

BRAMBER NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP MEETING

Bramber & Beeding Village Hall

Thursday 31st January 2019 at 6.30pm

Present: Cllr Roger Potter, Cllr Mick Tilley, Cllr Sarah Green, Cllr Mike Croker, Mrs Paddy Robson, Mrs Christine Supiot, Mrs Brianne Reeve, Mrs Rachael Rainbow and Mrs Diana Croker.

Members of the public: Five

Notes: Rebecca Luckin

NOTES

1. Apologies for absence

a) Apologies were received and accepted from Consultant Mrs Alison Eardley (illness) and from Mrs D Croker (late arrival).

2. Declarations of interest

a) Cllr Potter declared a Personal Interest in item 8 b), as an acquaintance of owner.

3. Notes of the previous meeting – 13th December 2018

a) Subject to agreed amendments, the Notes of the meeting of 13th December 2018 were agreed as a correct record of the meeting and will be signed by the Chairman, when they have been re-printed by the Clerk.

Agreed.

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| Action | Amend minutes, circulate and upload to website | Clerk/Cllr Tilley |
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4. Matters arising

- a) Clay's Hill – Final search regarding anecdotal report of a historic covenant - NK advice circulated 18.12.18
- b) Infrastructure organisation contacts – NK advice circulated 18.12.18. PR had contacted organisations.
- c) Green space exceptional circumstances / development – NK advice circulated 18.12.18
- d) Access to proposed Clay's Field site – PR had contacted WSCC Highways for advice.
- e) Plan Programme – AE to update and circulate.

The meeting was adjourned

5. Open Forum

a) **Q** - Councillors are elected by the Parish and represent their views, when 70% said they didn't want building, are their views taken into account? Are Focus Group members views taking into account? Why are Councillors not representing their view?

A – The question is premature, we've not got to that point in the meeting yet. In the public survey, we purposely included the question regarding development, and, qualified it by 'why do you think that's the case?' If the person completing the form was against a particular development, they were then asked to say why. These responses have been assessed by the Housing Group. The main reasons given regarding objection were access to the Clays Field site and because members of the public liked the green space. The Housing Focus Group has criteria against which the site is assessed, there is no direct question about the views of parishioners, it is up to the Housing Group to consider their views when making the overall assessment. If we rejected the site, simply because residents said they didn't like the idea, it would come back to us, we are required to objectively assess the site. This will be covered in PR's Housing Focus Group report.

A – I understand what you are saying, it is difficult for elected members, they are expected to reach various targets regarding housing numbers, and do receive 'flack', they know, that at the end of the day,

if everyone said no to development, their plan would not be sound, or a developer could bypass them and submit a planning application. Members of the public do get a vote at the referendum and it has to pass the referendum, or it is rejected. That is the process.

Q - On dropbox is a land registry document regarding an agreement, but it's not clear what it refers to?

A - I don't want it to go out from this room, that we are not taking views of the public into account, since this is not the case, the site needs to be considered as part of the due process. If we don't observe process, we are likely to be challenged.

Clerk – Henfield had their plan overturned on a technicality, for using public opinion as evidence and now five years down the line, they are on their second plan, facing a much larger housing number than previously.

Cllr Tilley – we are obliged to respond in planning terms according to the planning criteria, not according to personal or local opinion.

The meeting was reconvened

Mrs C Supiot arrived at 6.54pm

6. Chairman's announcements

a) HDC Neighbourhood Planning conference – 1st February 2019 (Clerk and Cllr Potter to attend).

Subsequently cancelled and will be re-scheduled.

b) The revised HDC SHELAA is now available on the HDC website. Committee Members noted HDC's advice that Clays Hill should continue to be assessed.

7. Publicity / Community Engagement

a) Annual Parish Meeting – 20th March 2019 – venue to be agreed.

b) Beeding & Bramber Village Hall Showcasing event – 6th April 2019

8. Focus Group updates, policies and proposals

a) Housing & Development

There was thorough and robust discussion regarding the various views of Housing Focus Group Members.

