

# Hurst Green Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

## Minutes of the meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> February 2019 at 7.30pm at Hurst Green Village Hall

**Present:** Annabelle Blackaby, Andrew Brown (in the Chair), Bob Collins, Claire Tester (High Weald AONB Partnership), Colleen Burt, Donna Moles (Moles Consultancy) (DMo), Duncan McNab (DMc), Gill Colquhoun (Clerk), Graham Browne (by phone), Ian Hirst, Steve Wright, Tania McNab

**Apologies:** None received.

**Two members of the public were present.**

### 1 Welcome

Members were welcomed to the meeting; in particular members welcomed Donna Moles and Claire Tester.

### 2 Amendments/ Subsequent ratification of previous minutes

The meeting unanimously **approved** the minutes of 15<sup>th</sup> January 2019 with no changes.

### 3 Ratification of electronic decision to pay for external support

The Chair reported that following the unanimous decision at the previous Steering Group's meeting to apply for a government grant to cover this cost of the appointment of an external advisor, it had sadly transpired that due to the closeness of the Government's financial year, that this year's grant programme had closed. Steering Group members had been informed electronically and unanimously electronically voted to use some of our NP allocated budget as a bridge until April 2019 when the 2019-2020 grant programme will open, to avoid delaying the assistance of a professional consultant. This decision was **unanimously ratified**.

### 4 Presentation by Claire Tester, High Weald AONB Partnership

Claire Tester, Planning Advisor to High Weald AONB gave a presentation on the work of the AONB High Weald partnership of 15 local authorities:

- The High Weald AONB unit based in Flimwell supports the AONB advisory committee.
- Main statutory duty is to produce a management plan (recently reviewed, final version expected April 2019).
- The management plan has defined 5 major landscape components: geology/landform; settlement; woodland (a very significant component which often hides the landscape), and field and heath (not changed much since 14<sup>th</sup> Century).
- AONB can help provide information; advice on individual sites; and advice on policy wording to protect the AONB within Neighbourhood Development Plans. A copy of the 'Neighbourhood Development Plans – AONB guide' was tabled.
- Maps available on AONB website (and also on the Hurst Green neighbourhood plan resources page) were tabled. These show landscape components for Hurst Green; riverways (River Rother and gill streams), historic routeways (not A265); historic core settlement but most of older buildings are farmsteads, woodland including large area (Burgh Wood), field and heath map (advice to avoid building on medieval fields if possible).
- In terms of planning AONB is drafting a design guide focusing on housing developments of 10-60 dwellings. It is hoped this will be published in Spring 2019.

**Questions:**

Q. Do you have a policy around ancient fields, and are there policies around woodlands and routeways?

A. Yes – for fields (see above), for woodlands look at how activity on a development site will affect woodlands, and for routeways look at banks/widening of roads.

Q. What should we be doing as a Neighbourhood Plan group?

A. Creating a locally distinctive policy which will affect these features.

Q. Are you a consultee for a Neighbourhood Plan?

A. Yes via Rother District Council. High Weald AONB has objected, for example to a development site in Ticehurst.

Q. Would you be willing to look at our sites and comment?

A. Yes, we can either produce an AONB assessment of the sites, or can input to Hurst Green site assessment.

Q. With reference to Burgh Wood concern expressed regarding significant trees without TPOs.

A. (See action below).

Q. Is there a Neighbourhood Plan which most embodies the AONB partnership views?

A. Probably the closest is Crowhurst. Claire is pulling together best practice in Sussex.

Q. Reference to Foundry Close site (site 35).

A. (See action below)

The meeting thanked Claire for her presentation, and warmly welcomed her offer to help (see details above).

#### Actions:

1. Andrew [AB] & Claire [CT] to contact AECOM in relation to the site assessments and to see if there is an opportunity to input.
2. CT to look at the proposed plans for Foundry Close site (Site 35) and provide input to the Rother District Council / the Steering Group.
3. AB to place CT's presentation on the NP website.
4. DMO to send Steve Wright the document used by Salehurst & Robertsbridge Parish Council to record significant trees in the Parish.
5. CT's to review the Hurst Green proposed sites maps and provide feedback.

(CT left the meeting at 8.10 pm).

## **5 Presentation by Donna Moles (Introduction and overview of agreed and proposed professional support and next steps)**

DMo tabled an 'introductory meeting' plan paper; this outlined the work which needs to be done to get to first statutory consultation. DMO's view is that our timetable is ambitious, but that she sees that there is commitment from the NP Steering Group to make it realistic to achieve. She requested an update from each task group (to be discussed under Item 6). In terms of the process the first official step (designation of Neighbourhood Area) has been completed. The next statutory point is Reg 14 where we have a draft plan upon which to undertake a consultation.

#### Key dates:

- Vision and objectives workshop in early March, to be led by DMO.
- Consult on vision and objectives (drop in session) end of March.
- DMO advised to defer public sites meeting until we receive AECOM's work on sites assessment.
- Evidence work to continue until April. A 'Place check' is also recommended.

