

**West Wittering Neighbourhood Plan**

**XXX Focus Group Working Paper**

**July 2017**



CONTENTS

**INTRODUCTION**

**Overview**

This report sets out the work undertaken by the xxx Focus Group, and our proposed recommendations to be considered for the West Wittering draft Neighbourhood Plan.

X…………………………………………..

**The xxx Focus Group Members**

**Introduction (**About West Wittering in relation to focus group area)

**Aim and Objectives of group (Example from a different parish below)**

The Focus Group’s aim and objectives are based upon a strong foundation of evidence from the following 5 bullet points:

* Responses given in the Neighbourhood Plan, Housing Needs and Young People’s surveys;
* Input from the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and Focus Groups
* Input from Neighbourhood Plan workshops;
* Input from local stakeholder groups;

***The Focus Group’s aim is: Within the constraints of the limited space available, to meet the demand from and needs of the local community for high quality, well designed new market and affordable homes within the core area of the town whilst conserving and enhancing the natural and historic environment. We will do this by setting out specific proposals in the Neighbourhood Plan that complement the existing national and district policies*.**

In delivering this aim, the Focus Group has the following objectives:

***1. To meet the needs and expectations of local people by allocating high quality new open market and affordable homes on previously developed land within the planning boundary.***

***2. In accordance with local and national policy, to provide for a range of housing mix, types and tenures in the most sustainable locations that are accessible to local services and facilities.***

***3. To set out design specifications to ensure that new homes and developments complement and enhance the town’s built and natural heritage.***

To inform and shape these objectives, we undertook a SWOT analysis:

**SWOT Analysis for Group**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Strengths:** | **Weaknesses:** |
| **Opportunities:** | **Threats:** |

**Summary of issues and concerns (backed with evidence)**

This section sets out evidence against each of the above objectives identified by the group to help achieve our overall aim. As a Focus group, we fully recognise our role as identifying issues affecting the parish and suggesting/making recommendations to be fully consulted with residents.

To enable us achieve this, we have undertaken a review of the key current policy framework within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the existing Chichester Local Plan (CLP) and emerging (Review) of the Chichester Local Plan.

Examples below

**Objective 1: Provision of Sport, Recreation and Play and Existing Recreational Open Space**

The Focus Group reviewed a number of schools and playing fields as we see these as integral to the Town. However, we are also aware that the role of the Neighbourhood Plan is to add to the policy framework, not to duplicate it. We are aware that Lewes District Council has retained policies RE1, RE2 and SF12. RE1 and RE2 state:

RE1 - Provision of Sport, Recreation and Play

The Council will seek (through positive planning and provision, and through the control of development) to achieve provision of outdoor public and private playing space, which are as a matter of practise and policy available for public use, to at least the following minimum standards:

* 1.7 ha per 1,000 population for outdoor sports, including pitches, courts and greens, and
* 0.7 ha per 1000 population for children’s play, of which about 0.2 – 0.3ha will comprise equipped areas and 0.4 – 0.5ha will be of a more casual or informal nature.

RE2 - Existing Recreational Open Space

Planning permission will not be granted for development proposals which would result in the loss of existing outdoor playing space, or other space with recreational or amenity values regardless of their current or past availability to the public, unless it can be demonstrated that:

* sports and recreation facilities can be best retained and enhanced through the redevelopment of a small part of the site, or
* alternative provision of at least equivalent community benefit is made available.

The supporting text to SF12 states that, at the time it was written, that there is a recognised shortfall of recreation space in the Town. This is a very strong policy backdrop and an area where, in our view, no additional policy recommendations are required.

**Recommendation 1: *That RE1 and RE2 considerations continue to be given full weight and consideration as part of the planning process.***

**Objective 2: examine whether there are any heritage assets or heritage character (including conservation area) concerns that may require recommendations in the Neighbourhood Plan;**

The Town is fortunate to have a significant number of heritage assets and sites, almost all of which are currently designated with some form of status/ designation. Annex D provides an overview of the registered sites, and based on current information and analysis we believe that almost all have been adequately accounted for already. There were, however, three identified that we thought needed further clarification:

Sutton Road War Memorial: We had rightly considered adding the Sutton Road War Memorial as a key heritage asset to the Town, but are pleased to confirm that designation had already been given prior to this report being published. As such, no further action is required.

Drinking Fountain Monument: This is located at the junction of South Street and Steyne Road. The inscription reads as follows: "Erected by public subscription to commemorate the completion of fifty years of the reign of her most gracious Majesty Queen Victoria. A.D. 1887." We are unaware of any designation for this, and propose that this important heritage site is added to the list for the and afforded due designations.

The Focus Group also recognises that many of our heritage sites are not only important to our environment, but also to tourism. We would therefore urge sites that promote tourism to be maintained as much as possible. This could be through a mix of:

Where available, funding being provided for their maintenance;

The Town Council acting as a “convenor” and “communicator” to support any community led action to help maintain and preserve our heritage sites.

