



HENFIELD PARISH COUNCIL **PLANS ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

Public Meeting to discuss the Local Plan held on Thursday 1st February 2024 at 7:00pm in the Henfield Hall.

Present: Cllrs R Shaw (Chairman), D Grossmith, E Goodyear, J Jones and G Perry.

Apologies: Cllr A May.

In Attendance: Mr K Wright (Clerk), Mrs R Grantham (Operations Manager (OM)) and Mrs B Samrah (Parish Administrator (PA)) and 93 members of the public.

The Chairman started by reminding everyone that Henfield Parish covers Henfield itself and also the northern end of Small Dole, with the southern end of Small Dole being in Upper Beeding Parish. He said he was very pleased therefore that Roger Noel and Mike Croker, district councillors for Upper Beeding, Bramber and Woodmancote and Bob Harber, Chair of Upper Beeding Parish Council had come along, as well as Josh Potts, District Councillor for Henfield. He stated that residents of Small Dole will have views on development in the village as a whole, irrespective of Parish Council boundaries!

Each member of the Committee introduced themselves to the room.

The Chairman said that as the Plans Advisory Committee of Henfield Parish Council, the intention was to listen to residents' views on the recently published Horsham District Local Plan and take questions. He confirmed that the Committee was a statutory consultee and will be making representations on the Plan before the deadline of 1st March.

He said that the current Neighbourhood Plan was accepted in 2019 and identifies 5 sites for development within the Parish between the time it was accepted and 2031 but that did not mean that speculative developers may not seek to get planning permission for development elsewhere but the existence of the plan does provide some protection. Even more relevant is that if Horsham have no Local Plan, Henfield (and other Parishes) are very susceptible to speculative development and, indeed, in late 2022 or early 2023 he had spoken at an HDC meeting to complain about lack of progress on agreeing a Local Plan. The Council may not like everything in the latest Local Plan but the need for an agreed Plan was in his view critical.

In contrast to the timescale of Henfield's Neighbourhood Plan (NHP) (which goes out to 2031), Horsham District's Local Plan has a timescale of 2023 – 2040. As a consequence of needing to satisfy its own house building targets, the Horsham Plan has identified two sites within Henfield Parish in addition to those in Henfield's Neighbourhood Plan; namely, the old Sandgate nursery (that runs between West End Lane and Hollands Lane) and a parcel of land to the south of New Hall Lane in Small Dole.

He stressed that Henfield PAC is an advisory body ie expressing a view to Horsham, the determining body, giving the Committee's views on any planning issue. They listen to Henfield but they don't always agree!

He asked those who wish to speak to keep their comments brief (ie a maximum of 3-4 minutes) and see if the view is widely held in the room. He asked that those who wanted to speak stand up and say their name.

One resident questioned whether the sites in the NHP still stood and the Chairman confirmed that the sites in the Local Plan are in addition to NHP. He also asked whether another traffic survey could be completed to show the increase in traffic in West End Lane. Another resident said that he had been involved with a traffic survey comparing 2010/2011 and 2019 and that there had been an increase of 50% in traffic at morning and evening rush hour.

Another resident wondered what reasons had previously been used to reject the Sandgate Nursery site. Cllr Goodyear said that there had been previous speculative applications (and there is a current application that the PAC have objected to on a number of grounds, including being outside the Built up Area Boundary. She also said that the Secretary of State had said, in rejecting an earlier application, that Dears Farm near the site was a historic building and that as well as representing general urbanising the countryside, one application had been turned down. It was noted that there is still an outstanding application that is current.

The Chairman said that HDC planning had considered several sites in addition to NHP and that Sandgate and land south of New hall Lane were just two of those.

Steve Bailey from Campaign to Protect Rural Henfield (CPRH) spoke to confirm he had read the full 200 pages of the Local Plan and felt that 80% of it was likely to be accepted by most. He said that CPRH do not automatically reject new housing development and that they had supported the NHP, but that the right housing was needed in right place. He was aware that HDC had reduced their housing requirements because of Water Neutrality.

