

Minutes of the Hassocks Neighbourhood Plan Working Group Meeting 12th January 2017 7.30pm

Attendees: Chairman, Bill Hatton. Working Group members: Nick Owens; Frances Gaudencio; Sue Hatton; Adrian Batchelor; David Withycombe; Virginia Pullan;
Dale Mayhew and Laura Bourke (Dowsett Mayhew Consultancy) (arrived during item 6).
Jane Bromley (Administration).
Four members of the public present.

1. Apologies for absence: Ian Weir; Judith Foot, Justine Fisher explained she may be late but did not make the meeting.
Not present: Victoria Standfast.
2. Declarations of Interest: Nick Owens sites 1, 2, 15 and 17; Frances Gaudencio site 8. David Withycombe site 12. Virginia Pullan site 7. Adrian Batchelor site 5.
Local Green Space Declarations of Interest: Nick Owens LGS2; Frances Gaudencio LGS 5.
Schools Interest: David Withycombe, Hassocks Infants; Frances Gaudencio Windmills Junior; Sue Hatton Downlands and Windmills Junior.
3. The minutes of the meeting on 24th November 2016 were discussed and an amendment at the top of page three was agreed changing the word 'omitted' to read 'committed'. The Chairman then signed the minutes.
4. To note the resignation of Georgia Cheshire. BH relayed the resignation by GC to the Group and praised the efforts she had made towards producing the Plan and the fact that her skills had been invaluable particularly in organising the early consultation events.
5. Report on workshop held by MSDC on 22nd November 2016 concerning the progress of the District Plan.

MSDC had been trying to limit the increase in housing numbers to approx 800 p.a. But they stressed that the District is under huge pressure to provide more than this. A consortium of developers had formed a forum which had the aim of increasing this number. MSDC said they felt confident that they would be supported by the Examiner. The Examiner is expected to make a preliminary report in the next month or so,

6. Update on Ham Fields Appeal and the Friars Oak and Golf Course Applications

Ham Fields:

DM reported: The Inspector for the Ham Fields Appeal had allowed an opportunity for all parties in this case to issue further statements as a result of there being two material changes that might affect the Appeal.

1) The Ministerial Statement of 12th December which strengthens the powers of Neighbourhood Plans in local authority areas where there is no five year land supply. Policies in the Neighbourhood Plan will no longer be deemed out of date where Local Planning Authority's are able to demonstrate a 3-year Housing Land Supply. This however only applies to 'made' Neighbourhood Plans. In addition MSDC have not yet identified the number of their housing supply as they advise this needs to be tested and determined via the current District Plan Examination. The Ministerial Statement therefore on consideration was not able to further the case for the Parish Council with regard to the Appeal.

2) Since the Appeal had been made against the decision on the planning application for the Ham Fields site, MSDC have resolved to grant planning permission at the Golf Course site and the Friars Oak site. The latter application has now been 'called in' for determination by the Secretary of State (SoS). Hence this was considered a material change. The Parish Council statement could not introduce new evidence to the case but did refer to the fact that they had not seen evidence to show that cumulative traffic movements from the possible three large developments along the London Road would be at an acceptable level.

In addition the Neighbourhood Plan had now undergone its Regulation 16 Consultation and could be said to now carry greater weight for the case. The Statement prepared on behalf of the Parish Council and submitted to the SoS referred to this view.

DM felt it may be likely that the Secretary of State may require the decision on the Ham Fields appeal to be put on hold pending the inquiry into the Friars Oak application.

Friars Oak:

The planning application for this site had been 'called in'. The Parish Council had received correspondence from the Secretary of State advising the Parish Council are to be a 'Rule 6 Party'. A 'Rule 6 Party' takes a full part in the inquiry, it can present evidence and cross examine. A Pre-inquiry Statement would be required from the Parish Council and this needed to be submitted six weeks from the date of the letter from the Secretary of State which was 11th January 2017. An Extra Ordinary meeting of the Parish Council had been called for Tuesday 17th January 2017 to agree for funding to be made available, such that the Parish Council could engage DM from Dowsett Mayhew to write the statement.

FG mentioned she thought this would be a good opportunity to communicate to residents as to where the Parish Council were with the Neighbourhood Plan. DW felt this would be useful to explain the frustrations of the Working Group and the delay for the Neighbourhood Plan.

FG proposed that the Working Group put forward at the Extra Ordinary meeting of the Parish Council on the 17th January 2017 a suggestion that a 3

communication be sent out to residents. All were in favour and BH undertook to recommend this course of action to the Parish Council on the 17th January.

Golf Course:

The Golf Course planning application had not been called in.

7. To discuss the implications of the Statement on Neighbourhood Plans made by the Minister for Housing and Planning on 12th December

BH indicated that he had hoped the Ministerial Statement by Gavin Barwell issued on 12th December 2016 would be giving the Hassocks Neighbourhood Plan more weight but as it only appeared to change requirements for 'Made' Plans, it did not.

8. To agree the steps necessary to take the Neighbourhood Plan forward to examination as quickly as possible in the light of the above Considerations.

DM set out the next stages for the Neighbourhood Plan should the Working Group choose to recommend to the Parish Council to progress their Plan, despite the current uncertainties.

The Regulation 16 Consultation had been completed and it had been necessary to undertake a 'Sequential Flood Test' for the National Tyres site. This would need to go through a six week consultation and DM had a meeting with MSDC regarding this on 17th January 2017. Subject to the outcome of this meeting, the Consultation could then be begin.

During this consultation arrangements for the Examination of the Neighbourhood Plan could be initiated pending the outcome of the consultation. Following Examination the Examiner may recommend minor changes before progression to referendum but Hassocks Neighbourhood Plan Examination would probably involve a hearing at which the Developers may challenge housing numbers.

BH suggested an informal discussion with the Examiner before the Parish Council made a decision whether to press forward to Examination. DM advised that at Parish level there would be no opportunity for this, a decision had to be made without the benefit of feedback from the Examiner.

NO asked whether it would be possible for the Examination to begin but for the Examiner to give options for change dependent on the outcome of the Ham Field and Friars Oak Inquiries. BH advised that the results of these inquiries would not be known for many months. This was not a viable option.

SH asked about the implications for the Neighbourhood Plan in the event of the District Plan being required to increase housing numbers.

DM advised that numbers in the most up-to-date adopted Plan carries most weight, where there is a conflict between a District Plan and Neighbourhood Plan. MSDC had however chosen not to allocate numbers to individual Parishes rather to have total number required from Neighbourhood Plans. The Examiner may request more detail on numbers at Parish level.

BH mentioned that at the meeting with MSDC on the way forward for the Neighbourhood Plan he had the impression that he felt MSDC thought that pressing forward was the 'Nuclear Option' however he thought that Tom Clarke the MSDC Solicitor was of the opinion that MSDC didn't have the authority to prevent that Parish Council progressing to Examination.

BH proposed that the progression of the Neighbourhood Plan to the Examination stage be recommended to the Parish Council at their full meeting on 14th February 2017. All were in favour.

EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

In view of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted Councillors were referred to the Confidential Agenda. Members of the public in attendance were requested to withdraw from the meeting in the public interest.

- 9. Report on meeting with WSCC of 2nd December 2016.
- 10. Date of next meeting Thursday 9th February if required thereafter 9th March 2017.

The meeting closed at 9.20pm

Signed Chairman -----

Dated -----