

WEST CHILTINGTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN COUNCIL

APPROVED Minutes of meeting in West Chiltington Church Hall at 7.30 pm on Monday 13 April 2015

Present:

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| Muriel Astley* | Norman Kirby (Chairman)* |
| William Marsden* | Judy Fryer* |
| Robert Thornton* | Phil Tapsfield* |
| Ann Bush* | Sarah Fooks* |
| Clive Needham* | Jane Needham* |
| Lawrie Hudson | Carol Hudson |
| Sean Davis | Sharon Davis |
| Mark Price | Steve Pike |
| Pat Tinworth | Matthew Clark |
| Janette Wright | Marshall Monks |

*Active members

- 1. Apologies for absence – None**
- 2. Minutes of meeting 9 March 2015**

These had been approved in prior consultation and there were no matters arising

- 3. Consideration of text of draft pre-submission version of Neighbourhood Plan**

William commended those members involved in the drafting and design of this version of the Plan and raised some questions.

On page 4 he suggested that the reference to the South Downs National Park Authority's policies being "irrelevant" was too strong and proposed "unlikely to have material impact" as an alternative.

On page 7 he wanted to add something about traffic in the weaknesses statement but was advised that this was an analysis of an actual SWOT analysis undertaken by a working group and it would be inappropriate to change it and traffic issue were well covered elsewhere.

On page 11 he reiterated previous concerns about infilling and questioned the references to "42 of 49 respondents". He was reminded that this was a factual statement of the outcome of a questionnaire. The Chairman went on to explain that following the Parish Council planning committee meeting the previous week he had considered strengthening the policy on infilling to make it absolutely clear that infilling that harmed the nature and character of the parish would not be supported and that the circumstances in which local needs would be met from infilling were likely to be rare. It was suggested that an addition to the appropriate

paragraph on p 25 of the words “without damaging the nature and character of the Parish” would reinforce this view.

The issue of Gatwick flight paths was also raised but because it had not figured at all until now it was agreed that this should be left until such time as the public consultation stage had been conducted. If there was a significant concern from members of the public in their representations on the Neighbourhood Plan then it might be reconsidered for inclusion.

Robert then raised a number of issues.

The indiscriminate use of words such as preserve, protect and maintain should be reconsidered in favour of conserve and enhance. Heritage preservation was an appropriate use of the word and there was a case for including a list of heritage assets in the plan to include Wells Cottages.

On page 7 the term “Great history and culture” was stretching things a bit.

On page 10 the formula for affordable homes would need revision in the light of changes in the HDPF.

On page 13 a reference to “alternative” parking should be amended to “additional”.

On page 21 the exclusion of Smock Alley was not supported by him because of the objective evidence that existed to support its development. It would be unreasonable for that evidence to be lost and buried. The Chairman commented that the evidence would all be presented in the SA/SEA together with the reasons for the conclusions that the NPC was likely to reach so it would not be buried or lost.

Clive and Jane disagreed citing the opposition of the Steering Group in October 2014, the Parish Council’s objection (Robert dissenting) of November 2014 and Horsham District Council’s rejection of the planning application of March 2015 raising the question why it had continued to be pushed. Clive went on to point out that the three grounds of Horsham’s rejection included landscape and loss of visual amenity which were features of his alternative site assessment which had been dismissed by the Planning & Built Environment Working Group as subjective.

On page 22 there was a plea for an explanation of what sustainability meant in the context of West Chiltington. The Chairman observed that that was covered in the SA/SEA.

On page 42 item 16 of the Action Plan did not make sense. It was agreed that the objective early in the Plan covered the point of principle and the Action Plan entry probably needed revising to be consistent.

It was agreed to adopt the report of the Planning & Built Environment Working Group other than the recommendation to include Smock Alley in the proposed development sites. It was also agreed to approve the current draft of the pre-submission draft of the Neighbourhood Plan for review by a planning specialist and the Parish Council subject to any further minor amendments arising from the discussions at the meeting.

Two further issues arose in relation to the draft Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment.

William questioned the accuracy of para 6 of the non-technical summary and the Chairman agreed to have another look at it.

Clive questioned the wording of para 8.6 on the making of choices in relation to the development proposals which he claimed was prejudicial. The Chairman explained that he had tried hard to give a non-partisan version of the process but accepted an offer for an alternative draft to be considered.

As these were the only issues raised the draft Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Analysis was also adopted subject to consideration of any amendments agreed to as a result of the issues raised in the previous two paragraphs.

4. Consideration of design of the draft pre-submission version of Neighbourhood Plan

Thanks were expressed for the excellent work that Phil had done in creating this version.

The Chairman explained that as the design took shape it became clear that the Plan had been created in a format that would make it very readable especially by parishioners even though it was also a technical and legal document.

Suggestions were made concerning the design of the cover pages and Contents page to soften the impact of the images and in respect of the colouring in some parts of the report and it was agreed that these should be reconsidered.

There was some discussion over the previously announced intention to have an insert introducing the Parish. Phil explained that it was still the intention to include this subject to the amount of space that was available as he had explained in an email to members.

In response to questions it was explained that the intention was to have a number of hard copies printed for distribution to the major contributors and for reading in libraries, parish meeting room and elsewhere but most access was expected to be via a download from the Parish Council website. The details of the publication and circulation had yet to be worked out but it was recognised that it was important to ensure that every household in the Parish was made aware of it.

