

Minutes of the Hassocks Neighbourhood Plan Working Group Meeting Thursday 12th October 2017 7.30pm Parish Centre, Adastral Park, Hassocks

Attendees: Parish Councillors: Bill Hatton (Chair); Ian Weir; Sue Hatton; Justine Fisher (JF) (arrived 7.40pm during item 4 and left 9pm during item 5). Frances Gaudencio; Victoria Standfast and Judith Foot (JAF).

Co-Opted Members: Virginia Pullen; David Withycombe.

Dale Mayhew and Laura Bourke (Consultants, Dowsett Mayhew Consultancy).

Ian Cumberworth, Clerk to the Parish Council.

Jane Bromley, Administration.

Six members of the public and five members of the Parish Council.

1. Apologies for absence. Parish Councillor and Working Group member Nick Owens. Parish Councillor and Working Group member Justine Fisher apologised she would be late.

2. Declaration of interests. Virginia Pullen site 7. Justine Fisher site 8. David Withycombe site 12. Frances Gaudencio site 8.

3. Minutes of the meeting on 14th September 2017 for approval. The minutes were approved as amended and signed by the Chairman.

4. Section 106 Agreement – Golf Course – verbal update. The Clerk updated the Working Group. CIL of £73010 was secured for the site for the Parish Council. The transfer of land ownership to the Parish Council or MSDC had however not been achieved.

SH reminded the Group that this transfer had been the subject of a specific written request to MSDC.

BH proposed that a letter, from the Clerk, should be sent to MSDC asking them why HPC's specific request had been ignored and to ask that the Parish Council receive an explanation. Seconded by SH and all in favour.

4. MSDC Consultation on the Main Modifications to the District Plan in particular DP9B - Strategic site allocation to the North of Clayton Mills. To consider a response to the consultation for consideration by Full Council on the 31st October 2017.

BH set out the situation with regard to the Modifications to the District Plan. Mid Sussex District Council had agreed the modifications proposed by the officers and they were now undergoing consultation. The responses to the Consultation would all be sent to Inspector Bore who would then take these into account when examining the modifications. The Consultation Form was quite complicated, asking for opinions on alignment with Government Policy in some cases. MSDC had however confirmed that the Inspector would also accept letters of representation.

BH felt the issue for Hassocks was the process by which MSDC had arrived at the decision to allocate the strategic site at Clayton Mills. This site did not feature at all at the Examination in July but in the Overall Assessment and Ranking in Modification Document EP23a which was issued in September this site is placed No. 1 in the ranking.

BH said that during the Examination and also during his roundup remarks the Inspector had urged MSDC to consider the options for increasing land supply. There were basically two options. Option 1 was to amend Policy DP6 which related to Housing and the settlement

Hierarchy to increase the acceptability threshold for 'windfall' development on the edge of settlements from 10 to 25 dwellings. Option 2 was to allocate a further strategic site. In Document MSDC22, also issued in September, MSDC had discounted Option 1 without proper consideration and had gone straight for Option 2 which, in their opinion was the easy option which precluded the possibility of development being shared more evenly between the towns and villages of Mid Sussex.

BH said that in his view, the decision to allocate the site to the north of Clayton Mills had been made on the basis of a very superficial argument. The Modification documents were full of assertions and detailed background assessments had not been made available. In fact it would appear that the Clayton Mills site had been selected in advance of the preparation of some of the Modification documents, in particular the Transport Study, which has still not been made available for inspection by the public.

VS asked whether a Freedom of Information request could be made requesting the Transport Study. DM confirmed that this is possible, but drew attention to the potential that this could be refused (for example on the grounds of confidentiality).

SH had sat on the Scrutiny Committee when the Modifications were put forward to members and the Transport Study document had not been available to the members at that meeting.

JF queried the legality of the Committees decision when information was missing.

DM advised that it would have been up to the members to decide whether they had sufficient information available to them at the time to make a decision which clearly as a majority they felt they had.

The Clerk felt that the Monitoring Officer for MSDC would have advised the Officers on whether the Transport study for Clayton Mills proposed strategic allocation should be made public.

IW queried whether our response to the Modification of the further strategic allocation could be strengthened with a complaint against the process involved.

Cllr Cheshire queried the allocation of a travellers' site within the strategic allocation. DM advised that ensuring adequate provision for travellers pitches is a statutory duty for Local Planning Authorities. There are different ways to achieve this, and MSDC have opted to require provision on their strategic housing sites or for developers of such sites to make a financial contribution towards provision elsewhere.

