

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 31 October 2023 starting at 6.30 pm.

NPSG Members Present: Cllr Michael Bustard (Chairman), Lesley Durso, 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 Fowler and Cllr White

2. **Membership and Meetings**

The Chair reported that Mrs Wintle had resigned from the Group for personal reasons and would be much missed. It was agreed that Ms Stack should approach a possible new recruit. It was also noted that the 6.30pm start time for meetings was not practical for all members and it was agreed that in future meetings should start at 7.30 pm, and would be held in person.

3. **Minutes of the previous meeting:** - the minutes of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group meeting held on 26 September 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair

4. **Parish Priorities Statement**

- a) The Group took note of the folder 'PPS Responses – July to September 2023' containing all the responses received
- b) The Group took note of the overview of Survey responses prepared by the Planning Consultant.
- c) The Group then considered a draft Parish Priorities Statement based on the responses for submission to the parish council at their meeting on 2nd November 2023. A copy of the draft as amended is appended to these minutes. The parish council was requested to pay particular attention to the paragraph on Development sites. The community responses had shown very little support for new housing sites, but much more sympathy for meeting special housing needs, including affordability, and the Statement sought to balance these opposing desires. It was noted that there was no pressure from the SDNPA for neighbourhood plans to allocate sites, as the SDNPA would prefer to treat the allocation of sites as a matter of Park-wide strategy. The Housing Needs Assessment which the parish was about to undertake with technical support from AECOM would clarify the need with robust data and guide the next steps.

5. **Draft Vision and Objectives**

The Group considered the following first draft of a Vision statement:

East Dean and Friston will continue to be a sought-after place to live/visit/work, building on the open and friendly village atmosphere; demonstrating inclusivity whilst sensitively preserving the rural and built character of the parish; mitigating climate change and promoting biodiversity and healthy living for the benefit of all living, working and visiting the parish; and ensuring the local infrastructure reflects the changing needs of the parish. Affordable housing for locals will be strongly encouraged where practicable.

The following points were discussed:

- a) **The need for data on Housing Needs** – the sentence ‘Affordable housing for locals will be strongly encouraged where possible’ was agreed to need amendment. The Group would await the outcome of the Housing Needs Assessment, and would then look to draft a policy saying that if there was to be any new housing it must be of the specific types (if any) proven to be needed, and must meet correspondingly strict criteria.
- b) **The meaning of affordability** – the Group noted the sympathy shown in the community responses for providing some affordable homes. It was noted that a home would be classified as affordable if it could be sold at 85% of the market or rental value, which in the high value market of East Dean and Friston might not be affordable to many people. Central government had created a new category of ‘first homes’ where the discount could be pushed up to 50%, but only in very limited circumstances. There was no obligation to provide affordable homes on small development sites with less than eleven units, and no more than 50% affordable was ever required. Locally, there was a lack of sustainable locations, unless a rural exception site could be found. The Group concluded that it would be very difficult to tackle the problem of non-affordability through a Neighbourhood Plan, but that if the Housing Needs Assessment demonstrated the need for specific types of housing provision then the parish would need to argue a case with the SDNPA. It was also noted that affordable homes could be resold at market value, negating the point of providing them in the first place, unless they were designated as ‘first homes’, in which case the discount would continue. It was agreed that a more productive approach would be to encourage the provision and/or retention of smaller homes on modest plots, and to tackle relative affordability that way (see also para (d) below on preventing erosion of the stock of smaller homes). The local area would inevitably command premium prices, and affordability as currently defined could not mean ‘low cost’.
- c) **Provision of rented social housing** – it was noted that there was precedent for a local housing development to contain some units to be handed back to Wealden District Council to be retained for social rental housing.

