

Hassocks Neighbourhood Plan Working Group

DRAFT Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 14th September 2017 7.30pm, Parish Centre.

Attendees:

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN WORKING GROUP-

Parish Councillors: Bill Hatton (Chair) Nick Owens; Ian Weir; Sue Hatton; Justine Fisher (JF) (left the meeting during item 4 at 9.10pm).

Co-Opted Members: Adrian Batchelor (left the meeting during item 5 at 10.15pm); Virginia Pullen (left the meeting during item 5 at 10.25pm).

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

MID SUSSEX DISTRICT COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVES: Judy Holmes, Assistant Chief Executive, Judy Holmes (JH); Cllr Gary Wall, MSDC Leader; Chris Tunnell (CT) Special Planning Adviser to MSDC.

Ian Cumberworth, Clerk to the Parish Council

Jane Bromley, Administration.

3 members of the public and two members of the Parish Council.

1. Apologies for absence: Neighbourhood Plan Working Group members- Parish Councillors: Frances Gaudencio and Judith Foot (JAF).

Co-Opted Member: David Withycombe

Non- attendance: Parish Councillor Victoria Standfast.

2. Declaration of interests. Nick Owen sites, 1, 2, 15 & 17. Virginia Pullen site 7 Justine Fisher site 8.

3. Minutes of the meeting on 22nd June 2017 for approval.

The minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman.

4. MSDC – Modifications to the District Plan and Strategic sites.

JH explained the background history of the Mid Sussex District Plan (MSDP) Examination leading up to the initial findings of Inspector Bore, in February 2017.

JH gave an update on the Hearing sessions which took place on 25 and 26 July. JH confirmed the Inspector thought the MSDP to be sound providing certain modifications were undertaken. The main modification being an amendment to the housing numbers required for the first five years to 876 per annum and 1090 dwellings per annum from 2023/2024 onwards. The additional requirement being mainly attributable to Crawley and Horsham Districts' deficit

In addition JH stated Inspector Bore felt the five year housing land supply to be fragile/ in need of strengthening. By 2020 Inspector Bore required a Site Allocation Development Plan, to be in place.

During the hearing the developers' Forum had attempted to provide evidence that the Council's housing figures were insufficient. JH stated the Developers Forum argued MSDC's OAN starting point should be 1300 dpa. JH stated the Developers Forum at the Hearings had sought to undermine Neighbourhood Plans and the sites identified by MSDC and to promote their own sites.

JH states there was much dialogue concerning sites at the Examination but the Developers struggled to convince the Inspector that there were other sites that could come forward in the first five years of the MSLP.

JH stated Gleeson contacted the Council to suggest that their land at Clayton Mills was a site that could be identified as a 'Strategic Site' in the emerging District Plan and could come forward within the next 5 years. They advised an application on Clayton Mills was to be submitted at the end of 2017/start of 2018.

JH advised MSDC considered whether the site is deliverable in the first 5 years and whether it was a sustainable location for housing.

JH advised that once MSDC were confident the site was deliverable, MSDC Officers approached Hassocks Ward Members and the Parish Council to advise them of the potential strategic allocation.

JH stated that the site which had now come forward as a strategic site in Hassocks was the only strategic site within the district that had been assessed by the Council as deliverable within the next five years. This site was an extension of sites 13 and 4 in the Neighbourhood Plan.

JH confirmed the proposal along with all the proposed modifications to the MSDP was presented to the MSDC Scrutiny Committee on 12th September who after debate had Resolved to recommend the modifications to Full Council on 27th September.

Subject to a positive outcome at the Full Council meeting, JH confirmed there would be a consultation on the modifications, possibly from 2nd October to 10th November. This would be a Consultation run on behalf of Inspector Bore. All comments from this Consultation would go to the Inspector. JH confirmed Mr. Bore has indicated his Report would be issued by the end of the year. Subject to the detail of Mr. Bore's Report MSDC expect to report the MSDP to full Council for adoption at the end of January 2018.

JH stated MSDC would like Hassocks Parish Council to support the strategic allocation and to work with them on the Policy to achieve the best outcome for the Parish.

JH stated MSDC Officers are currently reviewing the situation for the Hassocks Neighbourhood plan and are looking at how the NP can move forward with minimum disruption or repeated work.

