

Report on LDC, Full Council Meeting Monday 26th November.

Yesterday evening a full Lewes District Council meeting voted in favour of passing the Lewes Local Plan Part 2 (LPP2) which included the proposed Gypsy and Traveller site, to the Independent Examiner. Support for the plan was expected, but what was not expected was the closeness of the vote with 18 supporting, 17 against and 1 abstention. Our District Councillor, Sarah Osborne, voted against.

The two key issues were policy E1 (Newhaven development) and GT01. It was clear that several councillors felt uncomfortable that they were being asked to approve a document that they regarded as not yet complete or indeed, correct. The phrase 'between a rock and a hard place' was used. It's hard not to draw comparisons with the current Brexit deal since some councilors clearly felt it was better to support a bad plan rather than not having one and risking open season with developers.

The Parish Council had lobbied hard to get the policy affecting Plumpton (GT01) removed from the plan. However, this would have necessitated another consultation period and the whole local plan would have been delayed. The LPP2 policies were drafted on the basis of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in 2012, rather than on the basis of the revised NPPF published on 24 July 2018. The Planning Policy team have 6 months from this 24 July 2018 date to get their plan in under 2012 rules (so January 2019) - In other words any delay to the current plan would mean that the Local Plan would have to be re-written under the policies of the NPPF 2018 version which in itself might mean an increase in housing allocation according to one of the councillors who supported the plan.

So now we must wait for the Independent examination and prepare for our chance to speak at that examination. The hope is that the examiner recognises the Parish Council's legitimate concerns about an unsustainable site and questions LDC as to why the site is now deemed suitable for Travellers when the site had previously been refused permission for permanent housing.

Our objection to the site has the support of Sarah Osborne, our District and County councillor, and our MP Maria Caulfield, who has already expressed her concerns to the Secretary of State on our behalf. Nonetheless if the examiner does conclude that the plan is sound and the GT01 policy survives then the next step would be the subsequent planning application. So, there two further steps in the process before this is concluded and the Parish Council will continue to oppose this on planning grounds.