday, 21st April 2023 or if not ready at least include an update of the NPSG progress.
- That the NPSG continue with the groundwork to prepare the Neighbourhood Plan
 - a) A communications strategy be developed.
 - b) Data collection/ research continues.
 - c) That external consultants update the VDS with a view to it becoming central to the NP.
- Jonathan Timberlake would work with the EDF History Group on identifying non-designated historic sites in the parish and also work with the Residents' Association Environmental Group carrying out some biodiversity surveys and collate existing biodiversity information for the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Advertise for a new NPSG member.

8. AOB

MB advised on the following: -

- The Chair of the Parish Council and Grant Fowler will be attending a South Downs National Park Authority East Sussex Parish Workshop on 7th March 2023 at the Parks local offices at Exceat. It is hoped information can be obtained from SDNP Planners as to when the revised Local Plan will be available for consultation. Also, to ask when the 2021 census outcomes would be available.
- DP is leaving the Parish Council and MB thanked her for her work on the Steering Group.
- The Chair reminded the meeting that Parish Council elections were being held in May and the current NPSG Councillors would only continue as EDF Council representatives if re-elected and appointed by the new Council..

9. Date of the Next Meeting: Monday, 3rd April 2023 starting at 6.30 pm in the East Dean and Friston Village (Small) Hall, Village Green Lane, East Dean, BN20 0DR.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 7.53 pm.

Signed.....(NPSG Chair)

Date.....