

## Additional housing targets for Lewes District Council (LDC) – Q&A

16<sup>th</sup> February: PPC has now met with Lewes District Council, as well as representatives of the Eton site to the east of Plumpton and can provide some further updates on the planning issue and what it means for the Nolands site.

29<sup>th</sup> January: PPC recently informed you that we had become aware of a potentially large development in Plumpton Green. That has naturally attracted some questions and requests for more information.

16 <sup>th</sup> February 2021	What has caused the situation where developers can operate outside of the democratically decided local and neighbourhood plans?	The government has committed to increasing house building and made changes in planning policy in 2019 meaning that planning authorities like LDC must review their plans when they are 5 years old. For LDC the Local Plan Part 1 (LPP1) which our neighbourhood plan is based on reaches 5 years old in May 2021 (the plan was originally intended to last until 2030). Unfortunately, LDC thinks it will be ‘winter 2023’ before a new version of LPP1 is ready due to the amount of work involved and the consultation processes set out in law. In the meantime, it is unclear how much weight must be given to the current plan.
16 <sup>th</sup> February 2021	Why has this triggered an increase in housing numbers for LDC?	The planning policy changes also introduced a new national calculation which LDC must use to determine housing requirements, rather than apply local knowledge. This is called the Standard Method. Under this method the number for LDC rises from 275 new houses per annum to 606 new houses per annum. This has created planning uncertainty that can be exploited by developers who will claim that LDC cannot demonstrate a five-year supply for this new number.
16 <sup>th</sup> February 2021	Is the new number set in stone?	No, for two reasons. Firstly, within the policy changes LDC can seek to use ‘exceptional circumstances’ to challenge the Standard Method, and under the ‘duty to cooperate’ could move undeliverable target to neighbouring districts. Secondly, because of the widespread outcry on the impact of the policy changes there is some informed opinion that the government will amend the statistical basis for the calculation which could change the outcome.
16 <sup>th</sup> February 2021	What is Plumpton Parish Council doing about this?	We are working with all the other LDC parishes (who are facing the same threat of opportunistic development after May 2021) and LDC itself to make sure that the current neighbourhood plan is respected until LDC can produce a new local plan. We have also written to Maria Caulfield as she has indicated concern over the impact of the planning policy changes, as the result of them seems to be the exact opposite of what was intended – to avoid unplanned and speculative developments.

