

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE CRANBROOK & SISSINGHURST
NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN STEERING GROUP HELD ON 23rd
September 2019

PRESENT: Cllr. Warne (in the Chair) and Cllrs. Hatcher, Pethurst, and Fletcher. Annie Hopper, June Bell, Matt Warne, Marion Cranmer,

APOLOGIES: Cllrs. Veitch and Smith. Jeremy Boxall, Marcus Boret and Liz Daley

Cllr. Warne 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 declared an interest under the site assessments regarding site 122 which had been put forward by a relative.

Annie Hopper, Lee Hatcher, Laura Rowland and June Bell declared a personal interest as members of the CVLT (Crane Valley Land Trust). Matthew Warne declared an interest as a board member of the CVLT. Members of the various Advisory Groups declared an interest as necessary.

1. Response to TWBC Draft Local Plan:

June Bell had produced a Q&A sheet arising from the Public Consultation meeting held on 13th September. Members present agreed that this should be circulated to the Steering Group.

Cllr. Pethurst gave details on how to respond on line, which was set out as a word document and in his view not the easiest to use. In order to respond to more than one policy you needed to copy and paste the comments section. We could ask TWBC at the meeting on Friday if they could provide a supply of policy sheets which could be used in case the residents do not have access to a printer/computer. June Bell informed the Steering Group that residents do need to register before making comments. Cllr. Pethurst felt that the response document was set out in a discouraging way.

Matt Warne suggested that quotes could be used from CPRE and AONB with links provided. These could be in the form of bullet points.

2. Neighbourhood Plan – The Way Forward:

A conference call had been arranged with Richard Eastham the consultant from Feria Urbanism. Cllr. Warne asked if all members of the Steering Group had read the email forwarded by him in response to questions previously put forward. Cllr. Warne was of the opinion that the group should follow his guidance and in the next month focus on the response to be given to the Draft TWBC Local Plan. Richard Eastham also urged the Steering Group to reach out to other Parishes such as Paddock Wood, Benchley & Matfield, Horsmonden and others who meet frequently to consider a coordinated response to TWBC actions. Hawkhurst Parish Council had also recently sent out an email reaching out to other Parishes to which Cllr. Warne had already responded.

Regarding the question is there any point continuing with the NDP? His conclusion at the present time is “no” which he qualified by various points mainly given the proposed content

and scope of coverage of the TWBC LP, the general attitude of TWBC towards neighbourhood plan groups and the way the system he believes is skewed in favour of borough/district councils and housebuilders.

Matt Warne felt it was pointless to go ahead with allocations however, there was still value in the other policies. Marion Cranmer was in favour of setting up small groups in the community so that the developer is informed of what we expect relating to type of houses and quality of build etc. With this in mind it was agreed to contact residents who had shown an interest at the recent public meetings to see if they would be interested in setting up groups with help from the Steering Group. Cllrs. Warne and Pethurst, Marion Cranmer, Matt Warne to organise.

Cllr. Fletcher pointed out that at the bottom of page 4 Richard Eastham had provided a list of design and development criteria which the NDP could use and really have an influence of what goes on to the sites:

- 1) Site layout
- 2) Access routes
- 3) Building heights
- 4) Form and massing
- 5) Site density
- 6) Boundary treatment
- 7) Connections beyond the site
- 8) Internal landscape treatment
- 9) Preferred architectural approach
- 10) Housing mix

Discussion then took place on the recent article in TWBC Local Magazine and although the figures quoted were incorrect it appeared easy to read and perhaps the NDP could utilise the same format.

Richard Eastham joined by telephone link and further discussion took place on how to proceed with response to the Draft Local Plan either by NDP endorsed by the Parish Council or direct from the Parish Council. He felt it was important to put in writing the lack of minutes from TWBC after meetings and to get thoughts down on paper. This could also include the issue with actual content of the Local Plan regarding housing numbers and way in which it is setting out vision for the Borough which the NDP disagree with and imposing housing on the Parish which the NDP feel is totally inappropriate. Focus could also be made on the absolute lack of cooperation with the NDP Group and the Neighbourhood Plan Process. The attitude and approach when developing the Local Plan has not created the space for the local community NDP to shape development in the parish as envisaged in the Localism Act. Richard Eastham commented that the response needed to be two pronged – content and approach. Cllr. Pethurst raised concern that if local residents were given quotes to use in their response to Draft Local Plan would this invalidate the responses i.e. if we publish quotes provided by AONB/CPRE. Richard Eastham replied that this happens all the time this would be totally acceptable for coordinated answers to be available and then cut and paste answers, no reason this would be considered invalid. Public at large can say whatever they feel. He felt it was important for the Parish Council to put a response to the Local Plan for the local community to see and perhaps a second response from the NDP on experience of working with the TWBC Local Plan.

