



# Steying Wiston, Ashurst and Bramber (SWAB)

## Neighbourhood Plan

### Vision Paper

January 2015

#### Introduction

The four parishes of Steying, Wiston, Ashurst and Bramber (SWAB) have decided to prepare a joint Neighbourhood Plan (SWABNP). Although they each have distinct identities and different characteristics, the four parishes share a physical context, setting and amenities such that their futures are linked and interdependent. The Neighbourhood Plan will provide the opportunity to safeguard these shared assets in order to ensure a positive and sustainable future.

The purpose of this paper is to capture the outcome of the SWABNP Visioning Workshop held with the Steering Group on 22nd October 2014, and to raise issues for the consideration of the Steering Group. These issues relate to:

- The vision, key objectives and land use planning policy scope of the SWABNP
- Further community engagement activities and evidence analysis
- The project plan through to the submission of the SWABNP

The issues raised reflect not just the outcome of the workshop but also provide initial insights into the national and local planning policy context of the SWABNP. Specifically, the SWABNP must meet a series of ‘basic conditions’ relating to its general conformity with that policy context. The examination of the SWABNP in due course will focus on how those conditions have been met, before it goes to referendum.

The context indicates very clear environmental – natural, heritage and sustainability - parameters that should be used to guide growth and change within the four parishes and prevent isolated growth.

The Draft SWABNP (the Draft Plan) will provide an outline of the policy context and the environmental parameters as a justification for its emerging policies. It will also be shaped by the recommended engagement activities set out below and by the anticipated adoption of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF).

Finally, the paper avoids a discussion at this stage about the location and number of houses to be planned for in the SWABNP. It is estimated that the vision outlined below could provide a number of options for the delivery of an appropriate number of new homes over the plan period, but this will be dependent on there being an identified and agreed local need, and there being sites that are available and in acceptable locations. There has been no review of those capacities or of potential sites. This work will be done as part of the Draft Plan preparation.

## **Vision**

The vision for the Neighbourhood Plan recognises the role that Steyning plays as the local hub and provider of services for the three other parishes, whilst in turn the three parishes of Wiston, Ashurst and Bramber provide a setting for Steyning along with access to the countryside, heritage, recreational and leisure opportunities. The vision for the four parishes in 2031 is:

*“The four parishes will have retained their own distinctive characters with the quality of the landscape spaces between them continuing to define their shared identity.*

*Steyning’s role as a retail centre to serve the other villages will have been reinforced, and the range and diversity of the outlets and shopping facilities will have grown to meet the needs of the four parishes without compromising the character of the High Street, heritage, the conservation areas and listed buildings.*

*Community facilities will have expanded and become more varied to meet the changing needs of all groups and age ranges, with all four parishes sharing their facilities and taking a greater role in the ownership and management of them along with their other open spaces and natural assets.*