- d) **Preventing erosion of the stock of smaller homes** – a problem related to the lack of balance in the local housing market was that a large number of properties locally had been extended, eroding the stock of smaller homes, as well as enlarging even the largest ones. It was proposed that there should be a policy to equalise the stock of houses, stopping the loss of smaller homes and encouraging the splitting of larger ones. However, it was accepted that the actual need must be quantified first, looking at census returns, salaries, prices, and in/out migration. The Housing Needs Assessment supported by AECOM would establish the facts.
- e) **Mitigating climate change** – the reference in the draft Vision statement to ‘mitigating climate change’ should be amended to say ‘mitigating *and adapting to climate change, and building resilience*’. The emphasis here must be on supporting householders in reducing the local carbon footprint through home insulation, solar panels, wind turbines etc. There was no support at government level for more radical action through a Neighbourhood Plan, but there could be a general policy to contribute to meeting government aims for net zero.
- f) **Promoting Health and Wellbeing** – it was agreed that this principle was closely related to the mitigation of climate change, and that home adaptations for that purpose would also promote physical and mental health. In addition, Health and Wellbeing should – like making contributions to net zero - be an overarching part of the vision, and underlie all the policies, being applicable to visitors and tourism generally, as well as to residents.

RESOLVED - That the Steering Group should continue to refine the Vision statement as work progressed, and that a second draft based on the above discussion should be brought to the 5th December meeting for further consideration, each element of the Vision to be supported by practical directives in the emerging Plan, as vision and action must go hand in hand.

6. Public Event and January Group meeting

The Steering Group would hold a public event on **Monday 29th January 2023** to update the community informally on progress and invite reactions to the draft Vision, objectives and scope of the proposed Plan. In the meantime work would continue with technical support so that a good amount of data should be available by the end of January. The Main hall should be booked **ACTION: KL**.

The January meeting of the Steering Group should be moved to **Tuesday 23rd January at 7.30 pm** in the Small Hall, so as to avoid a clash with the regular monthly meeting of the parish Planning Committee **ACTION: KL**

7. Controversial planning decisions

The Steering Group took note of a report on planning decisions in which the SDNPA has overruled the recommendation of the parish council. The report covered 202 cases determined between April 2019 and October 2023. Members were interested to see that of these only 15 had been cases where the planning authority had gone against the recommendation of the parish council.

8. **Neighbourhood Plan Task List: Allocation of Topics**

The Planning Consultant tabled a Neighbourhood Plan Task List itemising all the sections of the eventual Plan with a view to allocating responsibility for each one. The Task List would then form the basis of a skeleton draft of the Plan, which would be uploaded to Dropbox in the coming week. The aim would be to have a complete, informal first draft in place by Easter 2024. Members welcomed this very positive development and thanked Alison Eardley for a substantial piece of work.

[Note: An update of the Task List including the allocation of actions is now available to Group members on the NPSG Drobox].

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

- **Tuesday 5th December 2023**
- **Tuesday 23rd January 2024**
- **OPEN EVENING - Monday 29th January 2024**
- **Tuesday 12th March 2024**

All Group meetings to begin at 7.30 pm in the Small Hall of the village hall

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.45 pm

Signed..... Chairman

Date.....

APPENDIX

Parish Priorities Statement



I. Your Details

| Information Required | Response |
|---|--|
| Contact name | Katrina Larkin |
| Town or Parish Council | EAST DEAN AND FRISTON PARISH COUNCIL |
| Main contact address | The Old Cottage, Lewes Road, Laughton, Lewes, BN8 6BQ |
| Main contact telephone number | 01323 811870 |
| Main contact email | admin@edfparishcouncil.org.uk |
| Details of public consultation and engagement used in the preparation of the PPS | <p>Consultation and engagement include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community events – introduction as part of the Annual Village Meeting, 21 April 2023; Village Fete stall, 16 September 2023 • Newsletters – monthly updates in the Parish Magazine, and on the council website; posts on Facebook • Questionnaires – PPS questions hand delivered to every household in the parish, every business, and sent electronically to major landowners; also available online via SurveyMonkey with link sent to all village organisations • Existing evidence / consultation results – the parish has a Village Design Statement adopted by the SDNPA as a Supplementary Planning Document. It has collated and reviewed all consultation responses (see below) • Drop in Sessions – Open Evening 12 September 2023 • What percentage of the community have engaged in the preparation of the PPS – 44 people have filled in the Questionnaire online; a further 35 attended the Drop-in session and left 70+ responses on Post-it notes. This is only a small percentage of the voting population but the parish council and the Residents' Association are trying to reach those sections of the community that can be hard to reach by traditional means. We are using Facebook and reaching out to all village organisations |

| Information Required | Response |
|----------------------|---|
| | <p>including those with youth members e.g. the Cricket Club, and those catering for older members e.g. Over 50s Fitness.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Max 100 words</i></p> |

The vision for the future...

