

Neighbourhood Plan Review

Site Selection Consultation

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN REVIEW STEERING GROUP SUMMARY REPORT

Wisborough Green Parish

Approved July 2020

SUMMARY

A public consultation event was held in September 2019 to seek residents' views on potential development sites. As part of the Chichester District Local Plan Review, it is anticipated that a further 25 dwellings may be required to be incorporated into the Wisborough Green Neighbourhood Plan (WGNP).

At the consultation, attendees were asked to complete a booklet which asked questions about the displayed information. Site assessments were available for 7 potential sites, with a further 7 sites suggested as being unsuitable for inclusion with reasons why they were not being consulted on.

CONCLUSIONS

1. The consultation was representative. It was well attended by 190 visitors from all areas of the Parish. It achieved its objective in gathering quality information from Parishioners in order to inform the revision to the current Neighbourhood Plan.
2. A large majority felt the consultation had been presented in a clear and understandable way and felt sufficient information to aid decision making had been provided.
3. There was general agreement with the site assessment process and the individual site assessments, with Stable Field having slightly lower agreement than others.
4. There was strong preference not to have all the development on a single site.
5. There was no clear or strong preference for any one site. Tanglewood Nursery with pavement, Winterfold Garden and Stable Field with pavement were the more popular sites.
6. There was dominant agreement of why the sites not consulted on had been assessed as unsuitable.
7. The Farnagates sites (WG19-11 & 12) received the least support. The 5 remaining sites provide sufficient capacity for the current allocation.
8. Access to some sites has yet to be determined. There is therefore a risk to availability if safe site access is challenging to achieve or insufficient for the proposed number.
9. There was strong support to challenge Chichester District Council if there is any increase beyond the proposed additional 25 housing allocation.

STEERING GROUP ANALYSIS OF CONSULTATION COMMENTS

General Comments

Inconsistency with Traffic Light System: Prior to site assessment, independent advice on the assessment process was obtained from an independent chartered Town Planner with extensive experience in neighbourhood and strategic planning. A detailed review of the previous assessment process was undertaken as no set or recommended methodology to assess sites for Neighbourhood Plan (NP) allocations is available. Guidance provides a basic framework to consider whether sites are suitable, achievable and available, but does not recommend specific criteria or scoring methods. The traffic light rating system is used by many organisations and for many different purposes as a recognised tool for evaluating against set criteria or goals.

In order to maintain some continuity, similar headings to those used previously were adopted although updated to accord with revised NPPF guidance; the assessment criteria were validated by the consultant prior to use. All sites were assessed as individual sites and rated against this set criteria, not as a site to site direct comparison exercise. Members of the NP Review Steering Group undertook assessments as individuals or in small groups and discussed by the working group to standardise the

results. It is important to acknowledge that the local assessments were undertaken based on local judgement and knowledge. Where members had declared an interest in any proposed site, they were excluded from the site assessment.

Assessment can be subjective, and every effort was made to ensure that the process was objective. Acknowledging that opinion can vary, independent assessment was also undertaken by AECOM to validate results; these assessments were also displayed.

Inclusion of two double red sites: The NP Review Steering Group and AECOM ratings were a red traffic light due to several factors. For Stable Field, this primarily related to the site being in an identified Local Green Gap and therefore contrary to Neighbourhood Plan policy. For Paddock Farm Field, safe and suitable access had not been confirmed. The Parish Council made the decision to include these two sites, with explanation, to gauge opinion should the sites progress through the selection process on receipt of further Local Gap and Highways advice.

Five Minute Walking Isochrone: The spatial strategy for the village, as detailed in the WGNP, is to ensure future development allows the village to remain compact. The allocation of local gaps to mark the gateways to the village will ensure the settlement does not sprawl along radial routes. To achieve this spatial strategy, a 5-minute walking isochrone was identified as a distance people would naturally walk to facilities and therefore reduce car use; this became the key criteria to assess the compatibility with the spatial strategy. In the context of our village, sustainability factors favour sites that are closer to the village centre and have safe pavement access to central village facilities. Matching popular location with the practicalities of sustainability is a challenge, hence why favoured brownfield sites at Newpound were previously discounted.

