

Neighbourhood Plan Update

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group met on Tuesday 21st August. The Chairman explained at the beginning of the meeting that it had not been possible to meet earlier as, in response to the Consultation Documents issued late last year, the comments of the statutory consultees (such as Lewes District Council Planners) and representatives of the owners of some sites necessitated further work by specialist consultants. This work has only recently been completed.

Although the proposals in the Plan were very well received, for example, 96% of those expressing an opinion on the questionnaires supported the proposed policies. The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) was not so well supported by some other consultees. The SA is a technical document we are required by law to produce to ensure that our Plan focuses on achieving sustainable development which, for example, involves, where possible, developments being on green field sites which are close to transport links and community infrastructure, such as shops and GPs surgeries. Our Neighbourhood Plan will be examined by an Independent Planning Inspector who will ensure that our SA demonstrates how the Seaford Neighbourhood Plan is promoting sustainable development before it can progress to a referendum and subsequently its adoption. It is therefore critical to the success of the Plan.

The Dane Valley Project is progressing well: the owners of the various sites within the project have each made a contribution to the cost of the next stage of the project which entails specialist consultants doing detailed work to address and cost the key challenges for the site, such as flood alleviation and decontamination. Their report is expected in December. We were pleased to see that Southern Gas has already cleared their part of the site.

We received, within the Public Consultation, many requests for the three fields in Grand Avenue that back on to properties in Clementine Avenue to be designated as a Local Green Space. A small Working Party was set up to collect evidence to establish whether the fields met the strict criteria that we are required to use. The Working Party has used an identical methodology to that used in examining the eleven sites that we are already proposing should be Local Green Spaces.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has now decided, based on the new information provided by the Working Party and the Consultant, that:

- The Grand Avenue fields should be put forward for designation as a Local Green Space
- The revised Sustainability Appraisal is soundly based and provides convincing evidence that the Plan should include Florence House garden as one of the sites for housing development. There has been a recent judgement which has resulted in the garden being classified as a Brown Field, rather than Green Field, site.

- There should be a re-consultation exercise (under Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning Regulations) in the light of the above decisions.

The Steering Group has been conscious for some time that there is no Design Guidance for housing in Seaford. We have been successful in securing the services of a design specialist (funded, in effect, by Central Government) to produce a Seaford Design Guide. This will be published and comments sought during the next consultation exercise planned for November/December 2018.

The Steering Group are pleased that we can now move matters on by, hopefully:

- Agreeing at our next meeting (planned for late September) revised wording for the Plan reflecting the comments we have received
- Seeking the Town Council's agreement, at their meeting on 18th October, to the revised Plan and Sustainability Appraisal being forwarded to Lewes District Council for further consultation and appointment of a Government Planning Inspector.

It has been frustrating having to accept a delay whilst the above work has been progressed but we have been conscious of the importance of having a Plan, supported by a high quality Sustainability Appraisal, that will be accepted by the Planning Inspector and go forward to a referendum, in due course, and ultimately to implementation.