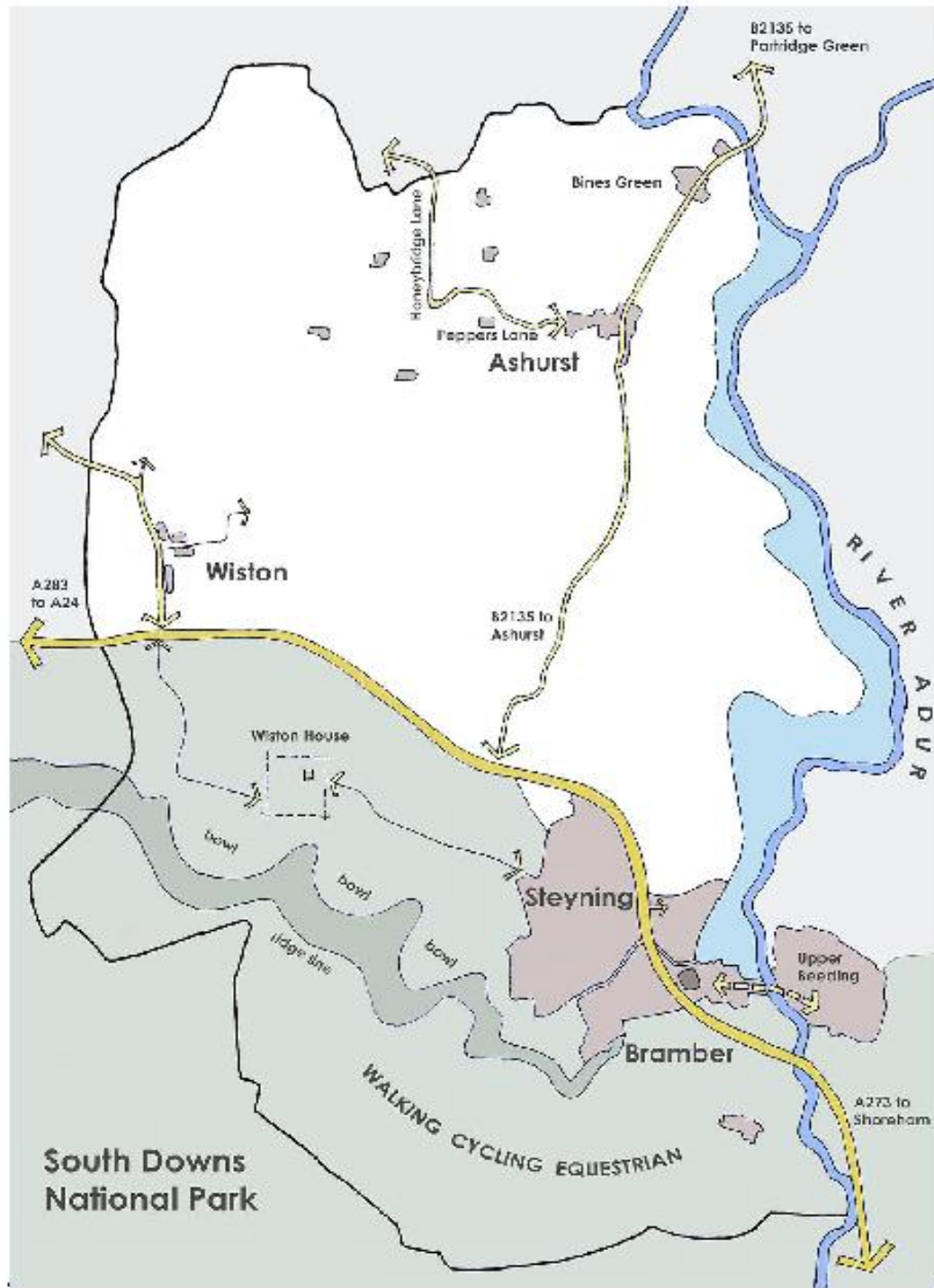
*The Neighbourhood Plan will have built on the strong, positive and supportive working relationships with the schools, the Steyning Health Trust and local businesses and retailers, which will have all continued to contribute to the vitality of the area and make a greater range of facilities available to the parishes.*

*The four parishes will have continued to support local employment, businesses and facilitated new employment opportunities. The plan will look to support the significant farming community present in the four parishes.*

*Tourism will have grown, making a positive contribution to the local economy and employment. This will be supported by a joint initiative with the South Downs National Park Authority to protect the shared setting and make improvements to connectivity, green infrastructure and heritage assets.*

*Accessibility to and connectivity between the existing network of footpaths, bridleways, public open spaces and other outdoor recreational and leisure assets will have been improved across the four parishes leading to benefits for pedestrians, horse-riders and cyclists.*

*There will have been a modest growth in housing numbers across the four parishes through the provision of new homes, purpose designed to meet local needs including elderly downsizers, and to provide a balance of dwelling types to serve the community over the long term. These new homes will have been provided in small clusters on sites that do not detract from the character and setting of the parishes.”*



*Vision Diagram as prepared by RCOH – the SWAB neighbourhood plan area and settlement structure*

## Policy Context

The development plan of which the SWABNP needs to be in conformity with is currently the saved policies of the 2007 Horsham District Local Plan (HDLP). However as the emerging Horsham District Planning Framework Submission Document has been submitted for examination and is expected to be adopted prior to the adoption of the SWABNP, the SWABNP will look to conform with this document.

The HDPF Policy 3 Settlement Hierarchy identifies Steyning/Bramber (as one settlement) as a larger village “*with a good range of services and facilities as well as some access to public transport – capable of sustaining some expansion, infilling and redevelopment*”. The other villages and hamlets in Ashurst and Wiston have been identified as Unclassified Settlements and therefore are only expected to provide for affordable housing that meets a local need on exception sites and infill developments over the plan period. Policy 14 establishes the proposed housing provision for the District from 2011 to 2031. It requires that at least 1,500 homes are provided through neighbourhood plans, to be allocated in accordance with the settlement boundary. Separately, a number of 750 homes are expected to come forward through ‘windfall’ sites. Steyning and Bramber are the only settlements in the SWABNP Area that have a settlement boundary.

