

Wivelsfield Neighbourhood Plan

Notes of the

Landowner Presentation Evening

Held Thursday 4 September 2014, Wivelsfield Primary School

Welcome & Introduction

Parish Council Chairman Jason Stoner welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the landowners/representatives for attending. Without them having submitted sites we would not be in a position to select sites for the Neighbourhood Plan (NP).

He went on to introduce the members of the Steering & Focus Group present, (Rosemary Fair, Richard Jephcott, Gordon Harper, Dave Wright, Dionne Franks, John Wigzell, Sheila Blair, Helen Nichols, Anne King and Clerk, Liz Gander. Nick Dutt and Angus Thwaites arrived during the meeting).

The Chairman then outlined the work that has been done on the NP so far, before preparing to hand over to the first speaker. All landowners within Wivelsfield Green had been invited to attend the meeting, with the exception of Gleasons, whose aspirations for the land south of North Common Road are already known following the submission of two planning applications. The evening's running order had been decided simply by the distance each presenter had to travel.

Springfield Industrial Estate – Anthony Padfield

Mr Padfield provided information packs and separate A3 plans to the Steering Group. The pack provided a full report, with Mr Padfield's presentation focussing on the specific questions posed within the Council's letter of invitation.

- Location – site of an old nursery off the Ditchling Road.
- Size of Site – 3.36 hectares/7 acres – only looking to develop approx 1.8 hectares (half the site), as there is a water treatment plant on the western edge which affects where dwellings can be located.
- No. Of Dwellings – currently working to 26, but precise boundary on western edge not yet set. Number may rise to 30.
- Access – onto Ditchling Road. Being designed to be better than would meet ESCC standards. Existing access was granted as industrial access in 1974 and met standards of the time, but would be upgraded.
- Types of Property – haven't yet decided upon mix. Plan as provided is for illustrative purposes only. If the site requires a significant number of affordable homes, the overall number of properties will go up.
- Off Road Parking – would comply with ESCC design standards – one garage with one additional off-road space per property. However the number of spaces would depend upon the number of bedrooms.
- Affordable Housing – requirements of 40% affordable housing would be complied with. Should site come forward as preferred site, Mr Padfield would wish to discuss with the SG the types of property needed in the village.
- Environmental Impact – an initial report has indicated there are no 'show-stoppers', but they are doing a detailed ecological study. The site has not been used for over 20 years so there is 'a lot going on'.
- Flooding – the Environment Agency has indicated that flooding would not be a problem on the site. In the most catastrophic circumstances it is thought that the SW corner could flood to a width of 16 feet.
- Utilities – all services are on site or close by (gas on edge of Ditchling Road).

- Additional Benefits – Mr Padfield had written to the Parish Council previously suggesting community benefits that could be offered should this scheme progress. These offers still stood, but Mr Padfield stressed that he felt the key benefit was using a brownfield site that had stood empty for considerable time. The Chairman clarified that the SG has consciously not engaged with any developer until this point. He apologised to those landowners/developers (such as Mr Padfield) who had sought to liaise with the SG previously, recognising the frustration involved, but thanked them for their patience.

Questions:

- Q: Are agreements in place with the householders affected?
A: New Lifestyle Developments own the old Springfield Industrial Estate and the property Brookfields which would need to be demolished to allow for improved access. The owner of Hay Cottage is fully aware of proposals and is entering into an option agreement to sell off some of her land.
- Q: Would they be prepared to provide additional parking spaces since the number of cars per head of population in Wivelsfield is a great deal higher than average?
A: Yes. The size of site allows for a residential area with a fair degree of landscaping and there would be plenty of space for additional car parking, though they would want it next to the relevant property.
- Q: An area of open space/play area is shown on the western side of the scheme. What guarantees that this will be preserved?
A: There is a gap to be left between the residential area and water treatment plant upon which people are still tipping. This would need to be cleaned up and landscaped. It had been noted that in the State of the Parish Report only 45% of people had said they wanted more open space. They would need to discuss what sort of space we are looking for and how it would be maintained.
- Q: Is Lewes District Council more or less stringent than Southern Water with respect to the gap left between the water treatment plant and new housing?
A: LDC's environmental body have already reviewed the proposals and agreed to the line as drawn on the map. Mr Padfield would be most surprised if they objected.
- Q: Have all neighbouring property owners been spoken to?
A: No, but if the SG were to recommend approval of the site, Mr Padfield would go and knock on every door.

Land East of the B2112 – Julian Walker

Mr Walker thanked the SG for running a 'very professional evening' and said that it was 'very refreshing'. He works for Bovis Homes and is representing Mr Baldock in respect of land off the B2112 (SHLAA site 14WV). They are only at a very very early stage with this site, (described as 'embryonic'), so don't have all the details provided by the previous speaker and no layout as yet.

- Site Location – being on the B2112, the site is comparatively close to Wivelsfield station. Traffic generated by the site would not have to travel through Wivelsfield Green to reach neighbouring towns, so it is therefore more sustainable.
- Size of site – 15 hectares
- Access – there is provision for access along Blackmores, but it is likely that primary access would be off the B2112. A highways consultant has had a brief look and believes this could be achieved quite safely.
- Number of Dwellings – potential capacity as per the SHLAA (100 dwellings) is being used as a starting point.
- Types of Property – Bovis Homes are predominantly a house builder (not flats). Would look to see what was needed in the local area to determine mix.
- Off Road Parking – would look to meet at least the minimum standards of off-road parking.