In terms of the sites promoted at the September consultation event, the 5-minute isochrone was queried. In the case of Glebe Field, although not within the isochrone, it is located on the edge and safe pedestrian access already exists to the village. For Stable Field, the proposed development on the eastern side is not within the 5-minute isochrone itself, although it is on the western corner; the landowner indicated that a linking pedestrian path would be provided within the field and on the highway. It is acknowledged that Tanglewood is outside the 5-minute isochrone.

Access: Queries were raised about safe vehicle as well as pedestrian access. At the time of the consultation event, all landowners had indicated that safe access could be provided although not confirmed for the site or for the number of houses promoted. Prior to the consultation event, independent highways opinion was sought for several sites to inform the assessment process. In view of local concerns highlighted at the consultation event, highways advice was sought from West Sussex County Council; unfortunately, reference was only made to pre-application advice service. The Parish Council has therefore engaged an independent Highways Engineer to offer further opinion to inform the selection process. If there is any access query, it will be landowner responsibility to obtain WSCC Highways opinion to allow the site to progress to the next stage of the selection process.

Site Specific Queries

WG19-3: Tanglewood Nursery

Those not familiar with planning terminology perceive the old nursery site as a brownfield site, although it does still retain a 'Greenfield' categorisation. Even though it is a pre-used site, it is also excluded from the Previously Developed Land definition which excludes land that is or has been occupied by agricultural buildings. The adjoining site, Greenways Nursery, had planning permission for 10 caravans for residential purposes granted on appeal in November 2014, and therefore included

in the Neighbourhood Plan. As such, the precedent to develop an ex-nursery site has been demonstrated.

Regarding safe pedestrian access, it is to be noted that the Greenways Nursery Appeal Inspector allowed the 10 residential caravans without pavement provision to the village. The Tanglewood site is being promoted for 6 units. Until a highways assessment is undertaken, this requirement and whether achievable is unknown. The use of third-party land may be required, which includes the village green owned by the Parish Council.

WG19-4: Stable Field

Several comments related to the map and the impression that development would be over the entire site when the eastern side had been offered to the village as a sports field. A decision was made to exclude reference to any 'community gain' to ensure that opinion was focused on development location, rather than influencing opinion. Explanation to the location of the proposed development (on the western side) was included in the written assessment description in two places and given by NP Review Steering Group members, when requested. Comments that refer to the gift of land for sports use, located within a Local Green Gap, relate to this community gain, details of which were made public prior to the consultation event.

In hindsight, visually indicating the gifted land would have given further clarity but to ensure an unbiased approach, this would have also been relevant to Winterfold Garden (with the donation of a garage for community use) and Glebe Field (with a donation of community land). It is to be noted that both these references to community gain were not mentioned as details have yet to be confirmed. Any community gain for the other sites had not been discussed with the landowners.

Reference was also made that safe access to the site had been demonstrated on appeal and this was not represented in the site description. Reference was also made that pedestrian access could be achieved. It should be noted that whilst the landowner identified that safe pedestrian access could be achieved, this would involve third party land (the Village Green, owned by the Parish Council) which had not been confirmed.

WG19-7: Paddock Farm Field

Many comments related to traffic and access, feeling that the impact of traffic entering the village at this point had been underestimated.

It was originally proposed by the landowner that access would be via Balchins Close and as such, local and AECOM site assessments were undertaken using this access. One week prior to the consultation event, the landowner advised that the access had been changed. The local assessment details were changed, but AECOM assessment and further access opinion could not be sought in time. Although the landowner's agent indicated that access could be achieved, not only in terms of visibility splays on the A272 but also over third-party land, this was not confirmed prior to the consultation event and therefore noted accordingly in the site assessment. The NP Review Steering Group, in discussion with the Parish Council, agreed to include the site to gauge community opinion at this stage.

WG19-8: Glebe Field

The comments indicated general questioning as to why the site had been included and not rated as red. This site was first put forward for the first NP consultations in 2014 and Historic England raised concerns about the impact of development on the historic church. The site has again been promoted for this consultation and is also included on the CDC Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment 2018 (HWG0011). CDC assessment indicates that “The site is potentially suitable subject to detailed consideration of the impact of development on designated heritage assets. The site was submitted during the Call for Sites 2016 and is therefore considered available. There is a reasonable prospect that development would be achievable during the Plan period.”