16 <sup>th</sup> February 2021	Isn't more new housing a good thing?	<p>Yes there are benefits, but we already have 70 new homes planned under a neighbourhood plan that was adopted after significant consultation and with a large majority at referendum.</p> <p>The plan includes a minimum 40% target for 'affordable' housing.</p> <p>By way of example, the Oakfield development has now commenced and of the 20 units, LDC will acquire 8 properties (3 three bed, and 5 two bed) for social housing.</p>
16 <sup>th</sup> February 2021	Is more known about the plans for Nolands?	<p>Fairfax have launched a website with some more details, but at this stage can only give an indicative picture of the final scheme and no confirmation of when a detailed planning application will be made <a href="https://www.plumpton-fairfax.co.uk/">https://www.plumpton-fairfax.co.uk/</a></p>
16 <sup>th</sup> February 2021	What is the Plumpton Parish Council view on the proposed Fairfax development?	<p>As a matter of principle, we consider the proposal is speculative until the uncertainty over the true housing target for LDC is resolved, and LDC has evaluated all the options.</p> <p>Whilst we acknowledge that the site has potential should a new housing target be allocated to Plumpton, we don't think the site should be considered in isolation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PPC will as a matter of principle not support any development of this magnitude that is not 'plan-led', i.e. it is not part of the LDC local plan or our neighbourhood plan</li> <li>• PPC will retain this position even when LDC local plan is deemed to be 'out of date' on its five-year anniversary in May, as under planning policy strategic documents must still be 'given weight' in decision making, and it is stated government intent that decision taking should be 'plan led' and not speculative</li> <li>• PPC will continue to push for LDC to update its strategic plans, and in particular update spatial policies to direct housing, and set the target for Plumpton so that residents have a reasonable expectation of certainty about new housing in the parish.</li> </ul>
16 <sup>th</sup> February 2021	What if Fairfax won't wait for LDC to have a clear target?	<p>We don't expect Fairfax to wait so we will prepare a detailed response in anticipation of a planning application being submitted by Fairfax. This will cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Magnitude of the development is dis-proportionate (the single largest ever development in the parish, and the largest since the mid 1960's)</li> <li>• The incursion into open countryside extends the easterly notional building line to the parish boundary, leaving no buffer to potential developments outside the parish</li> <li>• The density of the site exceeds that of equivalent sites within the PPNP (it is roughly 50% more units per hectare than the Oakfield site that has just started development)</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to the site requires traffic calming measures, and these would have to extend beyond the frontage of the site to be effective</li> <li>• Loss of green space and ecological impact: this is being investigated by the Plumpton Wildlife Group</li> <li>• Infrastructure capacity and capability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Disparate and unreliable electricity distribution network</li> <li>○ Sewage system that cannot reliably deal with current demand leading to overflows</li> <li>○ Surface water systems that can't cope with existing volumes of run off leading to perennial flooding issues</li> <li>○ Mains water distribution system with pressure drops and outages due to burst mains</li> <li>○ Expensive, slow and unreliable broadband service</li> <li>○ Access to Plumpton Green is via rural rather than main roads, and pedestrian access is poor with no pavement network to the north and south of the village, and even restricted in some stretches within the village.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
16 <sup>th</sup> February 2021	Are there other potential sites in Plumpton?	Yes. LDC has recently made a call for land and this has resulted in over 20 sites being put forward. Some of these sites were considered as part of the neighbourhood plan, but some are new. <a href="#">The call for sites map is here.</a>
16 <sup>th</sup> February 2021	How many houses could there be on the Plumpton sites?	LDC has indicated that the sites could have a capacity of over 1000 houses, but we would not expect all of them to be suitable.
16 <sup>th</sup> February 2021	There was talk of a very large development of up to 5000 houses just to the east of Plumpton – has that gone away?	No. We have met with representatives of the site which is controlled by Eton College and they are preparing plans for a 3000 home development specifically tailored to a rural location. The site is not in Plumpton parish, but does border Plumpton Green to the east. See site 11PL on the <a href="#">call for sites map</a> . Fortunately, Eton has indicated that the site will only be developed as part of a new LDC plan.
29 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	What is the proposed development?	89 dwellings at the Nolands Farm site, north east of the Station Road/North Barnes Lane junction. See a <a href="#">map giving the site footprint here.</a>

29 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	Hasn't that been turned down before?	Yes, in February 2019 under planning application LW/17/08. In fact, that application was much smaller, covering 45 dwellings over a smaller portion of the land.
29 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	Why was it turned down?	The three main refusal reasons were that it: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• was not part of our neighbourhood plan</li> <li>• represented an unacceptable incursion of development and urbanisation of open countryside, resulting in harm to the rural and natural character of the landscape around Plumpton village</li> <li>• had access issues at Station Road.</li> </ul>
29 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	Who is involved this time?	It is the same developer, Fairfax, assisted by the planning consultants Parker Dann, who are well known locally (they are generally involved in finding land for LDC, and for instance they represented the Plumpton Action Group in objections to the proposed travellers site south of the Plough).
29 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	What stage is the process at?	Fairfax and Parker Dann have been working with East Sussex County Council (ESCC) and Lewes District Council (LDC) for some time now, and those parties signed a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) in early October 2020. We have been informed that a pre-application is imminent.
29 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	When will we have any certainty?	Hopefully when the pre-application is made the developer will share that with us and we will know some level of detail about what is being proposed, and why the developer considers the application has validity. However, a pre-application will not answer all our questions, and we may have to wait for an outline or detailed planning application for confirmation. In the meantime PPC will engage constructively with the developer whilst maintaining our objection to the proposal.
29 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	Has PPC got more details it can share on the proposal?	No – we have only seen a one page indicative site plan that the developer does not wish us to share with residents at this stage.
29 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	Does the fact that LDC has signed a Planning Performance Agreement with the developer mean that they support the development this time?	Not necessarily. As the best practice advice on PPAs states "Although pre-application engagement and PPAs are a means of encouraging a collaborative approach to considering and resolving issues about a development, these agreements do not imply any obligation on the part of the council to approve the planning application for the proposal."

