

Worth Parish Council

Minutes of the Copthorne Neighbourhood Plan Advisory Sub Committee Tuesday, 5th September 2017 at 16.00hrs

Present: Cllr Blakemore (Chairman) Mr Livesey
Cllr Casella Cllr Curzon
Cllr Field Mr Lord
Cllr Phillips Mr Woodward
Mrs J Nagy No Members of the Public

Also Present Cllr Ian Gibson
Mr Chris Carey Consultant
Mr Andrew Metcalfe, Enplan

30 Public Question Time

Cllr Gibson was in attendance as a member of the public, not being a member of this this Sub Committee.

31 Apologies

Apologies were NOTED from Mr Hanks

32 Declaration of Pecuniary and Other Interests

There were no declarations of interest at this point in the meeting.

33 Minutes

It was proposed by Cllr Phillip seconded by Cllr Curzon and agreed by all present that the Minutes of the meeting held on 24th July 2017 were a true and correct record

34 Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman had no announcements

35 Correspondence

There was no correspondence to report.

36 Crawley Down Neighbourhood Plan

The Clerk reported that a meeting had been held of the Crawley Down Advisory Sub Committee last week, to consider reviewing the existing Plan. The Planning & Highways Committee agreed the Sub Committee's recommendation that the Clerk would write to DCLG and ask that the Article 31 is not lifted on the Wates 9 (DM/17/1148 refers) until the Council has had the opportunity to consider the Secretary of State's decision on the Planning Inquiry, due on 14th September.

The Sub Committee is considering whether to continue with a policy led approach or whether to carry out assessments with a view of allocating sites.

Members NOTED this information.

37 Mid Sussex District Council meeting

The Clerk referred to her report of the meeting held on 15th August with MSDC officers, attended by Cllr Blakemore, and Consultants Andrew Metcalfe and Chris Carey.

Cllr Field noted that Alice Henstock MSDC Senior Planning Officer is a resident of Copthorne, and asked if she had an interest in the Neighbourhood Plan. Mr Carey said that her professional code would not allow her act inappropriately; however, the Clerk will write to clarify this issue.

Mr Carey said that he felt that the meeting had been interesting. There was an ongoing issue with

the Wealden decision and the impact on the Ashdown Forest that needed to be considered by MSDC. In general, there is pressure on Local Planning Authorities in the south east to meet and to exceed housing targets. MSDC has just launched a Call for Sites for sites of 5 homes or more, and Copthorne should also carry out a Call for Sites process.

Mr Metcalfe agreed, saying that the current target for Copthorne was 51 homes, but as had been established at the meeting with MSDC this was a fluid figure. If Copthorne decides not to allocate sites, MSDC will do so for it, so the timing is critical.

Mr Livesey asked if a site had been discounted previously, or had had permission to build houses refused, could the landowner submit the site again. This is indeed possible, as factors vary over time.

Mr Metcalfe said that Copthorne's criteria would be different from MSDC; he would expect that sites for less than 5 homes would be considered.

Mr Carey said that he was disappointed that no mention of Copthorne "piggy-backing" onto the MSDC Call for Sites had been made, which had been discussed at the meeting; the Clerk will ascertain why this was the case.

At this point, the Chairman proposed the suspension of Standing Orders to allow Cllr Gibson to speak. This was seconded by Mr Lord and agreed by all. It was further agreed that Cllr Gibson could take part in debate, with the recognition and permission of the Chairman.

Cllr Gibson said that Crawley Down did carry out a Call for Sites. Neither of the sites which were subject of the recent Planning Inquiry were put forward during this process. A site for 400 homes in Fontwell was called in by the Secretary of State, and he has found in the developer's favour. The site was not assessed in the local Neighbourhood Plan so it was judged that it had "no opinion" on the site. It seems that it may be a case of defending against sites rather than promoting them. Given the Fontwell judgement, it may be that it is preferable for developers not to submit sites under a Call for Sites.

Mr Metcalfe said that if a Plan had allocated sites, it only needed to rely on a three year housing supply rather than five years. He suggested that allocations for more than the Copthorne target of 51 homes to ensure that the Plan would not be prematurely out of date.

