

## EWHURST AND ELLENS GREEN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

### MINUTES OF STEERING GROUP MEETING - 18<sup>th</sup> August 2014 at EYSC

#### Present:

Tim Bloomfield - Resident, Parish Councillor and former Surveyor (TB),

Allan Webber - Resident and former Senior Planning Officer (AW),

Valerie Henry - Resident, Parish Councillor and Parish Church Representative (VH) ,

Bob Arnold - Resident and School Representative (BA),

Paddy Geoghegan - Resident and Major Local Employer (PG),

David Allen - Resident and former Management Consultant (DA)

Unable to attend: David Quoroll - Major Local Employer (DQ) (DQ subsequently offered apologies he was held up in London on business. He has confirmed that he wishes to be on Steering Group and to fully contribute.)

Minutes recorded by AW

#### 1. Current Position.

Reported that Ewhurst Parish Council (EPC) had made an application to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) in late July. Currently advertised by Waverley Borough Council (WBC) for 6 weeks for comment and objections. WBC cannot refuse permission for the NP. It can only object to and alter the plan area. WBC's advice was that the application should be for all the Parish including Ellens Green as this is less likely to give rise to objections and appeals for alterations. It is assumed that we can proceed with preparing the Plan for this could be quite a long process. In addition to evidence gathering and plan making, the NP will be subject to a community referendum (which WBC undertake) and an independent examination before being made (adopted) by WBC as part of the statutory development plan. In total at least 18 months and more likely 2 years.

The NP will have to conform generally to the new WBC Local Plan (LP) including with respect to making provision for additional housing development. The strategic housing options are currently being given publicity by WBC and it is expected that the LP will be completed in late 2015 or more likely early 2016 which is the earliest the NP might also be completed and adopted.

In addition to generally conforming to the new LP, the NP must be in conformity with the NPPF and various other directives including some issued by Europe. These are the 4 or 5 "tests" which the Independent Examiner will be considering.

The NP must make provision for some housing development to be in conformity with the LP and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). A NP which does not make adequate provision will not pass the “tests”, will not be made and become a statutory plan, will not be useable by the local planning authority, will not be used in planning appeals and will be ignored by planning inspectors and the Secretary of State when reaching appeal decisions. In short it will not be any use as a plan.

The NP (its policies, proposals and any allocations) must be justified by sound, relevant evidence. It must be evidence based and not simply a collection of worthy thoughts and aspirations. Assembling the evidence, which must be published and made available when the plan is examined, is a major part of preparing a plan.

The NP should also be the local community’s plan. Engaging with the community and involving it in the plan’s preparation and assembly of evidence is vital. To properly engage with and involve the community is a major task, not least because it is unlikely that the community will have a uniform view on the issues, needs and solutions. At some point, decisions will have to be taken on compromises which the majority can support. The community referendum requires 50% of those voting to support the Plan. The more the community is involved preparing the plan the better in the long run.

## 2. Web-site for the Plan

We will need to set up a dedicated web-site for the plan. It is probably best that it is either part of the Parish Council’s web-site or accessible through it. It will have a lot of functions and will need a large capacity. It will also need to be easily accessible and readily useable by the community. Functions include (i) publicity and communication with the community and all interested parties (the application letter, WBC advert and these minutes could be some of the first things to go on), (ii) logging and storage of information and evidence i.e. all documents and the various editions of the plan, (iii) the location from which publicity material like flyers and documents can be printed by both the plan making team and individuals in the community, (iv) where the community can tender comments and information for the plan. It needs to be simple, accessible and “printable”. For practical reasons, standard size templates with minimum block colour are desirable.

TB to approach Parish Council/Village web-site co-ordinator to see if they can do the work as suggested above. If not somebody else will have to be found and paid for.

## 3. Engagement with the Community

We need to draw up plans for engaging with the community and involving the community in the work which needs to be done, not least because additional volunteers will be needed for some tasks.

Publicity/communication will be vital. It is considered that a small Communication Team should be set up. Agreed that TB should explore the possibility of establishing a team of three or four comprising himself, Jan Allen - an experienced journalist, publicist and editor, Sue Handley of Ewhurst and Ellens Green News and possibly the web-site co-ordinator. It was also suggested that at least one of the team might also attend meetings of the Steering Group.

Some engaging with the community on a potential plan for Ewhurst Village has already been undertaken by Cllr Chris Lyth's (CL) initiative. Although it preceded the decision to prepare a NP and was not what would normally be considered as properly conducted community consultation, the exercise should not be ignored. The comments received should be carefully considered and made use of as part of the process of preparing the NP. It was noted that some of the respondents offered to assist with plan preparation. It was also agreed that the response could assist in planning the "programme" for the first Village Forum (see next paragraph).

AW agreed to try to produce an analysis/summary of the response to CL's consultation exercise which can be used for the NP and forum and which can be published i.e. put onto the web-site. In accordance with established practice, a summary will not identify respondents by name. It will simply be a "head-count" summary of comments.

