

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CRANBROOK & SISSINGHURST
NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN STEERING GROUP HELD ON 26th
MARCH 2018.

PRESENT: Cllr. Warne (N.W - in the Chair), Cllrs. Fletcher (K.F) & Smith (J.S), Annie Hatcher (A.HA), Lee Hatcher (L.H), Liz Daley (L.D), Jeremy Boxall (J.B), Matthew Warne (M.W) & Tally Wade (T.W)

Attendees: June Bell in part (J.BE), Cllr. Fairweather (A.F) & Mark Sheardown (M.S)

APOLOGIES: Cllrs. Cook (D.C) & Veitch (B.V), Annie Hopper (A.H) & Marion Cranmer (M.C).

The Chairman read out the following statement:

Members are required to declare any interests, dispensations, predetermination or lobbying on items on this agenda. Members are reminded that changes to the Register of Interests should be notified to the Clerk.

Cllr. Warne on behalf of the Parish Council declared an interest under the site assessments agenda item with regards to the site 398

Cllr. Warne declared an interest under the site assessments agenda item with regards to site 122.

T.W declared an interest on behalf of the CVLT in sites 133, 92, 430, 325 & 385.

1. TWBC liaison:

N.W reported on the meeting held 13th March, attended by Cllrs. Smith, Veitch & Warne and Stephen Baughen (S.B) Building Control and Planning Policy Manager, TWBC. The following items were discussed –

Housing Needs Analysis - The working group at TWBC had a planned meeting on 20th March to agree the findings, to be published by Easter Weekend on the TWBC website. Lachlan Anderson - Frank, AECOM had been in communication with Sarah Lewis, Housing Officer, TWBC and had raised concerns over the Steering Group being unable to see the findings from the analysis. Lachlan had stated that the survey sent out did not reflect up-to-date considerations especially with regards to the new NPPF, so therefore could be erroneous. However the details within this analysis can be used by the NDP as evidence base. Lachlan will approach TWBC again to obtain the findings from the analysis.

L.D – it is worth going along the approach of Freedom of Information Act? N.W hoped to work in parallel with TWBC and the progressing NDP, however TWBC is not sharing information and this could result in non-conformity between the NDP and Local Plan. J.S reported TWBC stated the delay was the analysis getting approval from Cabinet Ministers before publication. J.S felt should the analysis not be published by the weekend, the NDP should demand it.

Housing Numbers/SHELAA – N.W reported that with the sites listed as not suitable for development by AECOM, they could still proceed should TWBC decide they are suitable to proceed to the next stage. S.B has stated his intention to allocate these sites despite AECOM's findings.

J.S added that TWBC are adopting a bottom up approach, where the sites will be looked at, the yield then calculated to work out housing numbers. Are the NDP doing any good putting more sites forward? It appears that TWBC are using these as “bottom-up” evidence to increase the housing targets for Cranbrook & Sissinghurst.

N.W felt already that her suggestion to TWBC of the idea of farmstead/hamlets development was lead them to misinterpret the C&S NDP preferred spatial strategy of dispersed growth as a way of mitigating the impact of development on the landscape. Instead TWBC have unilaterally decided that Hartley and Wilsley Pound are hamlets and added extra housing targets for them.

T.W felt due to the NDP being pragmatic and showed a willingness to work together it hasn't had the desired effect. Now is the time the NDP need to resist. N.W and J.S had compiled notes from the meeting and these were read out to the NDP and had been sent to S.B. Points raised were –

The General TWBC Strategy – Focus for development mix of

- A21 corridor
- Less at Tunbridge Wells/Southborough
- More at dispersed settlements including smaller settlements including Sissinghurst
- Longer term: a garden village of up to 4,000 to be delivered towards end of plan period/beginning of next plan.
- Cranbrook & Hawkhurst to take 5% share each, similar to existing core strategy

A discussion was had around the numbers given by TWBC, with the inclusion of the Sissinghurst village share plus the additional shares given to Hartley and Wilsley Pound the total share TWBC now expect the Parish to take is nearly 10% of the borough-wide total.

A discussion was had around whether this was fair or not and what could possibly be done to counter it.

J.S explained the AECOM report shows the capacity evidence that Cranbrook and Sissinghurst can cater for. What needs to be clarified should CSPC/NDP accept to take on the responsibly to allocate sites, how will this procedure work and will their decision stand should a site put forward is rejected by CSPC/NDP?

AECOM report states maximum capacity of approximately 412 homes, while TWBC have an expectation of 770 homes, however the evidence to support this figure is unsubstantiated.

N.W reported back to the steering group Richard Eastham's suggested advice on how to proceed with TWBC now they have the above information. The advice was the following –

- Get a written agreement between the NDP and S.B at TWBC to state the C&S NDP will be the document that allocates land, TWBC Local Plan will not allocate within the neighbourhood.
- Should the agreement not be accepted by TWBC, there becomes a decision point about the future direction of the NDP and does a plan without allocations have the power and influence that the CSPC, Steering Group and the wider community expect.
- Should the written agreement be accepted by TWBC, sharing of information is expected between both parties on the evidence base on housing numbers.
- Negotiation on housing figures needs to be sought and a range of sites to deliver the housing need. R.E advises negotiation is still worth entering if CSPC/NDP have the sole authority to allocate land for development. He feels negotiation would not work if TWBC have the right to allocate land in the neighbourhood under the Local Plan.