June Bell commented that a form has been devised by Liz Daley split into sections regarding the policies and process which would be delegated between the Steering Group to respond to on a shared drive which other members could add comments to if they so wished. This sheet was handed round to members who volunteered to look and comment on various policies. June Bell believed place shaping policies should be priority and gave further details on how to make responses. The Clerk would scan the completed list to all members of the Steering Group so that they knew who was dealing with the different sections.

It was agreed that the residents of Cranbrook and Sissinghurst be circulated an A4 sheet which would be produced by the Communication Team, with ideas they might like to consider when responding to the Draft TWBC Local Plan and Richard Eastham reiterated that this should not be too complicated. Standard responses could be formulated and links could be provided to help. He suggested we get as many residents as possible to put their name to an A4 response. The Communications Team were congratulated on the publicity produced recently for the information events.

Cllr. Warne informed the Steering Group that a new Limits to Built Development area was being proposed at Wilsley Pound which the NDP had not been consulted on and was not offered as a possible scenario during the Local Plan Issues and Options Consultation. At no point was it discussed or agreed that Wilsley Pound would in effect become a new settlement. Cllr. Hatcher agreed to make sure CCAAC were aware of this at the next meeting.

June Bell then raised the question of housing percentages between those allocated to Tunbridge Wells and Cranbrook & Sissinghurst Parish Council. Cllr. Warne gave percentage figures, last time our share was 5% and now it was 7%.

Discussion briefly took place on whether the NDP Group would be able to demonstrate that TWBC have not complied with the Localism Act/not followed due process in supporting the group. Richard Eastham felt unable to advise on this matter as it was moving into planning law territory. It has been pointed out to TWBC many times that the way they work runs counter to the Localism Act, various parts of the NPPF and also the NPPG. This could prove very costly.

In answer to a question by Marion Cranmer, Richard Eastham explained that the Inspectorate would not look at responses at this stage of the process, this would be undertaken by TWBC who would decide what to amend in the plan before it goes forward at Regulation 18. However, all responses would be made available perhaps after the amendments have been made.

Cllr. Fletcher asked if the NDP wrote saying they disagreed with site allocations in the Draft Local Plan and we have parallel set of sites which meets the housing numbers required, however NDP not given space/ignored at site allocation process. Cllr. Warne reported that the Draft Local Plan would need the agreement of Borough Councillors. Richard Eastham confirmed that it would require a democratic check by Borough Councillors and approval. In answer to a question from June Bell on whether he thought it would be worthwhile lobbying Borough Councillors now. He replied that a campaign could be started but would need more than just one Borough Councillor to actually stand up on behalf of the NDP and make feelings known to TWBC cabinet.

Marion Cranmer asked if it would be worth typing up our policies so that NDP are ready to go ahead if we are in a situation where we have some control working with developers. Richard Eastham responded “no” at the present time until other issues are resolved. There needed to be a clear road map on the way forward and put everything on ice at the present time. There needs to be a clarity about how to take the NDP to the next stage, before work to do so restarts in earnest. There is no point cracking on with revisions and updates to the plan etc if this becomes abortive work. Further more Richard Eastham commented that a strong and coordinated response to the DLP will be important, if nothing else, just to make sure the NDP views are on record.

In answer to a question raised by Cllr. Fletcher, has Borough Council allocated large sites as they will get more out of developers regarding infrastructure, Section 106 and CIL Payments as he felt this could be tipping the balance. Richard Eastham replied that this could indeed be the case and Cllr. Warne added that the Borough Council receives a New Home payment of £1,000.00 for every new dwelling.

June Bell raised question 8, regarding the chances of fighting the numbers allocated. Sally Marsh (AONB Unit) has expressed concern that TWBC have not made allowance for the landscape factors in applying their OAN figures, as described in NPPF Para 11 ii), as follows:

“Para 11: strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas, unless:

- i. The application of policies in this Framework that protect areas of assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type and distribution of development in the plan area; or
- ii. Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole”.

Richard Eastham stated that he could only assume that TWBC are aware of this option, as described in the NPPF para 11 part ii), for them to discount OAN figures because of the prevalence of AONB landscape across their borough, but have decided not to because in their view the adverse impacts do not “significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits” as per the test. In his view TWBC could be challenged to show their workings on this, if indeed they have made the consideration as described in NPPF para. 11 part ii) but decided to continue anyway.

The call finished at this point with Richard Eastham.

Cllr. Pethurst proposed putting the emerging Neighbourhood Plan into abeyance and focus on encouraging the entire parish to respond to the Draft Local Plan by the 1st November, seconded by Cllr. Warne and agreed.

3. Communications/Public Engagement:

Cllr. Warne reported that the events held recently were very successful, however she was very disappointed that Councillors representing Sissinghurst did not attend the event held in the village.

4. Stakeholder Engagement:

Nothing to report

5. Items for Information:

Nothing to report.

Next Meeting – **28th October 2019**