

## 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 Tuesday 26 September 2023 starting at 6.30 pm.**

**NPSG Members Present:** Cllr Michael Bustard (Chairman), Maria Stack, Tim Pontin and Jonathan Timberlake

**In attendance:** Alison Eardley (Planning Consultant); Katrina Larkin (Deputy Clerk)

*No members of the public were present*

1. **Apologies:** Cllr Grant Fowler, Mrs L Durso, Mrs Karen Wintle
2. **Minutes of the previous meeting:** - the minutes of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group meeting held on 10 July 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair
3. **Co-option of Members**  
The Chair welcomed Maria Stack and Tim Pontin as prospective members of the Group. Two other prospective members were unable to be present.
  - Ms Stack had a particular interest in health and wellbeing, and had worked in Public Health at East Sussex County Council, recently joining their Healthy Places Team and working alongside planners as part of this role.
  - Mr Pontin was a long term resident of the parish, concerned to keep the special character of the place. His commercial background was health related, and his skills were in IT and project management, including communications and marketing.
  - Mrs Wintle would strengthen the representation of the Residents' Association on the Group and specialised in handling their communications
  - Councillor David White had volunteered to join the Group in succession to Councillor Lees who had withdrawn (Cllr Lees remained available to contribute to a working group if required). This appointment would maintain the level of council membership of the Group.

RESOLVED - To recommend to the parish council that these four appointments be ratified at the next council meeting on 5 October 2023

The following questions were considered to clarify the scope of the project:

- Q: Who were the stakeholders, and could landowners have a disproportionate influence? AE replied that there was currently no proposal to allocate development sites in the parish. The South Downs National Park Authority needed to keep the availability of sites across the whole Park under review, as it was required to ensure that it had a five year land supply for new housing overall, but there was no pressure from the Authority for this parish to come up with sites. The allocation of eleven houses to the parish in the current Local Plan had already been used up by the new development at The Fridays. It was theoretically possible for ‘windfall’ development to happen, but only *within the existing settlement boundaries*, and subject to a maximum of ten dwellings. The existing settlement boundaries were tightly drawn around existing dwellings. It would, however, still be possible for an individual landowner to propose a site to the SDNPA.
- A: In the long run, the policies written into the Neighbourhood Plan would impact all the major landowners, and all ordinary residents. Anyone considering any action for which planning permission would be required was a stakeholder. The Chair stated that Mr Davies Gilbert had requested a meeting (arranged for 5 October with Cllr Bryant in attendance as a former Chair of the parish Planning Committee). The whole Neighbourhood Plan process was statutory with community consultations as part of the process, and the final draft must be approved by referendum in the community, determined by a Yes/No vote and a simple majority.

#### 4. **Chairman’s Update**

The Chair reported that the Open Evening had been attended by some 35 residents who had made a good number of comments and appeared enthusiastic. The appeal that had gone out in the Parish Magazine for volunteers had also borne fruit, and the Steering Group now had sufficient members, plus some volunteers in reserve willing to contribute to sub-groups on particular topics. In addition to the Open Evening responses, some 34 Questionnaires had been completed, mostly on SurveyMonkey.

The application to Locality for grant funding and for technical support had been acknowledged and communications had opened with the technical support team, but no confirmation of the grant had yet been received [*Note by the Deputy Clerk: the grant approval came through on 28 September 2023*]. AE stated that it was possible that when a second grant application was made in the financial year 2024/25 to complete the project it would be subject to the same delay and uncertainty as in 2023/24. It would therefore be advantageous if a complete draft could be ready by the end of March 2024. The grant would chiefly pay for AE to guide the process as its Planning Consultant.

#### 5. **Project Plan**

The Group referred to the Project Plan which had been circulated to all members, and discussed the next stages:

