



Minutes of a Meeting of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group held in the Small Hall of the Village Hall, East Dean at 7.30 pm on Tuesday 19th February 2019

Present:

- Cllr Tim Bryant (Chair)
- Sean Carmody
- Wanda Carmody
- Cllr Lesley d'Urso (Deputy Chair)
- Cllr Kevin Godden
- Annemieke Milks
- Sue Pettifor
- Bob Salmon (Chair – Residents' Association)
- Cllr Paul Seeley (Vice Chair – Parish Council)
- Cathy Vine
- Peter Williamson (Tree Warden)

In attendance: K Larkin (Parish Clerk)

Apologies: Mrs Joan Colin; Cllr Mike Keller; Stephanie Mills (Admin Assistant).

THE SCOPE OF A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN PROJECT

The Chair explained that NPs had once been seen as 'nimby's charters', but had evolved into holistic planning tools giving local communities the opportunity to guide development within their own areas for the next 15-20 years, and to exercise some local control. Anything to do with development and the shaping of land usage could be included

A parish with an NP should receive a higher percentage of the income generated from local development through the Community Infrastructure Levy, collected from developers by the local planning authority. In East Dean and Friston, there was in fact no additional housing allocated to the parish in the emerging Local Plan. This was because the site allocated for 11 new homes at The Fridays had already been built out. It would nevertheless be possible for the NP to ask for more, if that was wanted: for example, past experience suggested that the feedback from the public consultations that would be mandatory during the preparation of the Plan could include a call for more Affordable Homes, both for elderly people and for young families. An NP could also seek to protect areas from harmful development and promote local environmental improvements.

THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING PROCESS

- **Selection of the area** – this would probably be the area of the civil parish. In 2012, adjacent parishes had been consulted about the possibility of preparing a joint NP,

but had decided not to proceed. The parish council would technically be the 'qualifying body' and would need to make a formal submission to the SDNPA for the chosen area to be designated.

- **Identification of aims and objectives** – members agreed it would be helpful to see some examples of existing NPs (**ACTION: SM**). A brainstorming session would then identify important local issues (e.g. need for shops, offices, infrastructure, cycle ways, protection of historic areas, protection of wildlife and biodiversity areas, design of new builds/extensions etc.).
- **Gathering evidence** - Detailed work on these issues would be allocated to focus groups which would conduct surveys and justify the need (or lack of need) for development/land use, then report back to the Steering Group. The NP must be knowledge based. If transport aspirations were tackled, it would be necessary to liaise with East Sussex Highways. It was noted that this would still apply on the Downlands Estate where roads and verges were privately owned and maintained, but with public access. Major landowners such as the Forestry Commission, the National Trust and Gilbert Estate must be consulted.
- **Timetable** – this would be under the control of the Group, but experience showed that in order to keep momentum the Group should aim to complete the task in 2 years.
- **Funding** - some grant funding was available on application, and if awarded must be spent within the same financial year. It should be feasible to get £14,000 approx.
- **Drafting the Plan** – the draft should describe the issues, the aims and objectives identified, and the preferred options for delivering them. Specific policies should then articulate how the preferred options would be delivered. Professional consultants would be employed.
- **Consultation** – there must be full public consultation during the preparation of the draft.
- **Compliance check by the SDNPA** – the draft would then be submitted to the local planning authority, and if they were satisfied that it was sound, they would seek the appointment of an independent inspector to examine the Plan
- **Independent examination** – the Examiner (who would be a qualified Planning Inspector) will look at the plan and might hold public hearings. He could then recommend that the Plan proceed to a referendum (perhaps subject to amendments he regarded as necessary), or that it should not proceed. This 'referendum' element to the process could be very educational in itself. The Group agreed it was very unlikely that all residents were fully aware even of existing planning policy, or the emerging Dark Night Skies policy, or even the Village Design Statement.
- **Adoption** – if successful at the referendum stage, the NP would be formally adopted by the SDNPA and become part of local planning policy.

THE PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

The NP must be broadly in line with higher level planning policy, including the Local Plan being prepared by the South Downs National Park Authority, and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The parish already had a Village Design Statement which had been formally adopted by the SDNPA as a Supplementary Planning Document. References in the VDS to the policies underpinning it in the emerging Local Plan had all been

superseded as the Local Plan had evolved and policy numbers had shifted. However, all the policy substance the VDS needed to rest on was still there in some form. A document had been prepared showing the old and new reference numbers. This would be circulated to members (**ACTION: SM**). The VDS material could then be updated and incorporated into the Neighbourhood Plan.