Although the district’s settlement hierarchy suggests that some development would be appropriate in Steyning/Bramber in the plan period, further research shows that the district has not identified any Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) sites in the SWABNP Area. This suggests that the district is not relying on housing growth in this area to meet its housing supply requirements for the plan period. This may be due to the physical constraints in the area surrounding the larger settlement of Steyning and Bramber, such as the South Downs National Park immediately to the west and south, the flood risk to the north and east and the risk of coalescence with Upper Beeding to the east.

## Key findings of the vision workshop

The Neighbourhood Plan Area includes four parishes, each different in terms of their size, character, physical layout, setting and facilities. These are:

### 1. Steyning:

Steyning is the largest settlement in the Neighbourhood Plan with a population of 6,269 and 2,782 dwellings. It has expanded around the High Street which has a wide range of shops and services forming the focus to the village and the surrounding settlements, and is a major part of Steyning’s identity.

The A283 Steyning by-pass largely defines the northern extent of the settlement but also separates it from the eastern part, the area around Roman Road, with only one connection, Kings Barn Lane between the two.

Steyning has a number of organisations and amenities that contribute to its character and reinforce its role as a local centre. These include; the primary school, the comprehensive secondary school (known as Steyning Grammar school), a leisure centre including an indoor swimming pool, a community centre and hall, a library, a recreation ground and allotments and numerous clubs and societies, catering for all interests.

The western and southern boundaries of the parish are shared with the SDNP which sits tight to the settlement boundary. Development to the north of the A283 is rural in character with farmsteads, small groups of standalone dwellings and employment areas, including the Chanctonfold Estate business park along the B2135 Horsham Road in landscape that includes woodlands and water bodies. The eastern edge of the parish is less developed and characterised by the historic land management pattern of drainage channels and water bodies of the low lying land alongside the River Adur.

## **2. Bramber:**

Bramber is a smaller parish of around 350 dwellings that adjoins the south eastern settlement edge of Steyning. Most of the parish is within the SDNP and is relatively undeveloped. Despite its size it has a richness of heritage and landscape assets and six different character areas: The Street, Castle, Castle Lane, Clays Hill, Maudlyn and Annington & Botolphs.

The Street is the historic centre with Bramber Castle which is maintained by English Heritage, a Norman Church and St. Mary's House as tourist attractions, supported by the two hotels, restaurants and public car park in that area. The Castle Lane area feels like a part of Steyning and is separated from The Street by Bramber Castle, although they share this as a local landmark and open green space, along with the south eastern edge of Steyning.

Annington & Botolphs sit within the SDNP. This is essentially a farming community comprising a mix of pastoral and arable farming and stabling, but also includes a business park and a number of large private houses, together with a fine Saxon Church, St Botolph's, a popular tourist attraction. The southern part of the parish is very popular with walkers, equestrians and cyclists with a number of footpaths and bridleways and access to the Downs Link, South Downs Way and Monarch's Link.

Although areas of Bramber have a close physical relationship to Steyning and Upper Beeding, Bramber retains a strong and separate sense of identity. Upper Beeding and Bramber Parish Councils work closely together and share a village hall which is located in Upper Beeding, although Bramber has ambitions for its own village hall along with a recreation ground and the other community facilities it lacks. Bramber has a strong volunteer group, which among other things, monitors the drainage and ditches around Bramber working closely with the Environment Agency to alert them to potential maintenance/flooding issues, organises and maintains the renowned hanging baskets in the Street and organises the salting of pavements during periods of adverse weather. As a parish, Bramber positively encourages walking, cycling and horseriding.

### **3. Ashurst:**

The rural parish of Ashurst sits to the north of Steyning, connected by the B2135 Horsham Road, and sharing its western boundary with Wiston. It is a parish of around 115 dwellings with four different character areas. The main settlement is the village of Ashurst where there is a primary school, a recreation ground, a 12<sup>th</sup> century church, a popular country pub and a new village hall. It is surrounded by farmland on all sides.