CT spoke concerning the search for a further strategic site to strengthen the five year housing supply. CT confirmed other possible sites which had been considered were not deliverable within the first five years.

CT confirmed MSDC have carried out Transport modelling for the site and have discussed the site with WSCC Highways Authority.

CT emphasised that MSDC wanted to work with Hassocks PC to consider the re configuration of the Gleeson site, the location of a primary school on the site (which is currently proposed in the north east corner of the site), open space, play areas, as well housing.

BH asked for clarification as to the numbers envisaged for the site was it the original 140 plus 360 to make the 500 proposed and whether the Ashdown Forest issues had ruled out all other sites.

CT confirmed that the policy will allocate the site for 500 homes.

CT reiterated that other sites were ruled out on deliverability grounds as they could not be delivered within the first 5 years.

BH asked when the detailed studies to support the allocation would be available?

CT confirmed these would be available on the 02 October at the start of the consultation.

JF asked whether housing numbers would be capped at 500.

CT confirmed they would be.

VP asked whether a further Landscape Capacity Study had been carried out for the reconfigured site.

CT confirmed nothing further had been undertaken with respect to landscape studies at this stage.

VP queried whether the impact of the proposed development on viewpoints had been given consideration.

CT stated that the impact from viewpoints would not be sufficient to rule out the site.

JF queried if the transport work had considered the issues of the railway crossing

CT advised that if the strategic site was accepted then Network Rail would be consulted with regard to the issue of the rail crossing to the west of the site.

JH considered that the Policy could be amended to take into account local concerns if the Parish Council worked with MSDC at this time and before 27th September when the Policy along with all the modifications of the MSDP would be proposed to Full Council.

NO asked a number of questions of MSDC.

Question: In DP7- General Principles for Strategic Development at Burgess Hill. It has been noted that the 30% AH requirement has been deleted.

Answer: This was a duplication of policy which is included elsewhere in the Plan. Affordable housing continues to be required on the site.

Question: DP24A- Housing Density. Isn't the reference to 'optimising' a recipe for over development?

Answer: MSDC were of the same view. JH confirmed this term was included at Inspector Bore's request. Judy Holmes mentioned here that it would be good to point this out in the consultation response to Inspector Bore.

Question: DP26-Accessibility. Queried the amendment with regards to additional standard M4 (2).

Answer: Inspector Bore had felt that this was an undue burden on developers.

Question: A reduction of homes required to meet standards for wheelchair users from 5 to 4% should the 5% not have been increased not reduced?

Answer: The District cannot predict future need it only monitors current need which indicates the 4% requirement currently.

Question: DP31- Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Show people. Were the Council anticipating a site would be made available within the reconfigured boundary or were they expecting a financial contribution for sites elsewhere?

Answer: JH confirmed it was the latter and that this was standard wording and it was normal to receive a financial contribution.

Question: DP40- Renewable Energy Schemes. The policy doesn't seem to go far enough.

Answer: MSDC officers confirmed National Guidance has been followed which prohibits the Council from going above national standards.

SH asked if the developers were only providing land for the school and JH confirmed they were providing the land only, not the building. Financial contributions to provision of the school would be made by the developers in line with the need arising from the housing on the site.

NO posed a question regarding zero carbon homes. CT advised the main policy had been watered down as NPPF doesn't facilitate LPA's to require zero carbon homes.

NO posed a question relating to what consideration had been given to protection of the landscape.

SH queried if it would be possible to influence where the school would be located on the site

JH confirmed MSDC would be seeking as much information as possible from Gleeson's and would seek to influence the master planning process.

JH stated there was a meeting scheduled with Gleeson next week and stated it was important that HPC had the opportunity to influence the master planning process.

JH confirmed the masterplan could be attached to the policy. It is possible the school could be located in the north east corner of the site with the school playing fields acting as a buffer.

There was some discussions as to the requirement for the school whether one or two form entry was needed. JH confirmed it would be for ages from 4 to 11 but further detail would need to be worked through with WSCC. Given the recent discussions of the NPWG with WSCC, JH stated the detail would need to be confirmed with Vanessa Cummins at WSCC.

IW stated HPC want to sure there is enough space on the site for a 2 form entry school. IW also stated the Parish Council would want certainty that the land is transferred to WSCC.

