

## 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 10<sup>th</sup> July 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:** Alison Eardley (Planning Consultant); Katrina Larkin (Deputy Clerk)

**Apologies:** Cllr Hollie Milligan (Parish Councillor)

*No members of the public were present*

1. **Chairman's Update**

The Chair welcomed Alison Eardley (Planning Consultant providing professional support for the Group), and Katrina Larkin (Deputy Clerk and now administrator for the Group), and recorded the Group's thanks to Gina Zelent for her past contributions, Ms Zelent having resigned from the Group.

The Chair formally recorded that the Parish Council at its meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2023 [Minute C.720 (d)] had agreed that the Neighbourhood Plan should be prepared with one basic policy, namely an updated Village Design Statement, to which ancillary matters could be appended.

2. **Minutes of the previous meeting:** - the minutes of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group meeting held on 20 February 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair

3. **NPSG Deputy Clerk Role**

The Group considered a draft specification prepared by the Chair, and the following additional points were agreed in discussion:

- The parish council website should be interlinked with the Village website, and in due course with the forthcoming Residents' Association website, to ensure maximum visibility of NPSG publications
- The project plan, once agreed by the Group, should be maintained and updated by the Deputy Clerk
- AE would assist the Group in applying for a project grant, managed by Locality on behalf of the government. The basic grant of £10,000 could be

supplemented by an extra £8,000 maximum if the need were demonstrated, and there could also be tailored support on specific topics e.g. preparation of a Village Design Statement, assessment of the housing mix to suit the locality, and allocation of sites. However, the 2023/24 funding year which should have opened in April remained closed, and no applications for technical support were being processed. Part of the funding which was allocated directly to local planning authorities was nevertheless still coming. It was agreed that the Group should write to Maria Caulfield MP, and lobby Locality direct for further information **ACTION: MB/AE/KL.** The underlying reason for the delay could be in the Levelling Up Bill, currently before parliament, which contained a clause proposing changes to the National Planning Policy Framework, in particular a fundamental change to the calculation of housing allocations. The hiatus, and the lack of Local Plans in some districts, had resulted in more speculative development coming forward in those districts. Within the South Downs National Park, which did have a Local Plan, controls were more robust, but there were still pockets of land that might be put forward for development in East Dean and Friston, and it was fortuitous that the parish was primed to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan whilst the SDNPA was undertaking its own Local Plan Review. It was noted that the parish had reserved £10,000 which could, if necessary, be used to get the project under way, and on this basis should proceed without first obtaining a grant.

RESOLVED - That the specification be approved subject to the additional points discussed.

#### 4. **Draft Project Plan**

A question was raised as to **whether an NP comprising one basic policy, i.e. a Village Design Statement, would be adequate to achieve what the Group wanted to achieve.** It was noted that the existing Village Design Statement, which had been adopted by the SDNPA (and had been routinely referred to in planning decisions until all the reference numbers of the underlying Local Plan policies had been changed), was already quite comprehensive, including e.g. a chapter on Landscape, Environmental Concerns, and Biodiversity. If the updated version were embedded in an NP it would be more powerful, and new ancillary matters could be appended to it. A discussion of housing mix would be a new and separate NP policy

The Group noted that the first step should be **to issue a Questionnaire to the community to identify local aspirations.** It was agreed that this should be based on a set of questions the SDNPA had recently circulated, requesting all parishes within the National Park to prepare a Parish Priorities Statement to inform its forthcoming Local Plan Review. The responses would almost certainly include some aspirations which could not be included in a Neighbourhood Plan. The strategy would then be to pick out those that could be included, with technical support e.g. specifying what should be the local housing mix, or what affordable housing should be provided, where the Local Plan was not quite tailored enough to local needs; and to pick up the

remainder by other means, such as a Parish Plan. AE explained that some aspirations would be for projects which could benefit from developer funding. If an unwelcome development were permitted by the SDNPA in the parish – which could theoretically happen - the NP would at least allow the parish to retrieve some benefit from it. Topics that would not be in the main body of an NP but could be listed ancillary to it might include looking at Rights of Way in comparison with actual movements around the parish; or supporting biodiversity in line with the Biodiversity Conservation Act, which should become effective in the autumn of 2023. There could be incentives for positive action such as the formation of blue and green corridors, in the form of green pay-offs, and the parish should use the NP to secure the benefits of these, wherever possible.

AE kindly agreed to provide a preamble to the Questionnaire to clarify what the project could achieve, and also to make clear there would be no promise that it could all be achieved. For example, speed limits would be an issue which could only be tackled locally through parish council lobbying (already in progress) **ACTION: AE.** KL would provide a draft of the rest of the document, based on the SDNPA's Parish Priorities Statement questionnaire, and would give comprehensive instructions on how to respond and how to volunteer to help in the process **ACTION: KL.** The Draft would be circulated to all Group members for approval in time for the Village Fete on 15 July 2023.