To the north, Bines Green is a looser collection of standalone houses, a common and farmsteads either side of the B2135. The remaining two areas are lower density and more isolated collections of standalone houses, farmsteads and equestrian units along Peppers Lane and Honeybridge Lane which run west from Ashurst and the B2135, and then the Spithandle Lane area which is situated south of Ashurst, again running west. There are more farms to the east and the south of the village

Although the parish sits outside the SDNP, there are frequent views of the South Downs which form a backdrop to the parish which in turn forms part of the setting for the SDNP. The parish has a rich network of landscape and ecological assets including streams, water-bodies, copses and woodlands. It has many well used footpaths and bridleways through its unspoilt countryside.

There are no shopping or health facilities in Ashurst, so residents rely on Steyning for these and for the many other facilities to be found there.

Although Ashurst is only sparsely populated, it has a good community spirit, holding its annual dog show, flower show and fireworks. The village pantomime is put on every other year and there is an active local WI. During the summer, Ashurst Cricket Club plays on the Recreation Ground, and in the winter there is week-end football.

While Ashurst is keen to preserve its distinctive rural characteristics, it is conscious of its reliance on Steyning.

### **4. Wiston:**

Wiston is the most sparsely populated of the parishes within the Neighbourhood Plan Area with 219 residents in 96 households. Approximately one third of the parish is within the SDNP and the Wiston estate owns and manages large areas of the parish. It has considerable influence, playing a major role in the parish with 80% of residents renting property from the estate.

The Wiston estate has also had a significant influence on the changing demographics of the village with properties that traditionally housed estate workers being put onto the open rental market with the population moving increasingly to a younger, family oriented population.

The village is defined by two routes; the A283 and Water Lane/Hole Street, running east-west, which is used as a “rat-run” between the A24 and the A283. There are only footways along part of the roads making pedestrian access for villagers precarious. Recreational walkers are well catered for, but cyclists and horse riders are not, with no option but to use the main A283 to get to Steyning. Wiston has a strong affiliation with Steyning which is considered to be the main local hub for health, education, shopping and community services.

There are a number of small businesses in Wiston including 6 farms, 2 smallholdings, a firewood business, a campsite and Wilton Park which uses Wiston House as a conference centre and global forum for strategic discussion which is run by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

Despite its size, the parish does have a social club with 6-8 events a year and facilities including a recreation and cricket field which is owned by the estate. The rugby and cricket teams are not affiliated to Wiston but just use the estate’s pitches.

There is an 11<sup>th</sup> Century church, Buncton Chapel, which holds a monthly service, and a farm shop which includes a tearoom (which used to double up as a post office). These are popular tourist attractions. There is no pub. Wiston also has a village hall, but it is poorly located with bad access and the facilities are in need of refurbishment. There is a feeling that Wiston lacks a clearly defined community focus.

Wiston’s ambitions for the Neighbourhood Plan is that it helps it define and reinforce its community focus and sense of identity, and helps it improve connections for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians and makes the schools and other community facilities more accessible

## **Summary**

There has been a relatively slow rate of growth and change across all four parishes with little pressure for additional housing given a combination of the scale of the settlements, the level of supporting facilities available to some of them and the sensitivity of their setting in terms of landscape, heritage and other designations. However, like many rural communities, the parishes all have limitations in their mix and types of housing, in particular there are few properties suitable for the needs of an ageing population or to meet local affordable needs.

All the parishes, bar Bramber, have undertaken housing needs surveys and are aware of these limitations and of the unmet housing needs that exist. (Bramber will be undertaking a Housing Needs Survey during the Plan Process.) Despite the modest nature of the needs identified in Ashurst and Wiston, there remains a commitment to addressing the issue through the provision of a small scheme to meet these needs. The same commitment applies in Steyning, where the surveys undertaken highlighted a more substantial need for both affordable housing and small units of market housing for older people to downsize to.

Policy 14 of the emerging Horsham District Planning Framework sets a target of 1,500 dwellings to be allocated in the district through neighbourhood plans over the plan period 2011-2031, and a number of 750 dwellings to come forward through windfall sites. However the policy does not specify how this number will be apportioned across the settlement hierarchy and, as previously mentioned, the background evidence for informing the HDPF has not suggested any suitable land for development in any of the parishes of the SWABNP.

Despite their differences, all four parishes have a common interest in the character and quality of their shared setting, and in the role of Steyning as a local centre and provider of services, shops and amenities

Each parish has its own particular ambitions, needs and assets which may be difficult to realise, provide for and protect if they were to be addressed through four separate individual neighbourhood plans.

