



Neighbourhood Development Plan service offer to Town and Parish Councils and approved Neighbourhood Forums

July 2012

Introduction

This note sets out the Action in Rural Sussex (AirS) scope of works for the purpose of providing to a Town or Parish Council (or legitimate Neighbourhood Forum) in Sussex with a full suite of professional services to complete a Neighbourhood Development Plan.

About us

Action in rural Sussex has 80 years experience in supporting communities to achieve their aspirations. We are the market leader in delivering community-led planning in Sussex and have a skilled and experienced team who are experts in community development, housing and planning. We directly assist communities with the process of gathering evidence and developing the plan documents. The process places much emphasis on rigorous community consultation and social inclusion, generating evidence that is representative of the priorities of the whole community.

The AirS Neighbourhood Plan service includes professional planning and design expertise provided by our retained consultants, rCOH Ltd. Working to AirS and the project steering group, rCOH's planners and architects are able to advise councils on planning policy, development options, viability and design issues. This means we are able to interrogate developers proposals, review the technical evidence, and draft the neighbourhood plan and sustainability appraisal documents, including all plans and exhibition materials, as part of our comprehensive service.

The scope of works assumes the following:

- the client has established a steering group to manage and administer the Plan project – although AirS can offer support to enable this if not
- the client has formally registered with the Local Planning Authority (LPA) its intention to prepare a Plan and that this has been approved
- the local Planning authority and client are able to provide all the necessary evidence (other than the community survey) to AirS
- *the client or the LPA is able to provide AirS with all the necessary Plan and image licenses for use in preparing and publishing the Plan

The Value of AirS Support in Neighbourhood Planning

There is a combination of factors that will drive local councils to require specialist Planning, design and community engagement consulting support.

Firstly, the LPA in the area may be proposing a new Local Plan that will delegate to Neighbourhood Plans decisions for local land use allocations, rather than prepare its own 'site allocations' development Plan document for this purpose.

Secondly, the parish may be located in an area of high environmental quality but also of significant development pressure, from both within the LPA area and from adjoining areas. Landowners and developers may have already submitted to the LPA a range of housing proposals for consideration during the most recent 'call for sites'. It is expected that the NPPF will encourage the promoters of these proposals to argue their case robustly in the Plan preparation process and beyond.

And thirdly, the parish may comprise a number of distinct villages, each with its own character and identity and with different opportunities and constraints for growth in the coming years.

In which case, the parish will face a number of strategic choices about how much, where and when it should accommodate growth, and of what type. It has to engage and inform its local communities in a way that acknowledges the upsides and downsides of the choices to be made. And it has to be careful to follow proper procedure to minimise the risk of the Plan being determined as unsound.

If one or more of these circumstances apply to a town/parish/neighbourhood area then it is very likely that AirS' service offer will be well suited to helping the local community deliver a sound Neighbourhood Plan within a year to 18 months.

Proposed scope

Completing & analysing the evidence base and community survey response

We will use our comprehensive Sussex rural database of relevant information to define the key characteristics of the Plan area. We will use our online Community 21 platform to deposit this information for the community to examine and discuss at future workshops.

We will draft a community survey to obtain further information from households on their living, working, leisure and travel patterns and on their attitudes to development generally and key planning issues in the parish specifically. Once approved by you, depending on the size of the parish we can undertake the survey either by printing and mailing it to all households in the parish with a pre-paid envelope for return to us; or in larger areas (more than 2000 households or so) we recommend using alternative means of surveying the community; sample and online surveys for example. The full cost of the survey process will therefore depend on the methodology used. Finally, we will input the data into a survey report for analysis with the steering group and upload it on to Community 21.

We will review all the evidence base, comprising:

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- The evidence base of the Core Strategy/Local Plan and other relevant, local development Plan documents, e.g. SHLAA, SA/SEA, Infrastructure Plan, Transport Strategy
- Current significant Planning proposals at pre-Planning and application stages
- The community survey report
- The parish Plan (or similar) and any previous, relevant community surveys

We propose to have an initial meeting with relevant officers of the LPA in respect of the first and second tasks above to ensure we fully understand the relationship between the Plan and Local Plan and the LPA's expectations of the robustness of the Plan. It may also be appropriate for us to meet with representatives of the developers that are promoting proposals on which the Plan will be expected to take a view.

We will capture from this analysis the key issues for the Plan in a short 'State of the Parish' report, which we would propose to validate with the LPA (at a meeting with the relevant officers) before submitting to the steering group for approval.

We will organise and attend an open day exhibition of the report (assuming 10 a.m. – 8 p.m. on a week day).

During this stage of the process we expect to prepare for and attend up to two steering group meetings and to provide ongoing liaison between all the various parties in the project, on behalf of the steering group. In doing so, we will log and keep a record of all material correspondence received and sent.

It is estimated these activities will require 11 days of AirS input (additional time / costs may be incurred depending on the survey process undertaken)

Draft Plan preparation

We suggest the above report is circulated to the village focus group(s) to inform a debate about the content of the Draft Plan. We suggest that the Steering Group then hosts a workshop of group members and members of the focus group(s).

We will facilitate the workshop, the purpose of which will be to discuss and agree the key principles of the Plan, including housing numbers, locations and types and other land use and infrastructure proposals. It is anticipated that the Draft Plan may comprise a combination of firm proposals and options for the scale and location of development, on both of which the community and other stakeholders will be invited to comment during the six week consultation period.