Discussion then turned to the matter of convening the first Village Forum to which all in the Parish would be invited. A prime objective of the Village Forum would be to start the process of engaging the community in helping to produce the plan and enlisting assistance in the work. However it was agreed that before the first Village Forum could be organised, it would be necessary to draw up a "Project Plan" with a number of separate but interlinked work streams including one for community engagement.

It was agreed that we should start to assemble a "Project Plan" at the next Steering Group meeting, when we could also decide when to have a Village Forum and what needs to be done for and said at the Forum.

Also we should prepare the first Community Briefing note, outlining where we stand, what is being done at that time and giving first publicity to the Village Forum. It was agreed that the aim would be to get this note distributed to all the Parish before the end of September. It could go into Parish News and/or the Village Society News or be a separate flyer distributed through their distribution networks.

It was agreed that TB should put together the first Briefing Note and explore the best method of getting it distributed and circulated to all the community.

It was also agreed that the aim could be for the first Village Forum to be in late November.

#### 4. Evidence base Assembly

Notwithstanding the absence of a Project Plan and the setting of the goals and objectives of the NP, some of the required evidence base can be anticipated from considering what other plans have done and knowledge of the issues and needs to be addressed in this NP. Work can start on some areas now. Additional areas of evidence base work may arise from community engagement.

- (i) Review of the policies applicable to Ewhurst in the existing WBC LP (saved policies) and likely to be in the new LP. Also review of the NPPF to see what aspects might impinge on the NP. Identify any other directives which have to be taken on board including those for environmental assessment and habitat protection.
- (ii) Review of the housing provision requirements (numbers, types etc.) which the NP will have to meet to be in conformity with the new WBC LP. “Drill down” on what exactly those requirements will be and how provision can be made up. Also keep abreast of what might be a changing situation as the new LP progresses and more evidence for that arises. It will be necessary to “write up” this evidence and to have a sound analysis with figures available for any community engagement event. Figures should be treated as “the minimum” for LP figures frequently rise close to adoption.
- (iii) Assessment of the evidence for providing mainly for local housing needs. The results of the recent housing needs survey plus other sources of evidence e.g. census information and population changes, local employment and wage rates, information on elderly needs and the desire for down-sizing, housing costs and affordability. There will also need to be consideration of a realistic interpretation of what is often simply called affordable housing. It may be necessary to redefine what is meant by meeting local housing needs and what sort and size of housing is required to meet that need. It may not simply be affordable housing or forms of subsidised or social housing. The assessment may need to include a review of the other ways and means of meeting local needs.
- (iv) Assessment of the capacity and problems of local infrastructure and services and the scope and need for changes and improvement. Two forms of infrastructure - utilities (gas, water supply, foul water and land drainage, electricity, telecom) and public services (education, health, social support and others?). Some approaches to “suppliers” can be made now. May also need to approach again once options for housing development have been identified.
- (v) Local Community and Community Assets Appraisal. Identify what makes up the valued local community, its strengths and weakness, problems and needs (groups and resources). Also the community assets which are valued and used and those which need to be added to or improved. There are now precedents for policies and designations aimed at protecting community assets. Parish Council’s can claim a proportion of Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for use for community asset projects which can be doubled with a NP in place.
- (vi) Appraisal of the Character and Quality of the Built Environment. Review of the pattern of development. Conservation needs. Design guidance needs. Constraints on infill.

- (vii) Appraisal of the Natural Environment and Nature Conservation Assets. Again problems and needs. Conservation. Constraints on change.
- (viii) Transport and Traffic Appraisal. Again problems and needs. Constraints. Improvement opportunities.
- (ix) Socio/economic profile. To support other evidence work including meeting local housing needs and “protection” of the local community.

Other evidence gathering projects may be identified when work starts on the Project Plan and some may arise from discussion at the first “Village Forum”. That may also be an opportunity to enlist volunteers to undertake some of the evidence assembly work.

In the meantime it was agreed that AW should start to prepare “Project Briefs” for the work to be done for each of the above listed areas of evidence. AW would aim to have these available for circulation before the next meeting of the Steering Group. It was agreed that volunteer assistance should be sought for undertaking some of the work.

5. It was agreed that one of the important tasks for the “Village Forum” could be to help draw up the VISION for the Plan.
6. Paying for the Plan. Preparing a NP can be a very costly task especially if it is a complex or controversial one and/or requires the use of planning consultants (e.g. when local community volunteers are not able or willing to help). TB said he would attempt to find out how much Loxwood’s NP has cost for that could be a good guide for Ewhurst. The Parish Council had made available an initial budget of £2000. Clearly more will be needed in the long run. The Locality Fund for supporting NPs is closed at present. Applications for the April 2015 fund will be sought soon.
7. A point was made about the Steering Group not being a good representative cross section of the community even though all but one of the current seven are residents. Younger age groups are not represented and there is only one female. It was agreed that this was a very good point which should be addressed without making the Steering Group unworkably large. It could be addressed by co-opting on others from time to time and/or by setting up sub-groups/working groups. It could be a matter to be considered at the “Village Forum” when volunteers to assist with the NP will be sought.
8. NEXT MEETING Provisionally scheduled for 29<sup>th</sup> September