Mr Livesey asked if a site refused by MSDC could be considered in the Copthorne Plan site assessments. Mr Carey said that it could; the assessment needed to ensure that any site is achievable, sustainable and deliverable.

Mr Woodward said that housing numbers seemed to be weighted unfairly in Copthorne, as it had taken 500 at St Modwen's, and 45 at Holly Farm, so was already committed to high numbers.

Mr Metcalfe said that Copthorne did not have to allocate sites, but it needed to be aware that it is likely that MSDC will.

Mr Carey agreed, saying that if other parishes could need meet their allocations, then MSDC would be looking to Copthorne as a suitable sustainable location.

Mr Livesey said that infrastructure in Copthorne was lacking. At the St Modwen's site, land had been offered for a school, but WSCC turned it down.

Mr Carey said that 500 homes was not sufficient to support a Free School, and WSCC had no funding to provide a school itself. He agreed that it was an imperfect system.

Cllr Phillips suggested that if the 104 homes currently under consideration by the Secretary of State were approved, then Worth Parish will have met its obligations.

Mr Metcalfe said that this indeed could be argued, but as experience had proved in the Inquiry hearing, it must stand up in court.

Mr Woodward asked if any weight could be given to the 2012 Call for Sites, but this is considered

to be out of date.

The Chairman asked if the pros and cons could be defined.

Mr Metcalfe said that the pros were that Copthorne can choose where housing should go, and even if only one site was allocated, it would benefit from the requirement to meet a three year housing supply rather than a five year supply. The Plan would be considered more effective, and some areas would be given some protection as a consequence.

If there were no site allocations, MSDC will allocate housing within the parish, on justifiable sites.

With the permission of the Chairman, Cllr Gibson said that there was already a net increase of around 4 homes per year in the village. Mr Metcalfe said that this would be regarded as windfall, and not be subtracted from the overall target.

Cllr Field asked what other villages were bound on three sides by immovable boundaries – the M23 to the west, the Surrey border to the north, and the A264 to the south. Housing to the south would be considered to be building in the countryside, and there are no safe crossing points along the A264 to connect to the village.

Mr Metcalfe said that the BUAB could be defined within the Plan.

Mr Lord asked what would happen if sites were allocated, then fresh sites came out of nowhere, as in Fontwell.

Mr Metcalfe said that a Landscape Capacity Study could be considered, which would defend some areas. This would look at Heritage Assets and Green Spaces.

The Chairman asked if there was a requirement not to build under a flight path, but there is not.

Mr Metcalfe said that one option would be to think of the Plan being in layers, such as Ecology, Heritage, Landscape, with different groups assessing each one, and then they are added together to create a whole picture.

Even if the decision was not to allocate, the Plan needs some revision, in Mr Metcalfe's opinion. The wording of some policies needs to be amended, and a lot of the background text needs to be deleted, as less wording means it is less open to challenge.

With the Chairman's permission, Cllr Gibson asked if 50 homes could be provided at Hurst House, would that be considered as windfall; yes it would.

Mr Metcalfe had another suggestion; that the two Plans, the emerging Copthorne and the made Crawley Down be merged into a Worth Parish Plan. If this was agreed, the process to a made combined Plan would not take much longer than to achieve a made Copthorne Plan.

Mr Lord noted that considerable time and effort had been taken in defending the Crawley Down Plan, would defending two Plans be more difficult?

Cllr Field said that she thought that the Call for Sites be completed first, then consideration be given to a combined Plan.

Mr Woodward said that the current draft Plan was the best that the Sub Committee had been able to achieve over the last five years with the limited resources available, but much had changed in neighbourhood planning in the interim.

Mr Livesey agreed, saying that the Sub Committee had not had the manpower to complete the draft any quicker.

Mr Carey said that criticism of the Plan content was not intended to be a reflection of the effort that had been put into it. However, the Sub Committee needs to be pragmatic about the best way forward.

Cllr Casella asked if one combined Worth Plan would have more weight than two separate Plans,

but the weight would be the same.

