

Minutes of the Wivelsfield Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG) Meeting
Held Monday 4 January 2016, 7.30pm, Renshaw Room, Wivelsfield Village Hall

Attending: Ian Dawson (ID, Chair), Craig Bowden (CB), Dave Wright (DW), John Wigzell (JW), Sheila Blair (SB), Michelle van Bochove (MvB), Liz Gander (LG, Clerk), and three members of the public.

1. **Apologies for Absence**

Apologies had been received from Gordon Harper and Angus Thwaites.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

None noted.

3. **To Accept Minutes of the Steering Group (SG) Meeting Held 14 December 2015**

The minutes of 14 December were accepted as a true record of the meeting.

4. **Summary of the Responses Received to the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Consultation**

The SA/SEA consultation has now closed. Twenty seven consultation responses were received, seven from Statutory Consultees and the remaining twenty from residents. Some of the residents' responses came from couples or multiple people and therefore were said to represent the views of forty nine individuals.

The Steering Group will be reviewing the responses in the coming days and will be seeking advice from James Garside at Lewes District Council (LDC).

5. **Next Steps**

To finish collating and reviewing the SA consultation responses, in conjunction with James Garside. To submit comments to the Springfield application appeal.

6. **To Recommend Wording for a Letter to be Sent to the Planning Inspectorate in Light of the Forthcoming Appeal for the Springfield Industrial Estate Application (LW/14/0790)**

The appeal hearing for the Springfield application has, contrary to what was previously expected, been confirmed for Friday 12 February. The Chairman was pleased to acknowledge that the hearing will take place locally, in the Renshaw Room of Wivelsfield Village Hall, starting at 10am.

Discussion took place about whether or not this is the appropriate time to recommend that the Parish Council removes its objection to the Springfield application. On the one hand, as the key preferred site within the Neighbourhood Plan, the Parish Council needs to support the application, (and James Garside from LDC is likewise aware of the need for the LPA to be consistent between NPs and planning applications) on the other, it is wary of removing its objection on the grounds of prematurity before the Neighbourhood Plan is known to have reached Regulation 16 stage and therefore gained 'weight' in the eyes of the planning system.

JW had received confirmation from a Planning Minister that the Local Planning Authority (in this case LDC) should take a proactive and positive approach to neighbourhood plans and work in collaboration with the qualifying authority (the Parish Council) to resolve any issues so that the draft plan has the greatest chance of success. JW therefore felt that if LDC were following this guidance, officers would remove their objection to the planning application in order to support the progress of the Neighbourhood Plan. His concern however was what would happen if the NP were to be submitted before the appeal hearing (in order to get to Regulation 16 stage), but the appeal was then rejected. Would the Neighbourhood Plan be able to be successful if its key preferred site had been refused at both application and appeal stages? DW to ask GH to query this with James Garside, in order to help inform the decision as to when the Plan should be resubmitted to LDC, (should it prove ready for submission prior to the appeal, following consideration of the SA consultation responses).

DW/GH

JS reminded SG members that he believed it had, within the NP, reserved the right to go back down the list of sites if for any reason the preferred sites were unavailable. This to be double checked.

LG/GH

With respect to the LPA's responsibility to nurture NPs to a successful conclusion and the consequent need for consistency between the LPA's response to a NP and planning applications in the NP area, JS cautioned that when he and JW attended a meeting with Catherine Jack of LDC several months ago, she had said that the two issues (NPs and planning apps) are very separate.

JS also however reminded members that, when the Springfield application was first submitted, both the Core Strategy and Neighbourhood Plan were behind where they are now. He believed that, should the appeal be upheld, the Parish Council should seek a statement from the Appeal Inspector, as Ringmer PC did, to the effect that the site will be allocated within the NP, and should not be taken as windfall.

In addition to debating whether to recommend that the Council removes its objection to the Springfield application, the Steering Group felt that there are strong grounds to argue against LDC's three stated grounds for objection. Contrary to LDC's assertion that the site is 'in a poor location in relation to access to services and facilities and will result in a development that is visually intrusive, detached and unrelated to the existing built form of Wivelsfield', the SG pointed out that it is better located for a regular bus service than much of the village, that it will be immediately behind existing housing, therefore neither visually intrusive or detached from existing dwellings and that it is just as conveniently located to the village amenities of the village hall and green as properties at the other end of the village.

In response to LDC's assertion that 'the site lies outside the Planning Boundary of Wivelsfield', the SG pointed out that there is nowhere within the existing planning boundary that would accommodate additional housing, so in order to accommodate LDC's allocation for the village of at least thirty dwellings, the SG had no choice but to look outside the planning boundary. The existing planning boundary does not even include many long-established properties in the village. However, as a part of the NP process, the SG was advised at an early stage that it was at liberty to move the planning boundary, in order to incorporate preferred sites. This is what has been proposed within the Plan.

Finally, the SG had been led to believe that LDC's final objection has been nullified by the preparation of a draft Section 106 Agreement.

Since comments were required to be with the Planning Inspectorate by the day after the meeting and the SG felt it important to be seen to be consistent by supporting the NP's key preferred site, the SG agreed unanimously to recommend that the Parish Council send the letter that the Clerk had drafted, removing its objection on the grounds of prematurity and arguing against LDC's objections to the Springfield plans.

The SG agreed that it would be vital to have a Parish Council presence at the appeal hearing. ID and JS both intend to be there and, as the Councillor with most experience of planning appeals, the Chairman asked JS to lead the Parish Council's input. JW also offered to attend to speak in favour of the

appeal.

JS/ID/JW

7. Date of Next Meeting

A Working Group meeting will be held on Thursday 14 January.

A Steering Group and Extra-Ordinary Parish Council meeting will subsequently take place on the following Monday, 18 January.

The meeting closed at 7.58pm.