



WEST HOATHLY PARISH COUNCIL

representing Highbrook, Selsfield, Sharpthorne, Tyes Cross and West Hoathly

Notes of the Neighbourhood Plan Taskforce group meeting held Monday 2nd December at 8:00pm in West Hoathly Village Hall

Attendees:

Kathy Brown, Paul Brown, John Cull, John Downe, Sylvia Downe, Neil Greatorex, Dave Gunter, Andrew Perkins, Lesley Perkins, Shaun Taylor, Helen Schofield, Melvyn Willie.

This meeting was the first meeting of the taskforce group who it is hoped will complete the next phase of the Neighbourhood Plan work.

Helen Schofield gave an overview of what has happened over the last 18 months to 2 years.

Currently in the draft plan available on the website there is no wording associated with policy WHP13: Site for New Homes.

The purpose of the task force is to work together to gather views of residents and to propose some wording for such a policy that can then be re-consulted on before being sent to Mid Sussex for examination and referendum.

There is no deadline for this work but with no Mid Sussex District Plan there are potential vulnerabilities for all parishes for developers to build without reference to any up to date plans.

The purpose of this first meeting was to revisit the housing requirements in the parish and determine what would be an appropriate number of new homes over the 18 year timeframe of the Plan.

An important aspect and one that can to some degree be quantified is the need for affordable housing. There has been a long standing perceived need for affordable housing locally and over many years the parish and district councils have looked to see whether there is any way to satisfy this requirement.

Market priced homes are not affordable. Affordable homes are defined as those where prices are below market price either rented or part owned.

There are 2 ways for affordable housing to be developed.

- The draft District Plan proposes that 30% of any development is a contribution to affordable homes. For sites of 4 or more houses this would be houses which would then be run by a housing association. If a development is for less than 4 houses developers should make a financial contribution towards affordable homes elsewhere but this is unlikely to be local.
- A rural exception site is where a fully affordable site is developed on land usually adjacent to the built up area where a landowner is willing to sell it for near agricultural value. This is the route previously explored by the Parish Council and District Councils with no success

There are 40 houses within the parish which are run by a housing association. Currently there are 65 people with local connections who are on the District Housing Register looking for a house in the parish of West Hoathly. These 65 are divided

between 4 bands which range from being in very dire need of somewhere to live (band A) to those who have a home but would like a place of their own/live in the parish (band D).

The majority of people on the register are in band D but there are 16 who are in some need of a home.

Mid Sussex have agreed that, for parishes in the AONB (i.e. West Hoathly), the first letting of any new affordable housing within the parish which results from a market development allocated in a Neighbourhood Plan will be to people on the Housing Register who have a local connection. For any subsequent lets 50% of the homes will be prioritised for letting to people with local connections in perpetuity. For rural exception sites all of the dwellings are prioritised for people with a local connection.

Note: someone with local connections either has family in the parish or works within the parish.

The group recognised that to satisfy this requirement a level of market housing was also required.

The group agreed that the housing requirement within the parish was for smaller 2-3 bedroomed houses. Such houses would attract families, who would help the future sustainability of the school and pre-school, and older people who were looking to downsize and so would release larger market homes.

The group felt that there was no real need for 1 bedroomed homes of any type or for a large number of 4-5 bedroomed houses.

To satisfy a requirement for 16 affordable homes would need 50-60 new homes to be built during the lifetime of the Neighbourhood Plan perhaps with some front-loading to support the sustainability of the school and pre-school.

Whilst the impact on services and infrastructure would need to be ascertained it was felt that housing at this level could be absorbed within the parish.

The group also discussed the money available from developers to support infrastructure and the policy in the plan that any such money should primarily be used for highway projects to discourage and slow down the predominantly large volume of through traffic.

A very high level timetable was discussed. Potentially the plan would be ready for examination and referendum in the Autumn 2014. The previous time table will be reviewed and updated.

It was agreed that Mondays or Tuesdays were good days for meetings. The next meeting will hopefully be in the first couple of weeks of January.