This joint Neighbourhood Plan provides the opportunity to protect common interests and to plan for the joint needs of all four parishes with Steyning providing a comprehensive range of facilities that will have the flexibility to meet the challenges of change over the longer term.

To achieve this it will be necessary to include and work with a number of other organisations during the development of the Neighbourhood Plan. These will include the adjoining parish of Upper Beeding, the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) and the Wiston Estate.

The Vision Diagram on Page 3 sets out a simplified structure of the Neighbourhood Plan Area and illustrates the current spatial layout. In broad terms it shows where the environmental constraints are, what the road network looks like and other interesting connections the community might use, all of which should be considered in preparing the SWABNP.

Development land in Bramber is thought to be very small but this will not preclude discussions with residents during the Plan to determine if there are any potential sites available

Any development in Ashurst, to meet its identified needs, would have to be small-scale and sensitive to the context and controlled by a carefully considered set of design parameters.

Similarly, Wiston may have scope for some small scale, sensitive development around its core, but given its very limited facilities, any additional residential development should be considered against what it could deliver to meet the shortfall in community facilities including funding for improvements in connectivity.

The remainder of the Neighbourhood Plan Area should be considered as countryside with restrictions placed on any additional development, limiting it to exception sites.



## **Key Objectives**

In addition to providing a general development plan for the parishes, this vision translates into a framework of key objectives for the SWABNP to identify ways in which it can:

1. Protect the character, qualities and identity of the shared landscape setting by effectively managing the impact of any future growth and maintaining the spatial and qualitative relationships between the parishes.
2. Safeguard the rich heritage of the four parishes, including their listed buildings, conservation areas and Steyning's unique High Street.
3. Secure the role of Steyning as a local hub and coordinate its functions with neighbouring parishes via their neighbourhood plans to achieve a comprehensive, balanced and complementary mix of community facilities, employment, education and tourism opportunities.
4. Encourage and support tourism, the local retail and business community, paying particular attention to the agricultural community present in all four parishes.
5. Plan for some additional housing to meet local needs, changing demographics and to provide a more balanced housing mix, in particular for local affordability and elderly downsizers.
6. Support initiatives to deliver local needs housing and community facilities which are community led and enable community ownership and management of assets.
7. Identify sites for the delivery of the SWABNP that are sympathetic to the scale, topography and character of the parishes that will not have a detrimental impact on either the character of the parishes or their shared setting.
8. Integrate and improve the existing network of rural lanes, bridleways, footpaths and cycle paths, to improve safe pedestrian, equestrian and cycling routes and make facilities more accessible across all four parishes for residents and visitors.
9. Work with the SDNPA and Wiston Estate to plan for increased public accessibility and enjoyment of the park as a recreation, leisure and tourist amenity, and to develop local initiatives aimed at promoting a better understanding of the natural environment, local heritage and conservation through education and training.
10. Identify local green spaces, safeguard and improve their biodiversity and integrate them with the pedestrian, bridleway and cycle networks.

## **Project Plan: Key Milestones**

This is an indicative project plan with the key milestones outlined. A more detailed project plan will be agreed with the Steering Group.

### Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

- Request by NPSG for a formal SEA screening opinion to be sent to Horsham District asap (likely to determine that SEA is required as SWABNP will come forward prior to the Local Plan and will allocate land for development)
- Prepare and complete consultation on an SEA Scoping Report. Prepare and consult on Draft SEA. Report (as below)
- Prepare Final SEA Report for submission (as below)

### Call for Sites

- Alongside the Call for Sites the SG should contact owners of sites of interest to the SWABNP
- Invite developers and landowners to pitch their ideas at an open event and give the community a chance to give feedback. This will help raise the awareness of the Neighbourhood Plan and get the community's views on housing sites.
- The preferred sites to be agreed.

### Draft Plan

- All engagement activities to be completed
- RCOH to prepare draft plan for Steering Group consideration
- Informal consultations on Draft Plan
- Steering Group meeting to agree any changes for Pre Submission Plan

### Pre Submission Plan

- RCOH prepares draft Pre Submission Plan and Draft SEA Report (subject to agreement) for Steering Group consideration then Parish Council approval for public consultation (Reg. 14)
- Statutory six week public consultation period (Reg.14) finishes
- Analysis of representations and Steering Group approval to modifications

### Submission Plan

- RCOH prepares final Plan and SEA reports and Basic Conditions Statement for submission plan to Horsham District (depending on the changes required)
- PCs/AirS prepares Consultation Statement for submission at the same time