- Drafting policies and the Plan April. DMO will draft robust policies before they are put into the plan. Policy has to relate to land use. DMO recommends that a working draft is sent to RDC.
- Reg 14 Pre Submission Consultation run by the Parish. The Parish will need to address the comments made during the consultation, and sign off the plan.
- Reg 15 Submission. Written examination by Independent Examiner. Responses to the consultation will go to the examiner.
- Referendum (50% yes, regardless of turnout).
- Plan adopted by Rother District Council (sitting alongside Rother Local Plan).

It was **unanimously agreed** to support to the timetable, recognising it was an ambitious target.

#### Actions:

DMo to guide the Neighbourhood Plan Group.

DMo will populate a detailed action plan with timetable and resourcing for agreement.

DMo to send placecheck material to Steering Group members for distribution/capturing.

AB to send DMO declarations of interest form to confirm its suitability.

NP Steering Group members to ensure they have provided a declarations of interest form.

NP Steering Group to communicate with DMO via the Chair, and Steve Wright.

NP Steering Group to agree logo for identity (oak tree suggested).

NP Steering Group to start to think about infrastructure lists.

All to attend Vision and Objectives workshop set for 5<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

AB to confirm venue and timings to DMO / Steering Group members.

The meeting thanked DMO for her input, and **unanimously stated** that members looked forward to working with her.

## 6 Task group reports (Standing agenda item)

Short reports were provided by each task group Chairperson(s) including key achievements.

### 6.1 Education & Training task group - Colleen Burt

Nothing to report.

### 6.2 Leisure task group – Ian Hurst

Nothing to report.

### 6.3 Business, Economy and Tourism task group – Tania McNab

Nothing to report

### 6.4 Infrastructure task group – Duncan McNab / Bob Collins

#### 6.4.1 Parking survey (Printed version) decision.

An electronic survey had been completed with 120 responses. The meeting discussed if a printed version was also required. DMO advised that if the NP Group feels it needs a wider response pool it could be worth doing so as part of drop in.

#### 6.4.2 Highways England response to new accesses

Highways England (HE) had responded to AB, stating that they no longer had a blanket policy to ban all new accesses onto A21. There has only been an informal response from HE on speeding data supplied by the Parish Council. AB reported that he had personally also sent this to the Sussex Police and Crime Commissioner, PCC Katy Bourne inviting the Commissioner to comment and meet with the Parish Council / NP Steering Group.

## 6.5 Housing task group

### 6.5.1 AECOM housing needs assessment update/ housing survey decision

AECOM have been commissioned to undertake a housing needs assessment which has been funded by central Government on behalf of the Neighbourhood Plan; however progress or a completion date is unclear.

Action: AB chase AECOM for an update / explanation copying DMO.

### 6.5.2 AECOM site assessment update

Site visits had taken place in January 2019. One site owner had reported that they had not seen any evidence of AECOM visiting. No update had been received from the AECOM representative despite AB requesting an update prior to the meeting.

[Update received from AECOM on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2019: *“By way of an update of your site assessment I have a colleague in our landscape team currently assessing all of the sites for their landscape sensitivity, which will inform our recommendations and conclusions. I hope this exercise will be completed in the next 10 or so days. Subsequent to landscape’s input the report will need to be reviewed by the technical lead and will then be shared with yourselves for comment.”*

### 6.5.3 Update on Site 35 – Foundry Close

The plan for Foundry Close was tabled. Further documents are available on the NP website. Some changes had been made in response to comments on over density and parking allocation but there are still concerns regarding parking and access to A21. DMO advised that there is a risk that the housing allocation may be unaffected

Action: DMO felt dialogue with developers of the site is useful and recommended that the Housing group pass on thoughts to Parish Council. We can give verbal suggestions from the Neighbourhood Plan Group to site owners to influence the plans for this site, but the Neighbourhood planning group should refrain from endorsing any applications. The group must concentrate its efforts on formulating the Neighbourhood Plan.

### 6.5.4 Public meeting(s)

Not yet decided.

## 7 Budget and expenditure review

To-date the Neighbourhood Plan has spent very little. However, IH advised that at future meetings he would be providing a financial update, and reminded everyone that he needed numbers to enter into the budget spreadsheet.

## 8 Volunteer news

The Chair reported that he had not been made aware of any specific volunteer updates/news in relation to those working on the neighbourhood plan to share with the Steering Group.

## 9 Roundtable progress thoughts

The meeting was generally pleased to be moving forward with our external advisor on the detailed work on formulating the Neighbourhood Plan.

## 10 Matters for next meeting

A format and date for the public drop in needs to be decided and publicised.

**11 AOB**

None.

**12 Date of next meeting**

5th March 2019 – visioning and objectives workshop

19th March 2019 – monthly NP Group meeting

The meeting ended at 9.42pm.