***Recommendation 2a: Add the Steyne Road drinking fountain to the list of Town heritage designated sites.***

***Recommendation 2b: That through funding (if available) or community action that our heritage and conservation sites, are better prioritised for maintenance wherever possible.***

**Objective 3: promote and enhance biodiversity in the Town;**

The Focus Group rightly identified that promoting and enhancing biodiversity is absolutely essential. The Group was therefore particularly pleased to see the focus on both biodiversity and green infrastructure in the Lewes District Council Core Strategy, in particular:

Page 33: “Enhancements to the biodiversity of the district, including the further creation of a high quality network of habitats”

Page 111 – Core Policy 8 sets out an approach to Green Infrastructure, and includes how biodiversity (amongst many other issues) can be both enhanced and preserved. Paragraph 7.80 in particular states:

Green infrastructure refers to a multi-functional linked network of green spaces that provide opportunities for biodiversity and recreation. It includes:

* parks and gardens
* natural and semi-natural urban greenspaces – including woodlands, scrub, grasslands, wetlands, open and running water, cliff tops and foreshore, disused quarries and pits.
* green corridors – including river banks and rights of way
* outdoor sports facilities (with natural or artificial surfaces, either publicly or privately owned) and cycleways
* amenity greenspace (most commonly, but not exclusively, in housing areas)
* provision for children and teenagers
* allotments and community gardens
* cemeteries and churchyards
* accessible countryside in urban fringe areas
* river corridors
* green roofs and walls

The Focus Group recognises that the NPPF (paragraphs 7 and 118 in particular), the Core Strategy, and wider District Policies, create a very good framework to both enhance and to promote biodiversity within the development and planning process. As a result, there was only one area where the Focus Group wants to make recommendations based on the work we have done to date:

Grass verges: The Town is fortunate to have a significant number of grass verges that are integral to the Town because:

They naturally absorb rain and therefore support the natural flood defences of the Town;

Many act as “green corridors” for a range of wildlife;

They add to both the visual aesthetics and natural beauty of the Town;

Many are home to trees and flora which support the environment and natural habitats of the Town.

Whilst we recognise that at some point in the future some verges may be deemed suitable for development, additional thought to preserving and enhancing verges is important. There are two areas where we think policy recommendations may be necessary:

***Recommendation 3: That we take forward a policy on Grass Verges that likely includes:***

***Where possible, the quality of verges is enhanced and preserved through, for example, the planting of trees and the protection of wild plants.***

***To facilitate tree planting, when utility firms seek to place new, or maintain, infrastructure underground, the impact on tree planting on verges should be given consideration to help ensure as many trees as possible can be planted to enhance our environment; and***

***That further investigation is made into how verges with sensitive species present can be best enhanced and preserved through the existing ESCC Wildlife Verge Scheme***

**Objective 4: In accordance with local and national policy, to provide for a range of housing mix, types and tenures in the most sustainable locations that are accessible to local services and facilities**.

National Planning Policy Framework

5.5.1 Two Core Planning Principles set out in Paragraph 17 on page 6 of the NPPF are to: “actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable; and take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.”

Core Strategy

5.5.2 Paragraph 3.2 on page 29 of the Core Strategy states that “Although growth options are limited, due to significant environmental constraints, there is still a need to ensure that new development is provided in the most sustainable locations.”

5.5.3 In addition, Lewes Strategic Plan Core Policy 7 on page 108 has one key objective – “To work with other agencies to improve the accessibility to key community services and facilities and to provide the new and upgraded infrastructure that is required to create and support sustainable communities.”

5.5.4 Core Policy 7 continues on page 110 to say “The creation of sustainable communities in the district where residents enjoy a high quality of life will be achieved by: 4. Ensuring that land is only released for development where there is sufficient capacity in the existing local infrastructure to meet the additional requirements arising from the proposed development. Where development would create the need to provide additional or improved community facilities, services or infrastructure, a programme of delivery will be agreed with the relevant infrastructure providers to ensure that these improvements are provided at the time they are needed.”

***Recommendation 4: That the existing policy framework relating to development in sustainable locations and creating and supporting sustainable communities continues to be given full weight and consideration as part of the planning process. Following stakeholder and public consultation the Focus Group will consider if further policy is needed in relation to this.***

In the Focus Group SWOT analysis one of the weaknesses identified was a lack of infrastructure, particularly local amenity in the South East corner of the parish and uncertainty over future train services. Inadequate infrastructure was also highlighted in the Neighbourhood Plan Survey, which reported numerous comments from residents about existing infrastructure in the town being unable to sustain further development. In particular comments were made about medical services, schooling, roads, parking, policing, shops and utilities.

*Add evidence from surveys, assessments, existing literature, workshops, open days etc.*

**Annex A: List of Key Evidence Used (surveys, workshops, public events, existing information, census, etc.)**

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Xxx

Xxx

Xx

Xx

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**Annex B: List of stakeholders we approached**

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