In reference to Sandgate Nursery Site he said

- 4 planning applications had previously been made for this site in the recent past and 1 was still ongoing
- The Inspector had waived aside the traffic survey from Sandgate Nursery on a previous application
- Sandgate Nursery was the 39th preferred choice out of 42 sites in NHP and therefore rejected.
- This site conflicts with NHP and Forward Plan.
- This west side of the village does not have good access to the main road except by older roads such as Church Street and that these geographical features would carry weight
- This site is an area rich in Biodiversity of wildlife, with deer and butterflies seen in abundance.
- 90.3% of residents had supported the NHP with sites north and east of village with roads easily accessible from main road
- Comments from the public against this site would need to have all of these factors mentioned
- Any delays to the Local Plan may mean that HDC have to write a new Local Plan which may make Henfield more attractive to speculative developers
- He recommended that Henfield speak direct with HDC.

There was widespread support for Mr Bailey's views.

Mr Bailey said that regulation 19 meant that preferences could no longer be added (he said that under Regulation 18 consultation for the NHP in 2020 preferences could be logged.) He added that the Inspector will only look at whether it has met legal requirements.

Cllr Roger Noel said that the Local Plan having reached Regulation 19 did give some protection from speculative developments, but he fully agreed with Mr Bailey and encouraged everyone to act now and respond to HDC. He felt that an alternative site was needed in order to provide adequate numbers of homes in the district.

Cllr Josh Potts agreed with everything Mr Bailey had said and said another site would need to be proposed quickly, if HPC were to venture to suggest alternatives.

Another resident questioned the different timescales used for NHP and the Local Plan but felt that Henfield's NHP hadn't given protection to Henfield. The Chairman responded by saying that it had given some protection and also said that even though a site was not in the NHP it did not mean it couldn't be used.

Martin Kelland, a New Hall Lane resident, said that he had been a member of the original Small Dole Neighbourhood Plan team and he made the following points in relation to site SMD1, (Land West of the A2037 Shoreham Road).

- This site had already been considered and rejected by both iterations of the Henfield NHP and by HDC itself as a formal planning application DC/15/0353, a decision that HDC was prepared to defend at appeal (APP/Z3825/W/15/313049). (Wates withdrew). The decision notice / post Committee report should be noted in full but the highlights are as follows:
- Unsustainable location. The DC/15/0353 conflicts with the aims of sustainable development with its need to minimise travel, and to reduce the reliance on the private car: If you live in Small Dole you need access to a car.
- Harm to the Landscape. Horsham District's landscape consultant and the South Downs National Park representative saw adverse landscape impacts on the surrounding countryside and the settlement character of Small Dole. (The site is very close to, and very visible from, the SDNP.)
- Local democracy and public trust. Due to geography rather than size, Small Dole straddles two NHP areas (Upper Beeding and Henfield). When the Neighbourhood planning was being undertaken, both Parish Councils discussed the impact of new development on the village and agreed that planning needed to take into account the overall sustainability and size of the settlement. They resolved that the two NHP must not 'over-allocate' site. The decision taken and widely consulted-on in each parish, was to limit large site development to one site only in Small Dole; Oxcroft Farm (in Upper Beeding parish). Residents of Upper Beeding Parish and Small Dole voted for their respective Neighbourhood plans in May 2021 and both have now been 'made'. Both groups will no doubt have had in mind the above commitment when they made their decision.
- SMD1 + Oxcroft represent a 25% population increase of the hamlet of Small Dole. Population of Small Dole at 2021 census was 786, allocation of 60 houses (Oxcroft + SMD1) an increase of about 180 can be anticipated, that is +23% in one go. This would fundamentally change the character of

the hamlet. Such over-allocation in a small hamlet is one of the things that the Neighbourhood Plans sought to avoid in the case of Small Dole.

There was widespread support for Mr Kelland's view.

Chris Warren, Upper Beeding Cllr reminded all that residents had voted for NHP including one site in Small Dole, it was assumed that it would stand, he also felt that the website portal did not allow for full consultation - an earlier speaker said that when using HDC portal it was vital to tick first box saying illegal and second box saying unsound and then comments could be added.

Cllr Noel – felt that objections to either site needed to be made in the strongest terms. He did not feel that New Hall Lane Site (SMD1) makes Oxcroft Farm from NHP redundant. He felt that the whole planning system is broken from top or bottom. He said he knew fellow cllrs wanted to see a change in planning law.