29 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	If a smaller version of this development was turned down as recently as February 2019, why is LDC even discussing it again now?	We are not completely sure on this and our district councillor is trying to find out, but LDC generally has a duty to work with developers.
29 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	Is this a consequence of the LDC plan approaching 5 years old?	Possibly, but again planning law and policy is not clear cut and we cannot state definitively why this is happening now. Rather than speculate we are working to find the facts.
29 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	What could this mean for housing in LDC?	As we have said already, from May 2021 it appears that, unless LDC can argue otherwise, the housing target for LDC will be based on the 'Standard Method' which is a national statistical model. The impact of this is that LDC would receive a new annual target that increases the number of new dwellings required across the district by 227%. It also means that something called the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' kicks in – some regard this as a relaxation of local planning controls but that is not what we understand it was intended for.
29 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	When will LDC have an up to date plan?	We don't know yet, but back in July 2020 LDC indicated that it would be 'Winter 2023' before a new plan (Local Plan Part 1) would be adopted.
29 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	Are we at greater risk whilst LDC revises its strategic policies?	Hopefully not – the underlying principle of the changes to national planning policy were understood to be aimed at planning authorities that had been negligent by not creating strategic plans. LDC does not fit that category. The minister concerned was on record as stating the objective was to reduce speculative development and in particular to ensure " <i>that communities are not disadvantaged by unplanned growth</i> ". The opposite seems to be true in this case, but there has been a lot of recent press coverage of government attempts to change the planning system.
29 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	What are the implications for Plumpton from a new LDC local plan?	It is too early to say. Clearly, if LDC works out that it does in fact need more new housing than the current plan contains, then they will have to put them somewhere, and that might include an extra target for Plumpton. Unless and until that is the case, it would seem premature to discuss such a large development within Plumpton Green, which clearly does not match what the large majority of residents voted for in adopting the neighbourhood plan.
29 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	Isn't Plumpton already on course to deliver more new dwellings than LDC requested?	Yes. Whilst they may not have been 'built out' yet, the 4 sites in our neighbourhood plan will deliver 70 new dwellings over the plan period (it was 68, but LDC has approved 4 more at the 'Riddens' site, and the developer has reduced the 'Strawlands' site by 2).
29 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	What do our elected Parish, District and County representatives think of this?	Sarah Osborne as County Councillor, Rob Banks as District Councillor, and PPC have only just learned of this, and have not been consulted by the developer to date.