- Should the written agreement and sole authority to allocate land is accepted by TWBC, a task and finish group could be set up to allocate housing numbers to allocated sites in a way that works with the community.

T.W – could the NDP specify the nature of future developments on the sites allocated? How does the land owner have their say? TWBC have requested further information from land owners on the yield and capacity of their sites as part of their further evidence gathering. T.W suggested an outline proposed plan be included as this could cease potential over development by TWBC. This will form part of the allocations process anyway.

R.E is going to seek advice from Brian Whitley RTPI putting the below questions around legal aspects on allocations -

- Should there be an agreement that the C&S NDP is the allocating plan, can TWBC retain the right to allocate land, should the NDP group fail to allocate land in an effective and timely manner?
- Can TWBC prevent the NDP allocating land in its plan?
- Can the NDP make a binding request to TWBC Local Plan, does not allocate land within its neighbourhood area?

As there is still a disparity on numbers between the AECOM report and TWBC it was agreed that a draft written agreement needs to be devised, with the intention at the next Full Council to consider sole authority for site allocations with CSPC. J.S volunteered to draw up the draft written agreement for their next meeting with TWBC on 11th April and will also raise the question on timings of when site allocations needs to start.

N.W advised the Steering Group that R.E could assist with the site allocations, which he expects to be able to do within the scope of his current remit.

K.F asked do we have sites that meet the figure of 540 houses. A discussion was had around Colliers Green and this could be part of the negotiating process with TWBC and included in the proposed allocations. The NDP need to be in a negotiating position and Elected Members need to be aware of the situation the NDP are in, should the written agreement not be accepted by TWBC.

T.W highlighted there is a written Ministerial Statement to protect the NDP when it comes to land allocation and developments, this will be sent to N.W to review.

2. Public Engagement:

Landscape Character Assessment – T.W has uploaded the information collated from this engagement on to the NDP website.

Farmstead Owners Meeting – about 35 people attended the meeting on 14th March, which was a successful and production evening. Claire & Bryn Gaertner who owns a site in Colliers Green gave their feedback on the application they put forward. Claire offered her assistance to help owners of Farmsteads in future planning of their sites. A number of farmers and landowners had already come forward with potential sites.

June Exhibition – The Vestry Hall has been booked for Friday 29th June and Saturday 30th June. J.B asked for Sissinghurst to be considered. It was agreed to look at Thursday 28th June. It was suggested that Borough Cllrs. and MP Helen Grant be invited to the event to raise the awareness of the progress of the NDP.

Other – CGNIM event is being held on Sunday 27th May and it is intended the NDP will have a stall. A discussion was had around using the key points mentioned for the future Parish Cake articles be used at this event to get the message across on the work completed thus far.

3. Site Assessments/Allocations:

Nothing further to report.

4. Grant Applications:

Both N.W and M.W will write a report highlighting how the grant funding was allocated. The Clerk had provided the list of expenditure to date as reference.

5. Vision & Objectives:

A draft copy had been completed and sent to R.E to review.

6. Policy & Development:

N.W reported to outstanding policies are Community & Culture and Access & Movement. Two more workshops were decided Wednesday 11th April 9:30am – 12noon, Community & Culture and Saturday 14th April 2pm – 5pm, Access & Movement. N.W will get an update on the policies that had been sent to R.E for feedback. N.W & J.BE will finish compiling the Landscape policy to send to R.E.

Housing Design Code was still outstanding, A.HA did suggest that the Heritage policy had certain elements relating to Design Code. It was hoped Cllr. Kemp and Richard Gill could be valuable to this particular document. It was suggested that R.E or AECOM be approached to see if he had a template for this as guidance. K.F suggested the document needs to have a clear message and avoid duplication within the document.

7. Parish Cake:

N.W reminded the Steering Group that task groups need to send their editorial pieces to N.W, R.E & T.W who will approve the pieces by Monday 16th April. J.BE is happy to provide photos to be included in the article.

8. Engagement with Key Stakeholders:

N.W reported on the meeting with Berkeley Homes and members of the Steering Group. They discussed their aspirations for the Turnden Farm site. It is hoped there will be future meetings planned with Dandara Homes for site 120, Sissinghurst. J.S has volunteered to attend this meeting with N.W. It is hoped N.W will be in discussion with Ryden Homes to discuss site 119, land adjacent to Angley Road and to meet with Alister Hulme to discuss Freight Lane site.

J.B highlighted in a site assessment toolkit document that the NDP should be requesting to see sight of the pre application discussions that take place with the planning authority. This should be accessible from TWBC.

Next meeting: Monday 23rd April 7pm