Another Small Dole resident felt that HDC had made a U-turn on SMD1 having rejected it recently, The Chairman said that HDC had to find a way to satisfy the Government's quote on housing, meaning that the rationale that held good at one time doesn't always hold good now.

Another resident asked about the site that was to the east of Henfield village. The Chairman said that was one of the sites that HDC had marked and that he believed Taylor Wimpey had options on the land and would like to build on it, create an entrance by waterworks and build up to 800 houses there. The Chairman stressed that if Henfield's preference was to have houses to the North and East of village, as expressed in the Neighbourhood Plan, it opens the possibility of building up 800 houses and that that in itself would bring a whole different set of challenges for the village.

The Chairman confirmed that there were 270 houses proposed in NHP and that Sandgate would provide a further 60 and Small Dole another 55, giving Henfield 385 additional houses.

Cllr Grossmith stressed the need to send objections to HDC as they cannot be ignored but that they needed to be sound making reference to legal issues and measurable qualities. He also said that when the PAC consider planning applications it is always within the Planning Framework.

A Small Dole resident said that New Hall Lane gets flooded every year and that sewerage system is already not able to cope with the houses there. This was said to be the case in Downsview as well. Cllr Grossmith said that house numbers were the first thing to look at and water and drainage is considered at next stage. He said that the council was representative of residents and that was why this meeting had been organised to understand residents' concerns. In response to comments about lack of infrastructure to accompany development, The Chairman said that the infrastructure always seems to be playing catch up with new building projects but he was pleased to see that HDC have allocated money to homes in Shermanbury which are susceptible to flooding.

A West End Lane resident asked if it was possible that other fields in West End Lane might be sold for development and the Chairman said it was always possible. He said that he felt that the people in the room were interested in Sandgate Nursery and New Hall Lane development, and that if HDC had recommended more housing in other locations eg to the North and East of Village, then it was likely residents from Wantley Hill and the Croudace Estate would have come to the meeting with equally strong views. As such, HPC's task was not just to reflect the views expressed at the meeting but to represent the interests of the entire village in a balanced way. HPC would, however, be making clear the strength of feeling of those attending the meeting.

Cllr Goodyear said that when the NHP first put out requests for sites, 42 sites came back and seven of those were in West End Lane, some were rejected for other obvious reasons or were not suitable. The NHP proposed 6 sites and Taylor Wimpey have a small site in the northeast for approximately 100 houses, but in allowing these that could open the possibility of much more development to the east of Henfield. She reiterated that it was important that villagers have their say.

Mr Kelland said he was happy to circulate a ready worded letter which could be adapted and sent from individuals to HDC. Cllr Grossmith said getting opinions to HDC was important and that he would recommend using the template letter and personalising it, but felt it would be better for the HDC portal to be used by everyone with access to the internet.

The Chairman added that the developer with the current application to develop Sandgate Nursery wanted to add a greater number of houses at Sandgate Nursery than the 60 shown in the Local Plan. He said that he thought the Speed Indicator Displays (SIDs) can record the volume of traffic as well as speed and might be helpful, but he also said that volume of traffic alone would not, in his view, be enough to prevent a development.

Cllr Perry said that it was good to hear so many views as well as having a good attendance at this meeting.

The Chairman confirmed that the Plans Advisory Committee would be meeting in a few days time to discuss how to proceed having heard the comments raised this evening.

Cllr Bob Harber said he was disappointing for those people who had spent a great deal of time on NHP and some of that may be lost with Local Plan.

Cllr Potts said he would welcome anyone getting in touch with him or other Parish Councillors; he agreed with Cllr Harber about the time already spent on NHP.

Cllr Mike Croker said in his view a Local Plan was needed as without it nothing is off limits and everything in Local Plan won't necessarily get passed. He said that at Planning meetings he and others would be looking at the details from WSCC about traffic and will be challenging the details from Southern Water.

The Chairman closed the meeting and thanked the District Councillors and other Parish Councillors who had come along as well as all the residents. He reiterated that the South end of Henfield Parish was just as important as other parts and that HPC would represent all parts of the Parish. He recommended very strongly that individuals respond to the consultation in their own right and if possible directly on the local plan pages of HDC's website.