- Environmental Impact – have had a quick walk over the site – felt that whilst there is potential to find things, they can't see any issues.
- Utility Services – don't know, but assume all ok.
- Additional Benefits – could offer a bus layby, bus stop and shelter. By developing a slightly larger site they might be able to give justification to the bus company for running a better service.
- Affordable Housing – would conform with LDC policy.
- Landscape Capacity Study – has shown that the site could be acceptable in landscape terms. Mr Walker acknowledged that people may feel that we do not need a bigger site, but it can bring benefits eg infrastructure contributions, that cannot be ignored.

Questions:

- Q: Given that the SHLAA gives a site capacity of 100 dwellings, would you be looking at building that kind of number?
A: Yes, they would be looking at the upper end of the number. They tend not to look at sites of below 40. 100 would be the starting point but they would have to look at the constraints on the site.
- Q: Would you be open to a smaller site?
A: Not looking to get into a battle over numbers, however 30 would be a struggle and 30 in the SHLAA is the *minimum* to be delivered. Most of Julian's experience is with Core Strategies, not Neighbourhood Plans, however he is aware that you need to provide choice within a NP, so can't just provide 30.
- Q: Are you saying that 40 is the minimum number to be viable?
A: Yes
- Q: ESCC has said that the maximum number of extra properties that Wivelsfield can take (because of the traffic impact on Ditchling) is 80.
A: Bovis Homes had asked a Highways consultant to look at this issue. In order to be sure they would need to do a number plate recognition survey to determine how many cars were travelling from Wivelsfield to Ditchling. However, in the consultant's opinion, there is very little need to drive that way so he would expect numbers to be low, but it is something that could be investigated.
- Q: What about traffic travelling down Janes Lane. Would they do a study that way?
A: As part of a planning application they would have to do a full transport study. Highways issues are normally quantifiable matters and they would need to do full studies.
- Q: You mentioned you would conform to requirements on affordable housing but that you would also look to suit local needs. Is there a difference?
A: By local needs, it's a case of is there a need for four bed affordable housing or two bed affordable housing.
- Q: You said that 40 was the threshold for viability for you, whereas the previous speaker said that 26 units would be viable for him.
A: Yes, that's the case. Bovis Homes generally look at sites of that size or larger.
- Q: You mentioned access via Blackmores?
A: Yes, the site allows for that, but he thinks that they wouldn't want a site of that scale emptying on to Blackmores.
- Q: Would you be looking to knock down number 1 Blackmores to allow for access?
A: No, it would be the barn that went.
- Q: In the May 2014 amendments to the SHLAA, it is believed that the site was extended to the southern boundary. Is the rest of the land owned by the same landowner?
A: Don't know. Unaware of this. Of the two sites marked on the SHLAA map, 14W is the one that they are looking at. 7WV is the area underneath shown in black dots. Julian has seen this site to the south. It is a very different kettle of fish, long grass etc with a stream along the southern boundary. By contrast 14WV has short grass and is not very ecologically rich.

Coldharbour Farm – David Maher (A S Planning) & Richard Kendal (Countryside Properties)

Mr Kendal explained that they have come to this relatively recently as Mr Brook has previously been promoting the site himself. They are currently in the process of coming up with an option agreement, but wanted to come along to explain what they are about. They are a house builder (as opposed to building flats) and build around 1000 homes across the south east per year. The closest scheme they currently have is in Horsham. They place great emphasis on design and have won more design awards than other house builders. The type of design would have to be appropriate to the area (if they were to get to that stage with this site) and they would be keen to work with us to draw up plans.

- Location of Site – agricultural land fronting onto South Road, woodland to rear, at heart of the village. Sits just to the south of built development in the Parish. Has a more pronounced slope on the field at the eastern end.
- No. Of Dwellings – they would be looking at a minimum of 30 net additional units, but the site has a capacity greater than 30. For the purposes of illustration, they have shown a site with 30, but he doesn't think that the 64 mentioned in the SHLAA is far off. Feels that they would be happy doing a scheme of 30. However one of the issues with accommodating a smaller number on a larger site is how you end up with a scheme that works well in a larger site. They would work with us to see how public open space can be used to create a boundary with the site (subject to the landowner's agreement). Thinks 64 is a maximum figure, but recognises our 'need' for 30.
- Access – believes access would be achievable onto South Road, but question of whether there is capacity in the wider road network would need to be looked at.
- Drainage – possible need for upgrade works, but can't see a problem. Required to ensure there is no greater surface water run off than when the land was agricultural and as such would have to employ new sustainable drainage techniques. Swales and attenuation ponds would be needed.
- Utilities – don't see a problem.
- Affordable Housing – would have to comply with the 40% requirement. Would explore further with us the mix of properties needed. They are finding that often it is smaller accommodation that is needed now because of the so-called 'bedroom tax'.
- Parking Spaces – would explore with us. The plan shown is purely illustrative.
- Ecology – no showstoppers. Agricultural land. No strong ecological value. Woodland edge is most likely location for wildlife, including bats. For bats would give a buffer, low level lighting etc, but don't expect to find anything else.