CT stated MSDC would explore mechanisms available to ensure the land is transferred to WSCC.

Cllr Wall advised that once a site was certain WSCC would be more willing to look at the detail

JF queried if the potential strategic allocation had implications for other sites in the Parish, namely Friars Oak.

CT confirmed the strategic allocation and its effect on the Council's 5 year housing land supply position, might influence the Secretary of State's decision but at this stage what level of influence it would have was unknown.

BH queried whether Hassocks Parish Council are now being asked to "mop up" the remaining housing numbers given the issues identified at Burgess Hill.

CT confirmed the "residual" for Hassocks has been adjusted to 0.

JH stated the Government had published a further consultation on 'Planning for the right homes in the right places'.

CT confirmed the consultation set out a number of reforms to the planning system in order to increase the supply of new homes. CT confirmed the consultation includes a standard methodology for calculating a local authority's housing need. CT confirmed this stood at 1090 dwellings per annum for MSDC., but would rise if calculated under the proposed new formula.

JH stated the Government's new approach meant the need for more housing is not going to go away.

JH spoke about the duty of the District to consult with Neighbouring Authorities and that this had been a difficult task but she felt that they had come to an agreement and that they did not expect objections at Proposed Modifications consultation from neighbouring Authorities.

SH advised that the residents of Hassocks would have strong views on the acceptability of Ockley Lane for the access to serve such a large site.

NO queried whether a cycle path to Burgess Hill could be incorporated.

A general discussion was had on the impact on traffic in the Parish.

Cllr Wall advised again that once the MSLP was in place it would require WSCC Highways to look seriously at options for Hassocks and to invest in infrastructure.

IC queried the text in DP9B questioning whether it should be tighter for example there was no definition of 'Green Space' in the Policy.

CT advised MSDC would welcome feedback from the Parish Council on strengthening the Policy.

BH asked for advice on the progression of the Neighbourhood Plan if the new strategic site were to be accepted?

JH stated there was currently a gap between the HNP housing allocation numbers and what was required to conform with the strategic policies of the District Plan.

JH stated the HNP as currently written would be immediately out of date and therefore Officers are unable to recommend the Plan proceed to Examination.

JH stated it was for these reasons MSDC Officers had recommended the Plan was put on hold to allow MSDC to go through the Examination process and to agree the District housing need.

JH advised that with the new Strategic site allocation in Hassocks the NP would be in conformity and would therefore be able to proceed to Examination. MSDC wanted to work with the Parish Council to support amendments to the Plan with the least amount of work required.

JH confirmed the Council are still considering how the HNP can progress. MSDC do not want to hold back the Plan and will help as best they can.

SH queried the site 13 & 4 area as this was not in the new configuration and if this could this be built upon as well?

CT advised MSDC were considering how land should be safeguarded and there was still a debate about the best way to do this.

BH queried the timing if the NP was modified.

CT confirmed MSDC was exploring whether the two processes could proceed together. CT confirmed MSDC are currently checking requirements with their legal department.

CT stated he felt it was important to identify a measure of support from the Parish Council.

BH confirmed that this was a Working Group and the Parish Council would need to decide how they wish to proceed with any comments on the proposed Strategic Allocation at a full meeting of the Council.

DM asked a series of questions of Chris Tunnell

Question: How had the current site allocation come about?

Answer: The site had been submitted to MSDC by Gleeson for it to be considered as part of the Council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment.

Question: What documents had been provided so far and what might be available by the time of the consultation?

Answer: It is policy that the initial material submitted is not published. MSDC confirmed Gleesons had submitted a high level illustrative masterplan to demonstrate how the site might be developed.

CT confirmed a Transport assessment had also been submitted.

DM queried what further work would be done.

JH stated the NPWG should give the District a "wish list". JH confirmed Gleeson need to satisfy the District.

JH confirmed that MSDC would be meeting with Gleeson on Monday 18th September and the Parish Council should let her know what they wanted.

Question: What supporting documentation will the District Council publish to accompany the District Plan consultation?

Answer: JH confirmed a pack of information would support the consultation, the detail of which had been discussed prior to this meeting. JH confirmed this had not yet been decided.

JH stated MSDC are keen to ensure they get this process right and are therefore taking advice to make sure they get it right.