The Housing & Development Focus Group Report is attached to these notes – appendix one

b) Committee Members to discuss and consider the findings of the Housing & Development Focus Group, on the two potential development sites put forward (Clay's Field and Kingsmead), and to agree recommendations to Full Council regarding those two sites. **Steering Group members agreed to defer discussion until after the Environment Focus Group had presented their report.**

c) Environment & Countryside - Cllr Tilley reported that drop-in responses were considered, including comments regarding making Clay's Field a green space, since it appears to fulfil the criteria. The Focus Group recommended that the whole area be designated as green space. The next step would be to approach the landowner for discussion regarding green space designation, even for part of the site, if the whole was not possible. Residents were 80% in favour of the policies that have been drafted by the FG. An informal survey of people using Clays Field had been undertaken. The Clerk will ask AE if an independent survey would be helpful.

Action Question for AE

Clerk

Steering Group members discussed Green Space designation and the protection afforded. The National Planning Framework stated that 'it should not be used solely to stop development of a site'. There is a danger that a plan could be rejected, if no housing is allocated.

Having heard from both Focus Groups, Steering Group members agreed that the next step should be to

approach the Clays Field developer to ask what options are available, regarding Clays Field. To be followed by Focus Group meetings, and a Working Party meeting to discuss the options. The item will be placed on the next Steering Group agenda. The Chairman will liaise with DMH Stallards to arrange a meeting to discuss potential housing numbers and percentage green space.

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| Action | Arrange meeting with DMH Stallard / Owner | Chair |
| Action | Arrange Focus Group meeting dates | FG Chairs |
| Action | Arrange Working Party meeting | Clerk |
| Action | Item for the next agenda – consider and agree action regarding Clays Field | Clerk |

Regarding Kingsmead – PR provided a report –attached to these notes – appendix two

The Focus Group had undertaken an assessment according to HDC criteria and with reference to the SDNPA Plan. The SDNPA Officer had visited the site and was strongly of the opinion that the SDNPA would not support development of the site.

Cllr Croker **proposed** that Housing FG conclusions were accepted, that the site could not be developed.

Seconded by Cllr Green. **Agreed with one abstention (Cllr Potter).**

d) Tourism, Commerce & Heritage – nothing to report for this meeting.

e) Transport (Highways & PROWs) - nothing to report for this meeting.

9. **Community Facilities Policy** - nothing to report for this meeting.

10. **Neighbourhood Plan Finance**

a) Finance update, income to date - £9,000, expenditure to date - £1988.99 +VAT, balance = £7011.01, although the public event has incurred some costs and one invoice is due. Hall hire costs to be included too.

Action Clerk and Chair to meet regarding expenditure Clerk/Cllr Potter

b) Grant expenditure final date extended to 31.03.19 – confirmed.

11. **Call for Sites / Site Assessment update**

a) Progress update – discussed earlier in the meeting.

b) Agree next actions – discussed earlier in the meeting.

12. **Plan Programme** – item deferred to next meeting, due to absence of AE.

13. **Correspondence**

a) 17.12.18 – Message from member of the public regarding Neighbourhood Planning.

b) 20.12.18 – Ongoing correspondence from a member of the public regarding AECOM's methodology when calculating the HNA number.

c) 16.01.19 – Locality Newsletter.

d) 28.01.19 – HDC Revised SHELAA circulated to SG Members.

14. **Items for the next agenda**

a) **Councillors to consider and agree proposal regarding Clays Field**

b) **Preparation for community engagement events**

c) **Feedback from HDC NP event**

15. **Date of next meeting – 28th February subject to hall availability**

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.50pm

Signed:
Chairman

Date:

Appendix One

Clays Field Considerations for the Steering Group:

As you will realise from the summary assessment and from the additional information from Horsham this week this site presents us with a difficult decision and the Housing Group were unable to reach a unanimous decision. There is consensus that no more than a small development should be considered. The Steering Group should bear in mind that *neighbourhood plans should be positively prepared-providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to provide the area's objectively assessed needs* (NPPF para 30a). Therefore, I shall run through the main issues and attempt to put both sides of the equation in relation to the evidence.

Access was a major concern of local residents. The concerns were the width of Castle Lane and the junction with Goring Road, particularly the angle of approach and the visibility splay. **Evidence:** 1970's planning application was refused on the grounds that *access from Goring Road down Castle Lane is unsuitable by reason of its inadequate width and visibility*. However, NPPF para 31 states *preparation and review of all policies should be underpinned by relevant and up to date evidence*. In May 2018 advice from WSCC re a small development on the site was that they were satisfied that given the slow speed/low traffic volumes on Castle Lane the visibility splays were adequate. Some vegetation could also be removed from highways land to increase this. The Highways Authority was also satisfied with the access from the junction on to Goring Road from Castle Lane but that the telegraph pole might need to be relocated. The developer would also need to provide a transport statement and a TRICS survey data. (recommend that we should also get this – speak to consultant). In addition, a member of the housing group reported that there had been a car accident on Goring Road near the junction, but it was not known if this involved a vehicle coming from that junction. The most recent planning application in 2016 for stables on a corner of Clays Field, not part of the current site, was refused on the grounds of dangerous access on to Clays Hill for long vehicles.

