

## **West Horsley Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Minutes from Meeting on Wed 17 February, 2016 at West Horsley Village Hall**

Present for WHNPSG: Peter Bennett-Davies, Elaine Best, Sarah Christiansen, Paul Dodgson (chairman), Nigel Farley, Tina Grace, Kes Heffer, Frances King, Julia McClung, Tony Thompson, Valerie Thompson, Robert Treble, Sue Vaughn-Jones, Catherine Young.  
Present for rCOH: Neil Homer; Present for EHNP: Robert Taylor  
Apologies from: Nicky Adams, Carolyn Kimpton, Martin O'Hara & Dan Knowles (GBC)

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### **A: Notes (for the benefit of absentees)**

#### **About rCOH**

NH outlined his experience: professional planner for 30 years. Worked with a number of Local Authorities in the past. Anticipated an influx of Neighbourhood Plans (NP) needing advise and set up rCOH in 2011. Started in Sussex, now covers most of S. England working with 31 planning authorities.

General points made by NH about NPs:

- Government has mis-sold localism and neighbourhood planning is not easy. Most NPs lack the experience and technical knowledge needed to fight Councils on a level playing field. The process is very straightforward. The difficulty is understanding what to do with the process, identifying the gaps and knowing how you can challenge.
- There are changes being made to planning guidance, especially where the Green Belt is concerned. The picture is changing but mostly for the best.
- Where there is a NP in place decisions are being taken at a Local Plan (LP) level with the NP in mind. But a NP *must* conform to the strategic policies of the development plan. It can't be at odds with strategic policies.
- A NP consistent with the old LP won't be taken seriously.
- Key is to give the NP a long shelf life.
- Specific challenges for NP in Green Belt - NPs cannot amend Green Belt boundaries. Only the LP can do this. It is a "strategic policy matter". One proviso: option for NPs to offer alternative small plots for development (approx 10 houses per plot).
- The Government is much more pro-housing development now than ever before. Also, some permitted housing development rights have been removed.
- Can anticipate changes to LP because of changes to National Policy.

#### **West Horsley**

- It isn't unusual for a small parish like ours to be threatened with a 50% increase in housing numbers? For a Borough like Guildford, that has the Green Belt, the Thames Basin and many Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, they have to look for Parishes with less of the above. This is why West Horsley is so vulnerable.
- GBC *is* going to move the Green Belt boundaries.
- GBC hasn't looked at the accumulative effect of the multiple areas they plan to develop. They have not thought spatially about it.
- West Horsley is in the worst category for build/infrastructure investment. If we were getting 1,000 houses we would get proper investment in schools, doctors, roads etc. At 500 houses we won't get this.

## Options for West Horsley Neighbourhood Plan

There are three options open to us:

1. Abandon the WHNP and focus our energy on fighting the new Local Plan.
2. Have a revised NP but focus on things we can control. Shape our policies to refine the Local Plan; to shape new developments and to designate local green spaces.
3. Identify alternative development sites; set development principles.

It was agreed that Option Three would divide the village (NIMBY) and was not a viable route. Plus we don't have the right contacts within Guildford Borough Council to make it work.

**It was agreed that Option Two was the way forward. Work with the draft plan. Anticipate what is coming in the revised Local Plan. Work on a shortlist of policies.**

### How do we build on our draft plan??

- Many of the policies in our draft MP are not actually policies because they are not about the use and development of the land.
  - *A policy needs to address planning risk ie the cost to the applicant of not getting planning permission. We need to work our policies to either increase or decrease this risk depending on what we want to achieve. We can use this strategy to "take on the planning authority, to make the right things happen in the right place at the right time".*
- Focus on what is important to West Horsley, even if that means only working on four or five policies, eg. identify open spaces that need to be preserved.
- There is no point in duplicating policies that are already in the Local Plan.
- Design and prioritise the policies to get the best outcome.
- Need evidence of why we're coming to our views, eg housing stock/ aging demographic wanting to downsize.

We need to request a Screening Opinion from GBC. If they think our plan has environmental effects we will need a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) for our area. If an SEA is required we can't publish our plan without one. A draft SEA must be published at the same time as a draft NP. JM to write to GBC to request.

### How will rCOH hep?

- They can write everything, beginning with a template pre-submission plan.
- NH to look at our draft plan and tell us what we can use and what we need to work on.
- NH to filter out the key policies in our NP and help us to convert some that are not currently 'policies' in to meaningful policies.
- NH not confident about a reducing density policy as GBC will want to make efficient use of any land that it takes out of the Green Belt.
- NH to respond by 26 February.

## East Horsley Neighbourhood Plan

East Horsley has gone for Option 2. They:

- aim to have a draft plan ready by June/July.
- have conducted a household survey and drafted their vision objectives and housing needs assessment, and are waiting for the revised Local Plan before finalising.
- are comfortable with the 180 new builds proposed on four sites. Issues with one site.
- will focus on getting a better mix of housing which hopefully will reduce density on these sites and therefore reduce the numbers of new houses.
- are not going to offer any alternative sites.
- have four subgroups: Housing; Environment; Infrastructure; and Local Economy. Under the direction of their planning consultant, two members of the steering group oversee each team.

PD is meeting with Catherine Carr (chairman of EHNP) w/c 22/03.

## Guildford Borough Council Timetable

- Issue draft Local Plan in April
- Consultation in July
- Submit plan Spring 2017

## Community Engagement

Need to start planning how we will engage with the community. Need to think of individuals who might join sub-groups. Volunteers to present at meetings and to visit community groups.

## B: Actions Arising from the Meeting

NH to produce report on draft NP and way forward by 26/02/16.

NH

JM to write to GBC requesting a Screening Opinion.

JM

RT to forward draft EHNP to JM. JM to circulate.

RT/JM

JM to forward draft WHNP to RT.

JM

PD to meet chairman of EHNP.

PD

JM to arrange meetings on 02 and 23 March.

JM

## C: Dates of next meetings

Wed, 02 March 7.30pm in the Rubens Room, WHVH

- to discuss Neil's critique of the emerging plan
- to decide how to proceed in the light of his advice

Wed, 23 March 7.30pm in the Cedar Room, WHVH. Neil Homer to attend.