Questions:

- Q: When the existing affordable housing site or the corner was proposed it was on the understanding that it was an exception site and that LDC undertook to agree that there would be no further development on those fields.
A: Weren't aware of that – will follow up.
- Q: Re: question of access, concerned that there is an access that runs up the back of Shepherds Close and onto Hundred Acre Lane.
A: Not suggesting that this would be for vehicular access, but it might provide pedestrian access.
- Q: Would you consider some cycling access?
A: Yes
- Q: The field slopes up a hill quite significantly. The development would have quite a visual impact.
A: They would like to explore this further with landscape work and whether the use of open space can keep more of the western edge open. If the SG said 30, they would try to meet this requirement and accommodate the landscaping issues.

- Q: If you were granted 30, do you feel the landowner would be prepared to issue a letter saying that there would be no further building on the land in perpetuity?
A: Couldn't say that, but would in this case look at creating public open space and transferring it to the district council to preserve.
- Q: Have you left buffers before?
A: Don't believe that it is ancient woodland, but would leave an area that would provide a buffer between the trees and houses. Natural England's standard advice is for a 15m buffer, but they haven't looked into whether LDC's requirement varies. A buffer does however raise issues re: security by design.

Land off Slugwash Lane - Sam Watling

Mr Watling explained that he hasn't come across this experience before, so wouldn't have the level of information that some of the preceding speakers had. The site has been owned by Mr Watling's family since 1990. He is a house builder and would ideally look to develop the site for himself and his family. Mr Watling believes that development of this site would not be encroaching on green field development as he understands that the land previously housed a nursery and had buildings on it.

- Location – north west of the properties at the bottom of Slugwash Lane, some 50m back from Slugwash Lane south. Just outside of the immediate planning boundary, but is the first site outside the existing line of dwellings.
- Access – by a 50m long, 4.5m wide, private drive, (wide enough to allow two cars to pass). The existing boundaries around site would remain – wouldn't be cutting down trees etc.
- Size of site – 0.36 hectares (60m x 60m)
- No. of dwellings – four. High quality homes, not high quantity.
- Types of Dwelling - Two x five bed and two x four bed dwellings. Indicative layout provided but would look to work with us.
- Environmental impact - Would aim to design properties in keeping with surrounding area and which would enhance what is currently there.
- Off Road Parking - each house would have a double garage and room for two additional cars.
- Utilities – all properties would have mains utilities. Would be aiming for level 5 sustainability rating, supplying heating and light from energy efficient means, using rainwater harvesting etc.

Questions

- Q: Is the drive purely for your use?
A: The land either side has access rights.
- Q: Four and five bedroom properties are going to have more than two cars, would there be provision for more parking spaces?
A: Reiterated that each house will have a double garage plus two additional parking spaces, however the landscaping is not set in stone so there may be scope for more.
- Q: You mentioned a family connection?
A: If he was developing the site and was lucky enough to get planning permission, Mr Watling would want to live there himself. He would also hope to accommodate his sister and her young family, his Mum and his Nan and Grandad.
- Q: Understand there is a knotweed issue in Slugwash Lane?
A: It is being treated and they try to keep on top of it.
- Q: It is not true that all services would be available. The site hasn't got gas and surrounding houses have a septic tank, not mains sewerage.
A: The heating would be provided by energy efficient means, so the only real gain by having gas would be a gas hob. A septic tank is something they would have to look at.
- Q: Would you be building any element of affordable housing?
A: Believe the threshold is five dwellings, however if it was a requirement he would look at it.

Slugwash Lane – Mr & Mrs Stimpson

The Chairman noted a written submission from Mr & Mrs Stimpson who were unable to attend the evening. He proceeded to read out the content of Mr & Mrs Simpson's letter for information.

- Location: Situated going north along Slugwash Lane, directly following the existing development of properties.
- Size: two plots of approximately 50 x 100 feet and another of approximately twice that size.
- Access: all plots have direct frontage to Slugwash Lane and access would be directly from the road onto the property.
- No. of Dwellings: Up to ten.
- Types of Dwelling: Four semi-detached properties and approximately six in a terrace. Alternatively, approx. eight semi-detached properties or four large detached ones.
- Off Road Parking – each property could have garaging and certainly off road parking.
- Environmental impact – it is considered that as the properties would be a continuation of the existing properties in Slugwash Lane, there would be little environmental impact.
- Utility Services – as the proposed properties are directly adjacent to existing properties, provision of water, sewerage and power is not considered to be a problem.
- Additional Benefits – It is considered that the land, with its road frontage to Slugwash Lane and its location within an area of similar properties, could make a useful addition to the housing stock in the area.

To conclude the meeting the Chairman invited general questions, but none were raised. He thanked everyone for attending and said that it was useful to have the extra information provided. He also said the Council was hoping to get on and pick sites quite quickly.

The meeting closed at 8.20pm