Inter Settlement Gap It is acknowledged that this site forms an important gap between the settlements of Bramber and Steyning. HDPF Policy 27 regarding settlement coalescence states firstly that *development will be resisted unless it can be demonstrated that there is no significant reduction in the openness and break between settlements*. At the last meeting some residents commented on the importance of wording and here the word significant caused some differences within the group. Some thought *any* development would represent a significant reduction whilst others considered the remainder of the site (three quarters of the field) not allocated for development would still leave a significant inter settlement gap given that the proposed development was alongside Castle Lane. A further refusal for the 1970's development was *the risk of further development thereby reducing the inter settlement gap*. It is acknowledged that this continues to be a concern for residents.

The last requirement of Policy 27 says that *development should contribute to the conservation, enhancement and amenity of the countryside including where applicable enhancements to the green infrastructure network or the provision of quiet informal recreation*. Again, there were distinctly differing opinions – some maintaining that development of any sort would ruin the open green space and would be liable to further development – others thinking that the present proposal gives an opportunity to retain green space and have some control over it whilst also making a contribution to the housing need. Advice from National Planning Guidance says: *Designating any Green Space will need to be consistent with local*

planning for sustainable development in the area. In particular, plans must identify sufficient land in suitable locations to meet identified development needs and a Local Green Space designation should not be used in a way that undermines this aim of public planning.

It should be noted that the site is not within but abuts the Steyning building line. Advice from Horsham confirms that a building line can be adjusted within a Neighbourhood Plan and that it does not matter if this line is that of a neighbouring parish.

Other Considerations

Views into the Site – the views from Castle Lane will be impacted, those from Goring Road far less so. Views into the site from the National Park will carry more weight so it is necessary to consider the level of impact a small development opposite existing properties on Castle lane would have. Views out of the site will not be greatly impacted.

Archaeology – The finest and largest Broadward hoard to have been found last century was discovered on the site when the pond was dug in 1981. This will not be a planning consideration but will be included in the assessment statements as if development is applied for HDC would complete either a desk top or archaeological survey.

Finally, perhaps the most important consideration as this is a neighbourhood plan designed by and for local residents, is the level of public opinion opposing development on this site. This is not easy to assess against national and district planning policies nor to know what weight examination would give to it. However, from our perspective it is vital we decide the best way to retain an open space so long viewed and used as a community facility. Our task is to decide if it is to reject the proposal in its entirety or to include it in the plan with a firm limit of the number to be built and the remainder of the site retained for community use. This would have to be agreed with the landowner.

It can be seen there is no definitive conclusion – there are valid views on both sides – what is essential is that the evidence relates to planning policy.

Appendix two

The original assessments of this site were done using Horsham DC's assessment sheet and its criteria. Feedback alerted us to the fact that the SDNP policies should be examined and these are used in the following assessment.

Draft Summary Assessment for Kingsmead Close

Area: 1.14 ha.

Description:

This is a small woodland site situated just inside the boundary of the SDNP. The northern boundary abuts the Maudlyn residential area and the site sits at the end of a small cul de sac (7 houses). Land to the south is wooded and forms part of the N.P. whilst the site is screened on the East and there is pasture land to the west.

Site Capacity:

Any development on this site would need to be of low density to minimise the impact on the landscape of the National Park and also to ensure maximum retention of the woodland.

Recent Planning History:

DC/10/1283 for 3 x 5 bed houses-Refused

The presence of Tree Preservation Order (TPO) O 1310 which protects all large and medium sized trees on this site is confirmed. A tree survey conducted in 2006 by Environmental Services refers to the area as semi-matured woodland. In his 2010 report the arboriculturist states that “notwithstanding the relatively poor quality of the woodland its landscape amenity value, especially when viewed from above the Downs to the south cannot be disputed”. Woodland “should have the highest protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty”. It was noted that a development of this size would result in immediate loss of at least 24 trees all covered by the TPO.