What are the three key changes you would like to see in your Parish over the next 15 years? These changes should relate to the priorities set out below. It will also be helpful to explain when you think these changes should happen over the 15 year period.

| Information Required | Response |
|----------------------|---|
| | <p><i>The three key priorities for your parish in the next 15 years</i></p> <p>Some key principles that could be woven into an overarching vision: the preservation of local character: a friendly, inclusive village, with a healthy community, fully accessible to all; mitigation of climate change, with good stewardship of biodiversity and care for wildlife, and promotion of walking and cycling in preference to cars; management of tourism, to be welcoming and safe for visitors without overwhelming the community.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Max 100 words</i></p> |

Development and management of land

| Information required | Response |
|--|---|
| What type and level of development would you like to see in the parish? | <p>There is little or no support for new housing development, or for the building of new business premises. There is support for the improvement of community facilities, but not on new sites.</p> <p><i>For example, homes, employment and community facilities</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Max 100 words</i></p> |
| Are there any areas of the Parish you would like to see developed? | <p>The parish council currently supports the majority preference that there should be no new development areas. However, there is wide support for making provision for special housing needs, if appropriate, and the council is working on a Housing Needs Assessment with technical support from AECOM. The parish is not averse to development if it is shown to be needed, but there is a lack of sustainable locations, unless a rural exception site can be identified.</p> <p><i>Please provide a map showing the area(s)</i></p> |
| Are there any specific areas you want protected for other uses? | <p>The parish will want to propose one or more green corridors and/or local wildlife areas, for the preservation and enhancement of biodiversity. The parish is working on a Neighbourhood Plan</p> |

| Information required | Response |
|----------------------|---|
| | <p>in tandem with the SDNPA's Local Plan Review and will bring forward proposals as part of that process on the basis of detailed research.</p> <p><i>Please provide a map showing the area(s) and reasons why they should not be developed</i></p> |

Homes

| Information required | Response |
|---|---|
| <p>What type of homes would you like to see in your local community?</p> | <p>Homes – there is widespread support for smaller homes (for young families or downsizers). This is not so much a call for new builds as a call to restrict the number of homes being extended. The loss of 2 and 3 bed homes due to extension is a real concern. Where a 2 bed home has a relatively large footprint the SDNPA has sometimes allowed enlargement to 3 beds which is seen as eroding the stock of smaller homes. Affordability is cited as an issue.</p> <p><i>For example affordable homes, self-build, specialized care, elderly care</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Max 100 words</i></p> |
| <p>What size of home is needed locally?</p> | <p>Keep 2 and 3 bed homes and resist further enlargement.</p> <p><i>For example 2,3, 4 bed homes</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Max 50 words</i></p> |
| <p>Any other requirements?</p> | <p>There is support for enhancing energy performance and renewable technology where feasible.</p> <p><i>For example energy performance, renewable technology</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Max 100 words</i></p> |

