

Plumpton Parish Neighbourhood Plan

Update February 2017

1. What has been happening since June?

The Steering Group (SG) received many responses to the consultation in June last year. These responses came directly from residents, planning agents on behalf of residents, statutory bodies (LDC, ESCC, and SDNP etc) as well as developers. To answer these responses fully, we needed to complete a robust review of the Site Assessment and Strategic Environment Assessment reports which has taken a considerable amount of time to work through, but we were hoping to have completed this by the end of February.

2. Local planning decisions

Over the last few months there has been a clear change in the political environment as regards national and local housing supply strategy.

A number of recent court decisions relating to neighbourhood plans have changed radically the environment in which we are finalising our neighbourhood plan. The most important is the ruling by the Secretary of State on Newick, which has obliged Lewes District Council to over-ride the Newick neighbourhood plan, after it was adopted, and grant planning permission to a development of a further 50 houses that was not included in the plan. The decision made clear that neighbourhood plans **did not take precedence** over planning law, and where there was a need for housing, and development land was available that met LDC sustainability criteria, then planning permission should be granted.

In the light of the Newick ruling, and the comments we received, we have to ensure that our assessments of each site are completely objective and robust, and be mindful that any land included in the LDC Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) (which is updated regularly as new sites come on-stream) may be developed, whether it is in the neighbourhood plan or not, and the units on these sites would be **in addition to** those in the plan.

3. Sites

The owners of site 2.5, south of the railway (east side), have reluctantly withdrawn their land from the plan. Similarly, at the time of writing the Racecourse site is not achievable in the eyes of LDC since the pedestrian access required has not been

agreed. If a site is not achievable it cannot be included as a primary site in a neighbourhood plan.

We have recently been made aware that we need to include in our site assessment process the site at Nolands Farm, which was originally excluded from the draft neighbourhood plan because it had no access. The developers have found a way to create access.

Therefore, taking these two facts into consideration means there will be changes to the draft plan on which we consulted in June, and this is what the Steering Group is considering now.

4. The growing housing target

We have been told that LDC has been instructed by the government to find land within the district for an extra 200 houses on top of their original target. It is likely that Plumpton will have to accept some of those 200, although we do not know how many. Our draft plan made provision for more than the minimum 50 houses, but, in the light of the new target, we may have to demonstrate that Plumpton is willing to accept a larger number, in return for control on where new houses are built and the extent of any future development within this planning period (to 2030).

5. Limits of neighbourhood planning policy

Neighbourhood plans were initially sold to local communities with the promise that they would give them control on the number and the location of any new housing in their village. It is clear now that the government is retracting this local control.

However, the SG still firmly believes that it is better to have a neighbourhood plan than to have no plan at all. The SG will continue to do all it can to include in the plan as many residents' preferences as possible while being cognisant of modern planning principles so the plan will pass both LDC scrutiny and subsequently the planning inspector, and the final referendum.