SOME EXAMPLES

The Group began to suggest specific topics to see whether they might be suitable for inclusion. All the following were endorsed:

- **Promotion of Biodiversity** – the Cuckfield NP had a good Biodiversity section recommended by the Sussex Wildlife Trust and would be circulated to members as a useful model. (**ACTION: SM**).
- **Use of brownfield sites** – good for promoting more efficient use of land
- **Designation of Public Green Spaces** – there were some areas of unregistered land in the parish which could, where appropriate, be protected as Public Green Spaces. This would involve following a set procedure for identifying and advertising and consulting on the use of the land. If successfully designated, the land must be fully open to be public at all times. An example was Friston Green. [Note by the Clerk: East Sussex County Council placed Friston Green under the ownership of the Parish Council for the purpose of formally registering the land as a village green in the 1970s, no other claimant having been found.]
- **Management of the Downlands Estate** – the Group noted that owing to the combination of private ownership and public use of the roads etc. on the Estate, and the fact that the ownership of some parcels of land including verges had lapsed to the Treasury Solicitor (following the winding up of the development companies that had originally owned them), management activity on the Estate was complex. However, it was conceivable that the Plan could include a policy to reclaim such land for the parish, if that was the will of the community.

Other topics that were suggested but not found suitable for inclusion included preventing the planting of leylandii trees (already covered by legislation, though enforcement could be a problem); and requiring householders to plant hedges instead of using boundary fences (this would not be compliant with other legislation, though the loss of hedges could certainly be discouraged).

THE STEERING GROUP'S TERMS OF REFERENCE

A draft Terms of Reference document was available to the Group. [Note: A copy is appended to these minutes (Annex 1)]. These TORs were based on an existing model already accepted by the SDNPA as compliant with the legislation. The Group agreed to accept these TORs and to appoint Cllr Tim Bryant as Chair, and Cllr Lesley d'Urso as Deputy Chair (paragraph 4 of the TORs).

RESOLVED – That the draft TORs be recommended to the parish council for adoption.

RESOLVED - That Cllr Bryant be appointed Chair of the Group and Cllr d'Urso be appointed

Deputy Chair

THE AREA OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Group discussed the area of the Plan and queried whether areas such as Friston Forest should be included, bearing in mind that it lay under the control of the Forestry Commission. It was noted that because there were numerous public rights of way passing through the Forest, the whole area of the parish should be included in the Plan, to facilitate a holistic approach to future development and land use. The existing Village Design Statement (a formally adopted Supplementary Planning Document) covered the same area. [Note: A plan showing the parish boundary is appended to these minutes (Annex 2)].

RESOLVED - To request the parish council to make a formal application to the SDNPA for the whole area of the parish of East Dean and Friston to be designated as a Neighbourhood Plan area

THE NEXT STEERING GROUP MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting of the Steering Group should be held in the week beginning 18 March 2019 (actual date to be confirmed – 19 March was not suitable).

ACTION: TB/SM

The main activity would be brainstorming to identify the issues the NP should tackle. All members were invited to bring ideas to the meeting. Cllr d’Urso would organize flip charts etc. (**ACTION: LD**). The data source ‘East Sussex in Figures’ was recommended as a starting point for gathering background information: <http://eastsussexinfigures.org.uk/>. The Chair confirmed that it would usually be possible to identify the ownership of any sites of interest to the Group.

Officers were requested to compile a ‘project initiation document’ (**ACTION: SM**).

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.42 pm.

Signed..... (Chair)

Date.....

ANNEX 1

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Introduction

East Dean & Friston Parish Council has taken the decision to produce a Neighbourhood Plan. In order to produce this plan the Parish Council has established a Steering Group to oversee a process that will result in the preparation of a draft Plan which will be put to a public referendum. In doing so it is deemed appropriate that the Steering Group are provided with and accept the following terms of reference:

The plan will seek to:

- Identify all the important aspects of life in the Parish for which are needed to plan for the future
- Bring forward proposals which will enhance the quality of life in the Parish in the years to come

2. Membership of the Steering Group

The Steering Group (SG) will be formed primarily from local volunteers and elected members of the Parish Council. This group will consist, as far as possible, of a cross section of people from across the parish as a whole

The Steering Group has delegated powers and may form Focus Groups (FG) or sub-committees to undertake various aspects of the work involved in producing the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Steering Group will be supported by senior officers of the South Downs National Park Authority and any other third party deemed appropriate or necessary to prepare the plan. The Local Planning Authority are obliged to provide assistance under the statutory provisions of the Localism Act 2011