Design

| Information Required | Response |
|---|---|
| <p>Are there any areas of local character which are particularly important to the local community?</p> | <p>The existing Village Design Statement which has been adopted by the SDNPA as a Supplementary Planning Document (and is now to be relaunched as a Neighbourhood Plan) designates four Spatial Types in the parish. Full details are in that document. The</p> |

| Information Required | Response |
|---|---|
| | <p>old village of East Dean has a Conservation Area.</p> <p><i>Please provide the location as well as what is important about the character</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Max 100 words</i></p> |
| <p>Particular features of buildings of local character</p> | <p>There is widespread support for ensuring that any new development (or redevelopment) is in keeping and contributes to local character. Sussex Style buildings, incorporating Sussex flint, tiled roofs, Sussex gables. Desire to restrict the height of buildings (2-storeys) in consideration of views and also to minimise the overdevelopment of plots. Avoid use of too much glass and concrete. Provide adequate off-street car parking. Provide hedges and trees as opposed to hard fencing. Some very limited support for the occasional ‘eccentric’ feature.</p> <p>There are more details in the extant Village Design Statement, which also deals with boundary treatments and the safeguarding of views. The topic of Design is now being reviewed with technical assistance from AECOM</p> <p><i>For example. building materials, boundary treatments, relevant points from Parish or Village Design Statements</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Max 100 words</i></p> |

The natural environment

| Information Required | Response |
|--|--|
| <p>Opportunities to make nature bigger, better and more joined up</p> | <p><i>For example connecting two areas of woodland or heathland or the restoration of a local pond</i></p> <p>Environment – The community strongly values our natural environment and there is a strong desire to protect it from development. A number of areas were noted as particularly special, including the three village greens, cricket ground, bowling club etc., which should be protected – some already are, but there may be others that could be designated as local green space. There is significant support for improving biodiversity, linking habitats, further rewilding, providing additional ponds, wildflowers etc. There is some demand for more allotments. Various viewpoints are special to the area and should be retained. Light pollution should be minimised.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Max 100 words</i></p> |

Jobs

| Information Required | Response |
|---|--|
| <p>Information about business you would like to protect and business opportunities that should be provided</p> | <p><i>Name important businesses and business areas, amount of home working and opportunities for new businesses</i></p> <p>Existing local shops, services (including the Wednesday market) and hospitality businesses are all to be protected. In addition people would like a Post Office, surgery and pharmacy and want to improve the areas around the shops on Downlands Way to incorporate more community space.</p> <p>There is a need for better mobile and wifi services, which are very poor in areas and restrict business opportunities, especially working from home.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Max 100 words</i></p> |

Public spaces

| Information Required | Response |
|---|--|
| <p><i>Public Open Space, Public realm, Pocket Parks</i></p> | <p>The parish has three designated village greens; a recreation ground which is protected as a QEII Field in Trust; and Friston Pond which is designated as an Ancient Monument. In addition the National Trust and the Forestry Commission each manage extensive public open spaces. The Horsefield and the Went Way allotments are already listed as Local Green Spaces. All these should be retained. Opportunities for nature recovery exist elsewhere and will be precisely identified as part of the ongoing preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan. The Bowling Club (privately owned) has also been proposed as an important greenspace.</p> <p><i>Name the important greenspaces in your local area, identify any opportunities for nature recovery</i></p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Max 100 words</i></p> |

Infrastructure

| Information Required | Response |
|---|---|
| <p><i>Active travel priorities, roads / parking, community buildings needs, waste / water infrastructure, broadband, renewable energy</i></p> | <p><i>What local infrastructure does the local community need, where are there shortfalls or a lack of local provision?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tourism – Need to balance the impact of tourists on the environment versus their input into the local economy. Need safer, better signposted paths leading to Birling |

| Information Required | Response |
|----------------------|---|
| | <p>Gap. Better control over parking and speeding (Gilbert’s Drive, coast roads). Parking at Birling Gap is problematic – lots of people parking on the verges. The Neighbourhood Plan will consider whether there is scope to provide additional services to encourage local spend?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community infrastructure – the parish council is investigating the possibility of building a new hall to provide practical activities for younger people, storage for museum items, tackling isolation. This would be on the same site as the existing cricket pavilion. Some called for public toilets. General need for infrastructure and better broadband to support any development. • Getting around – reduce speed limits through the village and along the A259. Create segregated cycle tracks and footpaths with improved connectivity for access e.g. to Birling Gap and Eastbourne, enhancing safety, health and wellbeing. This will need funding. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Max 100 words</i></p> |