		<p>We are working to establish the facts – none of us are planning professionals and so we need to understand the implications.</p> <p>We all share the view that this application has no merit at the current time but need to understand what obligations LDC has.</p>
29 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	Weren't we supposed to have certainty on new housing for many years?	Yes – our neighbourhood plan covers the same period as the LDC local plan, out to 2030. Clearly LDC expected its local plan to be robust for that period.
29 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	Does this mean our Neighbourhood Plan is dead?	<p>No, even under the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' both the LDC local plan and our neighbourhood plan must be given weight in any decision making.</p> <p>Looking ahead, as the Neighbourhood Plan must align to the LDC local plan, so any significant change in that LDC local plan (such as an increase in housing target) may require our neighbourhood plan to be revised in due course.</p>
29 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	Doesn't LDC know how poor the infrastructure is in Plumpton Green?	<p>It should do, and certainly our district councillor is very well aware on our behalf.</p> <p>We will have to cater for 70 more homes shortly, which in itself will create significant demand on capacity.</p> <p>We will take this opportunity to remind LDC of the perennial problems with sewage, flooding, electricity and water supplies, broadband, poor roads and pavements etc. We can't forget that issues like capacity at our school must be confirmed also.</p>
29 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	Are we losing out on anything if we object to this development?	All new developments are now accompanied by a variety of mechanisms like Community Infrastructure Levy which provides money for PPC to spend on the priorities identified in the neighbourhood plan. We will receive such monies from the neighbourhood plan sites as developers 'build out' on those sites. This new proposal would clearly bring significantly more money, but that alone is not a reason to support it.
29 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	Would this development bring more affordable homes to Plumpton?	<p>Yes, as all developments over a minimum size must bring an element of affordable housing. All of the sites already in the adopted neighbourhood plan are intended to include a minimum of 40% affordable homes (though one site is specifically allocated for one and two bed units specifically designed for older people).</p> <p>We just need LDC to enforce this condition at the detailed planning permission stage and then the developers to start building them.</p> <p>Unfortunately, 'affordable' does not always mean 'low cost'.</p>
29 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	Will the council bring more services to the village as a result of more houses - like a GP Surgery?	That is for LDC (and the NHS) to decide, but Plumpton Green is classified as a 'Service Village' which means LDC expects us to enjoy a basic level of service and facilities that meet some day to day needs, although travel to bigger settlements is needed to fulfil all needs.

		Realistically, to get more new facilities in walking distance we might have to take a lot more than 89 houses.
29 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	Are the houses going to be rented as “affordable” like Sun Close or available to be purchased 100% as part buy part rent schemes like some other new build developments.	It is too early to say, but that may be the case. Whilst our understanding is that Fairfax is a commercial developer rather than an affordable housing association or similar, and we don’t yet have any details on the proposed development beyond the fact that it is 89 units. We will learn more when the pre-application is made, but even that may not fully address this point.
29 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	If we accept these 159 new houses (70 in the Neighbourhood Plan + the 89 at Nolands) will Lewes expect Plumpton to take any more new development?	It is a very real possibility. If LDC is really struggling to deliver housing in those areas that it chose within its own strategic plan, then there is every possibility that this might just be the beginning. To put this in perspective, the LDC strategic plan that our Neighbourhood Plan was based on required a minimum of 50 new dwellings in Plumpton out of a total of 6900 across the whole LDC district up until 2030. We don’t know how far short of the original target LDC is, even before the new ‘Standard Method’ calculation more than doubles the annual target. That is why we support the desire of LDC to properly re-assess its strategy before it starts considering schemes that have previously been refused on the grounds that they don’t meet democratically adopted strategy. The developers have indicated they are not prepared to wait for that.
29 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	Is Plumpton the only parish that is being targeted by development that is outside of the approved district plans and neighbourhood plans?	No, we are certainly not alone. We are communicating with our neighbouring parishes and also the wider Lewes parishes. We already know that East Chilmington, Wivelsfield Green and Newick are all facing the same issue.
29 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	Does this have any connection to the proposed traveller site in Plumpton?	No, it is unrelated. To the best of our knowledge, there has been no progress on submitting any planning application to progress that site.
29 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	What can we do as residents?	At the moment, there is no formal planning application to officially comment on. You are always welcome to voice concerns through the normal democratic channels – Sarah, Rob, PPC especially. PPC will keep you informally regularly – at least monthly and more frequently if anything changes significantly.
29 <sup>th</sup> January 2021	I would like to help PPC – what can I do?	In the first instance, if we have any residents that have relevant professional knowledge on planning law and planning policy, PPC would welcome assistance.