3. Roles and Responsibilities of the Steering Group

The local representatives who are members of the Steering Group will:

- Promote the process of preparing the Neighbourhood Plan, be encouraged to participate and provide their views and opinions on the specific topics which are covered during the preparation of the plan
- Arrange meetings and appoint Focus Groups to gather views and consult on emerging policies which are considered appropriate for incorporation in the draft plan
- Assess existing evidence about the needs and aspirations of the Parish
- Liaise with relevant organisations and stakeholders to secure their input in the process
- Analyse the results of questionnaires or other evidence received during the planning process and use them to prepare a robust draft plan

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- Inform the Parish Council of progress on a regular basis in order that Steering or Focus Group Minutes can be noted
 - Support the Local Planning Authority and East Dean & Friston Parish Council Parish Council during the referendum process.

The Parish Council will:

- Support the Steering Group throughout the process providing sufficient assistance and financial resources to ensure the plan is prepared expeditiously
- Appoint professional planning expertise and provide any relevant aid during the development of the plan. Drafting of the plan will require professional assistance to ensure conformity to national and local policy and that the plan will be sound and robust enough to withstand independent examination
- Work with the Steering Group and the local community to establish the future infrastructural needs of the area are provided prior to any housing or other development occurring within the Parish.
- Work with the Steering Group to develop policies to guide the future development and use of land in the area.
- Support the Steering Group in developing sustainability appraisal or other assessments requested by the Local Planning Authority prior to the plan being submitted.
- Support the Steering Group in efforts of engagement and consultation with the local communities throughout the plan making process.
- Facilitate any required contact with the relevant statutory bodies or parties who must be consulted during the plan making process.
- Carry out all statutory duties contained in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) regulations 2012 and engage with the South Downs National Park Authority during the referendum process of the plan for which the principal authority are responsible.
- Following the preparation of the draft Plan and with the agreement from the Group, submit the plan to the Local Planning Authority for inspection and independent examination
- Provide any budgetary support, not outlined above, for the production and local promotion of the plan

All Members of the Steering Group will:

- Declare any personal interest that may be perceived as being relevant to any decisions or recommendations made by the group. This may include membership of an organisation, ownership of interest in land (directly or indirectly) or a business or indeed any other matter likely to be relevant to the work undertaken by the Steering Group.
- Ensure that there is no discrimination in the plan making process and that it is a wholly inclusive, open and transparent process to all groups in the Parish and to those wishing to undertake development or be involved in the plan making process
- Work together for the benefit of the communities established within the Parish.

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- Treat other Members of the Group with respect and dignity, allowing Members to express their views without prejudice and interruption.
 - Any decisions taken by the Steering Group, other than those delegated to appointed officers, will be carried forward if the majority (more than 50%) are in favour.

4. Chairman & Focus Group Leaders

- The Group have elected Cllr Tim Bryant as the Chairman and Cllr Lesley d'Urso as Deputy Chairman from their number
- If the Chairman is not present, the Deputy Chairman shall take the meeting. If neither is present, members shall elect a Chairman for the meeting from amongst their number
- The quorum for SG meetings is 4 and for FG meetings 3. In the event of the committee being equally divided on any matter the Chairman will have the deciding vote
- Focus Groups will be set up as required to research and review evidence and to contribute to the plan document – at least 1 member of the SG will be on each FG
- The lead members will support colleagues who require their assistance, monitor progress against the programme and work closely with officers of the South Downs National Park Authority and the planning consultant when appointed.

5. Frequency, Timing and Procedure of Meetings

- The Focus Groups will usually meet monthly although sub groups may meet more frequently as necessary
- The Steering Group comprising of the working groups and all other members shall meet at least every 4 weeks initially
- Meetings shall normally be held at 7.30pm on the third Tuesday of each month at the Village Hall
- The Steering Group shall keep Minutes of meetings which will be open to public scrutiny. These will be publicised on the Parish Council web site and displayed in the notice boards or such other prominent places as may be requested
- Notices, Agenda, Minutes and associated papers shall normally be despatched to Steering Group members by email unless otherwise specified or agreed.
- Meetings shall be conducted in accordance with set procedure to be determined and agreed by the Steering Group
- The Steering Group will regularly update and report its progress to the Clerk/responsible financial officer of the Parish Council ensuring that she is aware of the on-going budgetary implications associated with the project.
- The Terms of Reference will be reviewed throughout the project and amended as required. Any changes to Steering Group Terms of Reference shall require Parish Council agreement

ANNEX 2



East Dean and Friston CP



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