The Group then discussed **the publication of the Questionnaire**, and it was agreed to use the following means:

- A stall at the Village Fete, within the Residents' Association stand
- Publication of the Questionnaire as an inset in the September issue of the Parish Magazine (there would need to be a session for folding the inserts)
- Publication in an online survey (e.g. using survey monkey)
- Publication to all village groups and societies with the request that they let their members know about it e.g. at their own forthcoming events
- Use of social media
- Direct approaches to key landowners (the National Trust; the Gilbert Estate; the Forestry Commission; local farms; local businesses; and Eastbourne Borough Council, owing to the direct impact of the use of their Heritage Downland on the parish).
- Organising a drop-in day at the village hall in early September, with graphic displays, post-it notes, refreshments
- Sheppards Village Stores would be requested to keep a box for responses

The **analysis of the responses to the Questionnaire** would be undertaken in the first instance by MB and KL. The categories in the Questionnaire would lead naturally to the setting up of working groups to do further research on specific topics, prioritising those topics that could make the most difference. In the meantime, the Group should find out what area of the parish was under the control of each of the

major landowners **ACTION: JT/KL**. The parish should sign up to use the Ordnance Survey Data Hub **ACTION: AE to send instructions to KL**.

5. **Other actions** - the following were agreed:

- AE would list the key milestones for the Project Plan
- Cllr Milligan would be requested to publicise the project on social media
- New volunteers should be invited to join the Steering Group and/or contribute to the future working sub-groups. AE advised that a group of 8 to 10 would be ample, and that an attempt should be made to cover different demographics, and harness particular skills. An invitation would be included in the Questionnaire and publicised in the Parish Magazine, and individuals would be approached.
- Planning decisions in the parish should be analysed to see which policies were most often referred to by planning officers **ACTION: KL**
- A list would be maintained of all the architects involved in planning applications in the parish, to ensure that all would receive copies of the NP in due course **ACTION: KL**
- The responses to the public consultation carried out by the NPSG in 2019 should be retrieved and re-assessed

6. **Meeting dates – the next two meetings would be held on**

- **Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2023**
- **Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023**

*There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.04 pm*

Signed..... Chairman

Date.....

*A copy of the Questionnaire as approved by the Group members is appended to these minutes.*

## ANNEX

## Public consultation

### An exciting opportunity for parishioners:

East Dean and Friston Parish Council is in the early stages of developing a Neighbourhood Plan for the parish – including the villages and wider rural area. This is a planning and land-use document that, once agreed with the community, will sit alongside the South Downs Local Plan and will be used to guide land-use and determine the outcome of planning applications within our parish over the next 15 to 20 years.

Whilst we cannot use the plan to stop development – for instance any sites that might come forward in the emerging South Downs Local Plan – we can have a direct say in what that development will look like, how it is designed and what sort of infrastructure we believe should be delivered alongside it, for instance playgrounds, footpaths and other community facilities.

An important first step is for us to consider, collectively, the features of our parish that we feel are the most important to safeguard against inappropriate development and also to set out our aspirations for the future of the area. This short survey is one way that we will be gathering this information over the coming months.

**Completion instructions** – please return your completed response by any of the following means:

- Deposit it in the box that will be on the Neighbourhood Plan table at the Village Fete
- Deposit it in the box on the counter of Sheppards Village Stores
- Post it to Katrina Larkin, the Deputy Clerk, at The Old Cottage, Lewes Road, Laughton, BN8 6BQ
- Email it to the Deputy Clerk, email: [admin@edfparishcouncil.org.uk](mailto:admin@edfparishcouncil.org.uk)
- You are invited to give your email address if you wish to be contacted about progress and/or work on the project in some way. All contacts will be managed in compliance with General Data Protection Regulations and only used for the purpose for which you have given permission, and not disclosed to any third parties.

## Here are the questions

- **The vision for the future** - What are the three key changes you would like to see in East Dean and Friston over the next 15 years?
- **Development and management of land** - What type and level of development would you like to see in the parish? Are there any areas of the parish you would like to see developed? Are there any specific areas you want protected for other uses?
- **Homes** - What type of homes would you like to see in the parish? What size of home is needed in the parish? Any other requirements?
- **Design** - Are there any areas of local character which are particularly important to the community? Particular features of buildings of local character? (The Village Design Statement will be relevant here)
- **The natural environment** – do you see opportunities to make nature bigger, better and more joined up? If so, what are they?
- **Jobs** – give information about business you would like to protect and business opportunities that should be provided
- **Tourism** - what are the two most important developments required within the parish as regards tourism, either opportunities or controls.
- **Public spaces** – what do you consider to be the important green spaces here; identify any opportunities for nature recovery; tell us which views (landscape, historic) you most value
- **Infrastructure** – what infrastructure does the local community need, where are there shortfalls or a lack of local provision?