JH reiterated developers are not going away and they are trying their level best to de-rail the Plan. JH stated MSDC are at their mercy until the Plan is adopted.

JH re-iterated MSDC are keen to get it right and avoid expensive legal challenges. JH confirmed MSDC are working closely with advisors to make sure they are 'safe'.

Question: What background documents did you have which lead you to allocating the site?

Answer: CT confirmed the site had gone through the SHLAA process of assessment. CT stated this had informed MSDC that more detailed work was required which led to the transport assessment being undertaken.

CT confirmed further work is in progress but will be completed and available for the consultation.

DM queried if the issues at Stonepound AQMA been considered?

Answer: CT confirmed the Sustainability Appraisal would look at the AQMA and HRA issues.

DM: Did Inspector Bore state specifically that a strategic allocation was required to strengthen the five year housing supply?

JH stated the Inspector had advised that MSDC's 5 year housing land supply position needed to be strengthened. JH stated Mr. Bore had recommended the Council consider amendments to the windfall policy to increase supply through this mechanism. He suggested the relaxation of the windfall policy to consider sites outside the settlement boundary.

JH confirmed the Council had looked at this approach and have discounted it as MSDC felt this was too loose a policy to be considered and would not give the Council certainty. JH stated MSDC did not believe such an approach would be NPPF compliant.

IC queried whether MSDC were confident that Gleeson would deliver the site within 5 years.

JH replied that MSDC had no control over the developers and that the recent Housing White Paper was hoping to address the deliverability issue.

CT advised that any comments and requests for Policy DP9B should be made by the Parish Council prior to the MSDC meeting on 27th September.

BH thanked all from MSDC for attending.

5. Next steps in developing the Neighbourhood Plan.

There was a lot of discussion as to the best way forward for the Parish Council.

There was detailed discussion on whether the NPWG should support the proposed allocation at this time.

Members also discussed whether the Parish Council should make a public statement on MSDC's proposal to allocate a strategic site in the Parish.

Members debated whether they should support the policy given the housing requirements placed upon the District.

Members also discussed how best to influence the policy as currently worded.

It was suggested by a member that it might be best to accept the site and put all efforts into modifications of the Policy to provide the best outcome for Hassocks.

Others felt that residents would expect the Parish Council to make a stand on behalf of the residents as this would have a huge impact of village life if it were to go ahead.

Members queried the background studies which had been undertaken and whether it was best to await the publication of such studies before taking an informed view on the proposed allocation.

Members raised concern with the timeframe in which the Parish had been asked to respond. A discussion followed on the timeframe given by MSDC for the Parish to respond in order to influence the policy wording. The outcome of the discussions was that there was too little time and too little information available to the NPWG in order for them to comment on the principle of the allocation.

The level of influence the NPWG could have on the proposed policy was also discussed. DM explained MSDC Officers had advised Officers welcomed amendments to the policy prior to the Council meeting on the 27/09. DM confirmed after the Council meeting it would not be possible to guarantee influence over the policy as following consultation on the Proposed Modification it was at Mr. Bore's discretion.

In light of this advice, Members considered the merits of making representations on the Proposed Modification consultation and whether representation would have a meaningful impact on the Policy.

IC advised Members a statement should be made to MSDC in order to confirm the Parish Council's position.

It was Proposed by BH and RESOLVED that DM would draft a letter on behalf of the Parish Council that would be sent to MSDC, thanking them for their attendance at the meeting and that the Parish Council could not comment on the Principle or the Policy wording with regard to the strategic allocation due to lack of time and information. The letter would also seek clarification on the detail of various policies

This letter would be sent from the Clerk.

6. Other matters arising. It was decided to call a special meeting of the Parish Council to agree comments on the consultation. This meeting would be held on Tuesday 31st October.

7. Date of next meeting. Thursday 12th October at which the HNPWG would agree comments on the consultation on the modifications to the MSLP to be put forward to the Parish Council on 31st October.

8. Exclusion of the Public and Press:

In view of the potential confidential nature of the business to be discussed, members RESOLVED that attendees from the public or press present, should withdraw from the meeting in the public interest.

9. Confidential minutes of the meeting on 22nd June 2017 for approval
The minutes were approved and signed by the Chairman.

10. WSCC school site – Update. None.

The meeting closed at 10.35pm

Signed Chairman-----

Dated-----