Subject the points raised the design was approved.

5. Contributions from non-active members

A member asked if the allotments had been included in the Plan. The Chairman that there was no mention of the allotments but agreed that it might be appropriate to add it to the list of open spaces the Plan identified as important to retain.

A question on the public consultation process was answered by explaining that once the plan was published it would be subject to a statutory consultation period of at least 6 weeks. A form would be available for parishioners to indicate whether they supported the Plan or not and offering an opportunity to comment on any specific aspect whether supportively or because they objected to any specific issue. Those comments would be recorded individually, considered in terms of their impact on the Plan and included in the Consultation

Statement that would accompany the submission version and subjected to the examiner's review. Once the examiner had given a view, assuming it was broadly favourable a final version of the Plan would then be put to the referendum.

Another member asked whether the Hatches Estate site was included in the Plan and having been told that it was included as a development site in the 6-10 years period of the life of the Plan he objected to its inclusion without what he argued was proper consultation. He explained that he had only just become aware of the possibility and drew attention to a previous proposal to develop the site which had attracted objections at a public meeting of 200 people. The Chairman explained that the possibility of the site being developed had been in the public domain since at least the Spring of 2013 and included the display at the Village Show in July 2014 and figured in material on the Parish Council website throughout the subsequent period. It was also a site that was identified for potential development in the Horsham Strategic Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) in the 6-10 year period if serious issues of access, topography and drainage could be resolved. The Planning & Built Environment Working Group had reviewed all the evidence and concluded that it met the current HDPF criteria for development of just 15 homes only if the problems with the site could be resolved. At this late stage of the Neighbourhood Plan development process it was not possible to take further representations but a communication would be sent to neighbouring residents advising them of the intention in the Plan and explaining that they could make any representations in the public consultation stage that would occur later in the Summer. The representations made at this meeting would be included in the Consultation Statement.

The member who had raised the issue was not satisfied and asked to be allowed to join the active members' group immediately so as to continue his objection. His request was refused.

[Although not stated at the meeting the primary reason for refusal was that it would not have been in the member's interest because members of the active members group were subject to the local authority code of conduct and this meant that they were excluded from speaking and voting on issues in which they had a personal interest.] The member then left the meeting.

A suggestion was made that crime should be addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan in the light of recent events at the skate park. Since the issue had not come up before it was decided to leave it to the public consultation stage and if there was sufficient concern it could be considered then. It was fundamentally an issue that the Parish Council would be addressing anyway so might not need any special attention in the Plan.

Another member asked what would happen if once Steele Close was built not all of the affordable homes had been taken up by local residents. The Chairman said that this was an issue that he had long been aware of and was implied in the presentation on the Housing Needs Survey in February. The answer was uncertain but the Plan did now contain a proposal for a review of how the allocation policy for affordable homes was working before any more development offering affordable homes should be considered.

6. Specialist review of draft Neighbourhood Plan

A member questioned the need for a specialist review but it was concluded that the original intention to have one was fully justified by the complexity of the planning process.

A paper on the proposals for a specialist review had previously been circulated and it was agreed to accept the recommendation that Action in Rural Sussex should be recommended to the Parish Council for engagement as a specialist to review the Plan and if so required by the NPC to advise on the final stages of the process.

Subject to approval by Council officers appropriate funding would be sought by the Parish Council for this and all the remaining activities.

7. Future Timetable

The Chairman explained that the draft Plan and SA/SEA would be circulated amongst the Parish Council and they would initially be invited to ask questions and make comments using the standard email contact for the NPC. Clive argued that it would be appropriate for the NPC and Parish Council to get together at some point and the Chairman indicated that it had been the original intention to do something on the lines suggested before the end of April but that plan had been changed because of the ending of the current Council's term of office. The proposal was however a good one and would be pursued.

Subject to those exchanges and the specialist review that would be undertaken the Plan was likely to come before the Parish Council formally at its June meeting for final approval.

[After note: Subsequent advice from the Parish Clerk indicates that a more acceptable approach would be to pass the draft plan to the Parish Council after the specialist review. A special meeting which the NPC could attend was also likely to be the means to deal with the plan.]

After final printing the pre-submission version would be published at a meeting in the Village Hall on hopefully 11 July and given wider exposure at the Village Show on 18 July. Public consultation would last until the end of August after which a submission version and the appropriate statutory documents would be prepared. The independent examination and subsequent stages would be arranged by Horsham and it was likely that a referendum would take place in 2016.

The active members of the NPC would be involved in all of these stages of the process.

8. Membership of the Active Members Group

A paper had been circulated outlining the requirements for active members in the remaining stages of the Plan preparation. No comments had been received and with 11 members (Terence Bermingham had resigned) it was concluded that that ought to be enough to carry out the remaining activities. If anyone else offered themselves with appropriate skills they would be considered in due course but for the present no change in membership was proposed.

9. Any other business

The Chairman reminded members that this was the final meeting of the public Stage One of the Plan development and thanked active members and non-active members alike for their contributions. The next public stage would be in July with the consultation on the pre-submission plan.

The meeting closed at 9.30pm