The SDNP officer states “development on this site, even with houses with large gardens and the retention of better species result in a ribbon of development extending from the urban area.” The reasons for refusal were:

- outside limits of any existing town or village and development would consolidate an undesirable element of sporadic development in a rural area having the visual qualities and character of the National Park and,
- unacceptable loss of trees and harmful to character, appearance and amenities of the area.

This is re-iterated in the appeal decision in which the main reason is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surrounding rural area with particular regard to its location within the SDNP and the protected trees on the site.

SDNP/14/01328 for 1 large property- Refused

Planning officers’ concerns maintained that this smaller proposal would still be refused as the location remained outside the settlement boundary, albeit in a sustainable proximity to the centre of Steyning, but also within the designated SDNP. In addition, the Arboricultural officer stated “that this is woodland and its cohesive structure would be compromised and eventually destroyed by the alteration of the land to residential, even from one single dwelling”.

In August of this year an SDNP Planning Officer, and Landscape Officer visited the site to assess it at the request of the Housing Group. They re-affirmed the views established during the previous applications for development:-

“The South Downs Integrated Landscape Character Assessment (2011) explains that the site lies within the Arun to Adur Scarp Foothills landscape type. This comprises the lowland shelf at the foot of the steep northern scarp of the South Downs between Amberley and Steyning. Impressive panoramic views onto the foothills are afforded from the adjacent scarp to reveal a balanced woodland and farmland mosaic. Importantly this balance gives a sense of unity to this landscape.

From our site visit we could see that the site forms an important wooded background to the built up area in local views and contributes to the rural setting of Steyning. The site provides a characteristic settlement edge typical of this landscape character type i.e. woodlands are typical at the break in slope. The woodland is considered to have important local visual and amenity value as it is protected by a woodland TPO.

In terms of wider landscape impacts, as explained above, the site forms part of a distinctive fieldscape interspersed with belts and groups of trees and small woodlands, that forms an attractive wooded foreground to Steyning when looking from the South Downs Way on Annington Hill. This small woodland is a typical characteristic landscape feature forming an important visual buffer to the built up area of Steyning and contributing to the intrinsic rural character of the area. Development would be prominent in views from the South Downs Way breaking up this distinctive wooded character and sense of unity to the landscape, harming the landscape quality and extending the built up area into the countryside towards the scarp slope of the Downs.

Therefore as explained above we would have strong concerns if this site was proposed as a site allocation. I trust these comments are of help in considering potential site allocations in the Bramber Neighbourhood Plan."

Infrastructure:

Access to utilities.

Conformity with Local Policies:

Does not conform to:

Policy SD4 (Landscape Character) *Development will only be permitted where it conserves and enhances the landscape*

Policy SD6 (Safeguarding Views) *landscape carries overwhelming weight* (Sandford Principle) and the purpose of this policy is to ensure development does not harm views and does not detract from the visual integrity, identity and scenic quality of the N.P.

Policy SD11 *The removal of protected trees or groups of trees or a woodland setting will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances* (the trees on this site are protected by a group TPO)

In addition Bramber is excluded from the SDNP list of housing allocations.

The proposal put forward has made every effort to meet the requirements of Policy SD5 *Design to complement the landscape character*. The design submitted impressed the focus group in that it took account of the impact on views by the use of different levels to mitigate this and the design had attempted to complement the setting. However, given the comments relating to relatively recent applications and to the current stance of the SDNP it was felt that inclusion of this site would be to the detriment of the plan.

Policy SD28 was considered as it refers to affordable housing but as SDNP has no expectation of housing here it is unlikely to be considered.

Opportunities:

This site would contribute to the particular housing need for smaller houses in order to balance the existing stock and provide accommodation for elderly downsizers and young families.

Constraints:

The major constraints are:

The location of this site just within the N.P. and consisting of woodland covered by a TPO.

Previous applications have been refused on grounds that any development here contravenes policies named above.

The SDNP does not identify Bramber for potential development in its emerging local plan.

Conclusions:

This site is one that could have made a small contribution to the housing requirement. However, when the policies laid down in the South Downs Local Plan are considered its viability is questionable. Given the reasons for refusal of previous applications for fewer, albeit larger dwellings and the fact that the new SDNP policies, if anything, strengthen support for them and the fact that there is no allocation for Bramber it is recommended this site is not included in the plan.