We will prepare the Draft Plan, which will include a summary of the 'State of the Parish' report, the Plan objectives (including the measures by which its success will be judged in due course), the proposed land use allocations, the proposed Planning policies, the proposed infrastructure investments and a delivery Plan (setting out how each policy and proposal will be financed and implemented). During this process we may have to meet with LPA officers to discuss the emerging Plan. It will also include a full colour proposals map showing the spatial distribution of the proposed land use allocations and other policies and infrastructure proposals. We will deliver to you two complete hard copies and a digital (pdf)

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version of the Draft Plan (and Proposals Map). You should agree with LPA the means by which the consultation exercise will be carried out, including using online methods.

In partnership with the NP steering group we expect to organise and attend an open day exhibition of the Draft Plan and to prepare the exhibition materials (assuming a combination of display boards of written content, colour Plans and images, and a consultation response form).

During this stage of the process we expect to prepare for and attend up to four steering group meetings and to provide ongoing liaison between all the various parties in the project, on behalf of the steering group.

It is estimated these activities will require 10 days of AirS input.

Draft Sustainability Appraisal preparation

We believe this task is important but has to be proportionate to a Neighbourhood Plan project and, assuming the use of the LPA's sustainability appraisal objectives and data, this should be straightforward.

However, we expect that the Appraisal (SA) will be an important means of demonstrating that specific proposals can be supported or should be rejected in the Plan. It must therefore be prepared with care and have sufficient robustness to withstand the scrutiny of those whose proposals are to be rejected.

We will prepare the Draft SA, comprising a schedule of sustainability objectives (derived from the Local Plan SA) and will show how each specific proposal (and each option, if options have been included) measures up against each relevant objective. Where negative sustainability impacts are identified, we will indicate how such impacts may be mitigated.

The Draft SA will be prepared as a single report, elements of which will be used to inform the above workshop that in turn will inform the SA. It will be ready to accompany the Draft PLAN for the consultation exercise.

It is estimated these activities will require 3 days of AirS input.

Submission Plan & Sustainability Appraisal

We will collect and log the representations made during the consultation exercise. We will then review each representation and propose to the Steering Group an appropriate response (either agree and amend or disagree) in a single schedule. Representations will include which choice of option is preferred (if these have been included in the Draft Plan).

We will also refer to the Draft SA where this has helped shape a response to an issue or indicate where there may need to be changes made to the Submission SA.

On the assumption that the LPA and the Steering Group are able to agree the proposed response to each representation (and to the option choices) we will then prepare the Submission Plan and SA in the same format as the drafts (unless advised otherwise).

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We expect to attend a meeting with officers of the LPA to discuss key representations and then attend up to two meetings of the Steering Group during this stage. We will also continue to provide ongoing liaison between all the various parties in the project, on behalf of the steering group.

We will then support the NP steering group to complete the Consultation Statement to accompany the Submission Plan and SA. The LPA can advise you on how this statement should be structured. We will begin the preparation of the statement at the beginning of the project and update it to capture information on all the consultations and engagement exercises of the project.

It is estimated these activities will require 6 days of AirS input.

Examination

We expect that from the Examination onwards the LPA will play a lead role and we will therefore not be required.

Should the LPA require the Steering Group to undertake more of this task, and you in turn require us to prepare written representations and/or to review the Examiner's report, then we can provide an additional scope of works and fee proposal in due course.

Project Duration

In terms of project duration, we believe the following timetable is achievable for the above activities:

- State of the Parish report – completed within one month of instruction for Steering Group discussion
- Draft Plan Workshop – held within the next month
- Draft Plan & SA – completed within two months for Steering Group approval
- Public Consultation – a minimum of six weeks
- Schedule of Representations & Responses – completed within two weeks for Steering Group approval
- Submission Plan & SA – completed within a month for Steering Group approval to submit to the LPA

Fee Budgeting

Based on this scope of works, it is estimated AirS will be required to input a total of 30 days for the duration of the project. At our Neighbourhood Plan rate the total fee will be £13,500 + VAT + expenses.

We normally agree with the client to invoice for days completed up to the cap for each stage on the client's approval of:

- the 'State of the Parish' report
- the Draft Neighbourhood Plan (and Sustainability Appraisal if our responsibility)
- the Submission Neighbourhood Plan (and Sustainability Appraisal if our responsibility)

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We will retain the final day fee allocation for the examination, if our input is required

We acknowledge that local community client budgets will always be tight. In which case, we will only charge for actual days input up to the maximum set for each activity to provide the client with the benefit of a task being completed quicker than anticipated here.

But, if it becomes clear that we have significantly under-estimated the time required in this scope, then we would expect the client to be willing to negotiate changes to the scope that are mutually acceptable, ideally finding ways in which Steering Group members may be able to take on some tasks or that the LPA may be willing to offer additional support.

The AirS Team

The team comprises a small number of experienced and skilled community engagement officers, housing specialists and professional planners and designers.

We will designate a Project Manager, who will be your main point of contact for the duration of the project. The manager will ensure that the project plan is adhered to and the services provided meet your satisfaction.

Next Steps

This scope of works provides a general guide to the breadth and depth of the service offered by AirS. We expect each project to require some amendments to this scope, although not to any great extent.

If your Town or Parish Council (or approved Neighbourhood Forum) is interested in discussing our services further, then please contact:

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