- **Design Guidance and Codes** [row 15 of the spreadsheet] – Design would be the main policy in the NP. The existing Village Design Statement had been adopted by the SDNPA as a Supplementary Planning Document in April 2016, but SPDs were being phased out. New design guidance would be obtained with technical support from Locality, with a fresh emphasis on sustainability. Consultants would be assigned to the parish. The existence of the current VDS should simplify this process. The whole Group would oversee this policy as it could encompass many other topics.
- **Local Housing Needs Assessment** [row 16 of the spreadsheet] – technical support from Locality could also be provided for this, or guidance could simply be taken from the SDNPA due to the small size of the parish and the limited scope for building new houses. This would be a relatively straightforward desk exercise.
- **Environment/Local Green Spaces/significant local views** [rows 17 and 18 of the spreadsheet] – this strand of the NP would seek to protect local green spaces (in addition to those already designated); propose wildlife corridors; and identify views to be protected. Mr Timberlake would lead on this topic. Evidence would need to be gathered from the National Trust, the Forestry Commission, farmers and other major landowners. New formally designated Local Green Spaces must be demonstrably special to the community and could then be protected against Greenbelt-type development (landowners must be consulted).
- **Transport and movement** – this topic, which had featured in the responses to the Questionnaire, would review the paths and cycle ways, and consider what might be done to manage the pressures of tourism, particularly at Birling Gap. It would be helpful to know what the SDNPA and/or the National Trust had to say about tourism or ‘active travel’ in order to assess whether the parish could add any policy value to these topics in the Plan. **ACTION: KL to make enquiries.**
- **Topics falling outside the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan** – these would include limiting the use of cars, and upgrading broadband facilities, plus other topics. It would be important to publish information about all the topics that would fall outside the scope of the Plan, in each case saying what would be done about them. In the first instance they would be passed to the parish council for consideration either as projects to be carried out by other means, or as aspirations.
- **Review the findings of the surveys** [row 26 of the spreadsheet] – the closing date for submissions was the 30 September 2023 and work had begun on the review.
- **Public event to share findings of the survey/ draft V&O/ Design Guide/ policy areas etc.** [row 31 of the spreadsheet] - members agreed that an informal consultation with the community and the SDNPA on the scope and content of the Plan should precede the start of the statutory formal consultations. The community event would be in the simple format of a presentation with the opportunity for questions. An informal draft would then be sent to the SDNPA. Attendees would be invited to sign in.

- **ACTIONS:**

- Using the consultation responses, AE would prepare a first draft statement of the visions and objectives, and identify those proposals that could be incorporated in the Plan and those that would sit outside the scope of the Plan. This information would be on the agenda of the Group's meeting on 31 October, for discussion
- In the meantime KL would circulate the Neighbourhood Plan recently completed by the parish of Fittleworth, which was also in the South Downs National Park and bore many similarities to East Dean and Friston. .
- An induction meeting must be arranged with the Locality Design Codes Technical Support Team.
- The Project Plan would need to be reviewed after each Group meeting. TP would take charge of this, and liaise with KW who would be requested to advise on publicity at each stage.
- AE would store a master copy of the draft Plan in Dropbox for convenience in drafting and amending it
- KL would prepare a report on planning decisions in which the SDNPA had overruled the recommendation of the parish council. Data had been gathered from 2019 onwards, and would be presented to the Group at the October meeting.
- Also at the October meeting, sub-groups would be set up to research particular topics.

6. **Parish Priorities Statement**

Members took note that for this separate exercise the SDNPA would require a response from the parish by the second week of November. This response would be guided by the results of the community consultation.

**ACTION: KL to begin a draft response for AE to review/amend.** The draft would be on the agenda for the Group meeting on 31 October, and the draft as agreed by the Group would be forwarded to the parish council for approval at their meeting on 2 November 2023.

JT reported that there had been fewer visitors to the NPSG stall at the Village Fete, but that contact had been established with the hamlet of Jevington (the only part of the parish of Willingdon and Jevington that lay within the South Downs National Park), with a view to sharing information.

7. **Other Business**

- a) **Land ownership information:** the Group would need more details on land ownership, particularly for the Environment strand of the Plan. A list should be drawn up of those major features which were already in public ownership and

under protection, and those which were not. It would also be helpful to understand the role of farming and grazing in land use, as it appeared that such uses were diminishing, and it was not clear whether anything could be done to guide these changes. **ACTION: KL to supply a list of protected/unprotected sites; MB to consult a councillor who might assist with Land Registry enquiries.** Landowner privacy would be respected.

- b) Meeting on Zoom:** future meetings of the Steering Group would continue to be held in person but with a facility for remote attendance if required.
  
- c) Voting rights:** all Steering Group members, whether councillors or not, had equal rights to vote on any motions put before the Group. In the Terms of Reference, paragraph 5, sub-para at the top of page 4, the reference to 'voting members' should be understood to include all members.

**8. Meeting dates – the next four meetings would be held on**

- **Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> October 2023**
- **Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023**
- **Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2024**
- **Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2024**

All meetings to begin at 6.30 pm in the Small Hall of the Village Hall

*There being no further business the meeting closed at 7.55 pm*

Signed..... Chairman

Date.....