

WHAT IS A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN?

The Localism Act, which received Royal Assent on November 15 2011, introduced new rights and powers to allow local communities to shape new development by coming together to prepare neighbourhood plans. It is a community-led framework for guiding future development and growth of an area. All Neighbourhood Plans must meet Basic Conditions, which are described below.

In April 2013 the East Meon Parish Forum debated whether or not to develop a Neighbourhood Plan and voted unanimously to do so.

WHY DO WE NEED A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN?

It will help us to protect the character of East Meon and the surrounding countryside from unwelcome and excessive development, and give residents a very real say in how they would like to see the places in which they live and work develop over time.

Although East Meon is within the SDNP and is defined by a landscape that also constrains much development, we know that does not provide absolute protection.

For the plan to be approved it needs to be robustly evidence based, credible and consistent with the strategic objectives of the 'Local Plan'.

Further information can be found

at: <http://planningguidance.planningportal.gov.uk/blog/guidance/neighbourhood-planning/>

WHAT ARE THE BASIC CONDITIONS THAT MUST BE MET?

The Basic Conditions for a Neighbourhood Plan are specified by law, those most relevant to East Meon are:

- Must be appropriate having regard to national policy
- Must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development
- Must be in general conformity with the strategic policies in the development plan for the area

WHY ARE WE ONLY INCLUDING THE VILLAGE?

The existing policy in the East Hants Joint Core Strategy with the South Downs National Park severely restricts the possibility of development outside existing settlement boundaries. CP 19 states: "The approach to sustainable development in the countryside, defined as the area outside settlement policy boundaries, is to operate a policy of general restraint in order to protect the countryside for its own sake". The Parish Council therefore proposed that the Neighbourhood Plan should cover only the village itself and the immediate environs. However it does not preclude independent planning applications from the wider parish. Although outside the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan, if sustainable these would be seen as windfall sites for the plan.

WHAT IS THE LOCAL PLAN?

It is the strategy for local development and sits below the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and above any Neighbourhood Plans. Due to the overlap of the East Hants District Council (EHDC) and

the South Downs National Park (SDNP). they created a Joint Core Strategy as an interim measure before each produce their own local plans. The EHDC Local Plan will cover the EHDC area outside of the SDNP. East Meon will be covered by the SDNP Local Plan that will cover the whole of the SDNP up to the year 2032.

The Joint Core Strategy set out the required housing numbers for towns and villages in the EHDC area up to 2028. 10,060+ new homes have to be built between 2011 and 2028 (an average of 592 homes per year).

It further specifies that a minimum of 100 dwellings should be spread between all of the villages in the EHDC area of the SDNP. There is not yet a specific target for East Meon. If there is evidence of not many suitable sites then our share could be very small, and spread over a number of years. It is anticipated the the SDNP Local Plan will retain the 100+ dwellings requirement for the villages in the EHDC area of the SDNP.

IF WE DON'T HAVE A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN ARE WE VULNERABLE TO SPECULATIVE PLANNING PROPOSALS?

In the absence of an approved plan, the National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF) says that applications must be considered with the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Developers and landowners may see this as an opportunity to submit speculative planning applications. This happening in other parts of the country already.

WHY CAN'T THE COUNCIL JUST REFUSE PLANNING APPLICATIONS THAT THE COMMUNITY ISN'T IN FAVOUR OF?

The NPPF makes it clear that "In assessing and determining development proposals, local planning authorities should apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development".

Until we have the approved full Local/Neighbourhood Plan, developers will always try to prove that their application site is sustainable, if there is no evidence to the contrary then permission might be given.

WHAT ARE SHLAA SITES?

All Local Planning Authorities will undertake an assessment of how much land is deliverable for future housing development and these must be suitable, achievable and available. This is the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). SHLAA sites are put forward by landowners and developers, and some have been up for consideration for years, well before the Neighbourhood Plan process was started. The SHLAA process is independent of the Neighbourhood Plan. Being 'included' as a SHLAA site only means that such sites will be considered in the pool of all sites in the Local Plan.

However, being in the pool of SHLAA sites has no relevance to the consideration of a site for planning permission. It should also be noted that only sites that have capacity for 3 or more homes are being considered under the SHLAA process; since a number of the proposed sites in East Meon fall under this target, they will not be assessed as SHLAA sites.

Being a SHLAA site is a small first step in the planning process. Detailed assessments of SHLAA sites are undertaken by the Council to select which are the most sustainable choices to be proposed in the Local

Plan. Public consultation can bring out new issues and the list of best sites may often change. Only after a rigorous process are sites submitted to the Government Inspector for Examination.

HOW WERE OTHER SITES PROPOSED?

The required process asks residents, as well as landowners and developers, to suggest potential sites – these can be proposed by any resident, whether they own the land or not, and does not require the permission of the landowner. It does have to be determined during the initial criteria scrutiny whether the land might be available. On the first pop-in day (Jan 2014) we had many suggestions for, and against, potential sites – they all have had to be investigated against consistent criteria.

One such criteria was an independent landscape assessment and interestingly almost every site had landscape issues (some more than others).

In addition Radian Group, a Housing Association that owns homes in the village, has pre-existing plans for the potential development of two sites in their ownership. These are shown as A1 and A3 on the map, although no planning application has yet been made for either of them.

HOW ARE THE POTENTIAL SITES BEING ASSESSED?

All of the sites brought forward for consideration are assessed against a set of criteria developed with the advice of our planning and landscape Consultants. The views expressed at, and by feedback forms, after the February pop in session will be taken into account, and more detailed work done on those that attract the least opposition and most support. The South Downs National Park Authority has also carried out initial landscape assessments.

WHAT WEIGHT IS GIVEN TO INFRASTRUCTURE?

The NPPF requires local authorities to consider the need for infrastructure when drawing up their Local Plans. This includes:

- transport and roads
- water supply, waste water and treatment
- energy supply
- communications
- health and social care facilities
- education
- community facilities

CAN OUR DRAINAGE AND SEWERAGE SYTEMS COPE?

Independent of the Neighbourhood Plan, the Parish Council has previously engaged with Southern Water about the ongoing problems and although some remedial work has been carried out it is by no means clear that this will be adequate. The Parish Council and volunteers will be undertaking further work on this important issue.

WHAT ABOUT THE VILLAGE GREEN SPACES?

Valuable feedback has been received from the village and a full report will be made later on in the process. Formally designating an open space in this way adds an extra degree of protection above that they already enjoy.

WHAT ABOUT THE VIEWS INTO AND OUT OF THE VILLAGE?

The South Downs National Park Authority already give a high value to these, and full details are shown in the Landscape Assessment which is available on the website.

WHO IS ON THE EMNP TEAM AND WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE PARISH COUNCIL?

A Leadership Group has been formed to undertake the core administrative work and to progress the Neighbourhood Plan. This group comprises of the following volunteers: George Thompson, Steve Ridgeon, Clint Hansen and Chris Moor. The Leadership Group will work with the Steering Group which shall be members of the Parish Council who will oversee the work of the Leadership Group and provide guidance on matters such as policies, process, and finance.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

We are still at an early stage and all community feedback will continue to be important. The initial feedback on previously suggested sites does not constitute a vote, but rather some guidance for a rigorous process when other important criteria and demographic data will be applied. Ongoing consultation will inevitably bring out new issues and the list of suggested sites may often change.