Cllr Cheshire queried the lack of policy for demographic need. DM advised that, in general it is considered that that demographic need within open market housing is best determined by the market. It is argued that developers will build what is required to meet market needs, and they won't build houses they can't sell.

The Working Group to put forward to the Parish Council the following comments and proposals for comments on the modifications to the MSDP

BH proposed the following responses to the Modifications:

That Hassocks Parish Council appreciates MSDC needs to provide 16390 dwellings in the period to 2031, and wishes to provide a constructive response to the Consultation however it is considered that:

Policy DP9B which proposes a strategic site of up to 500 dwellings at Clayton Mills would impose a disproportionate share of District Need on Hassocks.

Para 31 of Policy Document MSDC22 states that “overall there are a number of significant positives associated with this site which outweigh any negatives related to its landscape setting and potential highway impacts”

The Parish Council disagree with this conclusion and consider that the imposition of a strategic site of 500 dwellings would be unsustainable and would have a most adverse effect on the village environment for the following reasons.

1. The Sustainability Appraisal supporting the HNP concluded that between 300 – 400 new homes would be appropriate. The strategic site plus existing commitments and HNP sites would produce in the region of 1000 dwellings. This would be contrary to Strategic Objective 2 of the District Plan which seeks to ensure development reflects the distinctive character of district towns and villages. [Please note that the Sustainability Appraisal that accompanies the HNP sets out that ‘a policy which sets out the housing need of the Parish at 280-290’ is the preferred approach. The proposed housing allocations within the plan would deliver this as a minimum with additional housing from windfall coming forward and determined against other policies.]

2. HPC contend that the selection of the strategic site, as proposed in Option 2 of document MSDC 22, as opposed to Option 1, which would have enabled a more balanced and comprehensive approach to the release of housing land around other settlements in Mid Sussex is not justified in document MSDC 22.

MSDC have simply discounted this option which had previously been mentioned by the Inspector as a possible way forward.

3. The supporting documents are high level and provide no evidence to back up the assertions relating to highway issues. HPC has not seen the Transport study which, according to MSDC 24, assumes that southbound traffic will avoid the centre of Hassocks and the Stonepound Crossing by using Lodge Lane and New road. HPC considers that traffic generated by the development will have a most adverse effect on Ockley Lane.

4. The proposal would reduce the countryside gap between Hassocks and Burgess Hill by at least 25% and would destroy a valuable area of countryside which, in the opinion of HPC, has high landscape value

DM proposed the following additional responses to the Modifications:

5. The additional Strategic Site contained in Policy DP9B seeks to strengthen the 5 year housing supply for MSDC but the detail suggests only 150 will come forward in the first five years. The original Neighbourhood Plan allocation for the site was for 140 dwellings and therefore Hassocks Parish Council question the necessity for the Strategic allocation.

6. Using Option 1 identified as an option by Inspector Bore to strengthen the 5 year housing supply, dispersing developments of up to 25 dwellings around settlement boundaries, was dismissed by MSDC. In the original District Plan a policy exists for scattering of developments of up to 10 dwellings. Hassocks Parish Council therefore question why the potential increase to 25 units was dismissed.

7. The benefits indicated that will arise from the larger strategic site proposed in DP9B would have come forward anyway through the Policies in the original Hassocks Neighbourhood Plan.

FG seconded the proposals with a suggestion that DM's points 5 to 7 came before BH's points 1 to 4 in the letter to be drafted. All in favour

FG additionally proposed that the following comments be made on modifications to:

DP7- General Principles of Strategic development for Burgess Hill

MSDC have deleted the requirement for 30% affordable housing. Hassocks Parish Council does not agree with this deletion.

DP24a Housing Density

This Policy is to be deleted as thought to be too prescriptive. A reference to optimising capacity of sites is included in Policy DP24 on Design and Character. Hassocks Parish Council objects to this. Design and Character are not going to mitigate the inevitable small rooms/ small houses which will be built to maximise the capacity of the site.

DP26 Accessibility

The monitoring suggestion within this Policy of groups with particular needs is meaningless unless deadlines and dates are set for monitoring and review. Hassocks Parish Council objects to this Policy as it is not clear enough.

This Policy states 20% of dwellings to meet Category 2 but this is not to apply to flats of fewer than 10 dwellings. Hassocks Parish Council objects to this as this reduces further the dwellings which need to meet standard M\$ 2

Homes for wheelchair uses has been reduced in proportion from 5% to 4%. Hassocks Parish Council objects to this and would like to see the evidence to support this reduction.

DP28 Housing Mix

Why is there not a proportion of allocation for the elderly?

BH seconded and all in favour.

5. Other matters arising. None

6. Date of next meeting. None set.

The meeting ended at 9.10pm