The Chairman asked for some comparison on timing.

Mr Metcalfe said that if the current draft Plan was "tweaked" it could be ready for inspection and referendum in Summer 2018. If site allocation was included, that would be early 2019. To write a combined Worth Plan, including site allocations, referendum would also be early 2019.

Mr Livesey asked if Copthorne was to proceed as it is, with amendments, then could it be merged afterwards; it was confirmed that it could.

The Chairman said that he was disappointed that a revised Plan would not be complete until mid 2018. Mr Metcalfe said that the submission process can take between three and four months.

With the permission of the Chairman, Cllr Gibson noted that the Crawley Down Plan had gone to Regulation 14 consultation at the Fayre in 2014, and was not made until January 2016.

Cllr Casella thought that the goal posts had been moved, and that a combined Plan was now preferable.

Mr Woodward thought that the current Copthorne Plan should be completed before considering other options. He agreed there is a case for site allocation, however.

Mr Metcalfe advised that he undertakes work for developers, and that site allocations are difficult to overcome. A case can be put forward that proposals meet policies, as any issues can be overcome with mitigation.

Cllr Field asked Mr Metcalfe if he was still prepared to act for the Council, if it chose to proceed with the current Copthorne Plan. He replied that he would, but the result would be a less worthwhile document.

Mr Metcalfe asked if the Sub Committee would be happy for MSDC to choose sites on its behalf. If the decision was to proceed with the current Plan, and then combine, MSDC will already have allocated sites, as it has started its Call for Sites process.

Mr Livesey said that the Sub Committee already knew what sites would come forward, so there would be no surprises. Mr Metcalfe said that this may be the case for this year, but not what would come forward in the future.

Cllr Casella asked Cllr Gibson if he had a "feel" as to how the Crawley Down Sub Committee would react to a joint Plan, without committing it either way.

With the permission of the Chairman, Cllr Gibson said that this would be a decision of Council. He thought that a joint Call for Sites would work. Much depended on the decision of the Secretary of State on 14th September. Some members of both Sub Committees may feel that a combined Plan would be seen as less of a "village" project and may not wish to continue to assist. He was of the opinion that professional assistance would be needed whatever decision was reached.

It was AGREED that the matter would be put to the vote.

Mr Livesey proposed that work continued on the current draft Plan, with no Call for Sites; seconded by Mr Woodward.

In favour: Mr Livesey and Mr Woodward
Against: Cllrs Casella and Phillips, and Mr Lord
Abstain: Cllrs Blakemore, Curzon and Field

NOT carried.

Cllr Phillips proposed that work continued on the current draft Plan, to include a Call for Sites; seconded by Mr Lord

In favour: Cllrs Curzon and Phillips, and Mr Lord

Against: Cllrs Blakemore, Casella and Field, and Messrs Livesey and Woodward

NOT carried.

Cllr Field proposed the creation of a new combined Worth Parish Neighbourhood Plan, with a Call for Sites; seconded by Cllr Casella

In favour: Cllrs Blakemore, Casella, Curzon and Field

Against: Messrs Livesey and Woodward.

Abstain: Mr Lord

With the permission of the Chairman, Cllr Gibson suggested that as this was such an important decision, it should go to Council, and not to the Planning & Highways Committee, which is parent Committee to this Sub Committee

This was AGREED by all present.

It was therefore AGREED that a recommendation be made to a meeting of the Full Council that the Copthorne Neighbourhood Plan be abandoned, and work should start on a combined Worth Parish Neighbourhood Plan, with a Call for Sites.

Mr Metcalfe advised starting the Call for Sites process as quickly as possible, before MSDC start allocating sites.

It was agreed that work would not stop completely on the Copthorne Plan as background research would still take place.

38 Presentation from Enplan

This item was to consider employing Mr Metcalfe as a Consultant for the Copthorne Plan. Given the decision to recommend to Council that the best approach is for a combined Plan, a discussion on Mr Metcalfe's appointment did not take place.

Mr Metcalfe was asked to provide a fee proposal to provide advice on a joint Call for Sites, and ongoing assistance with a potential combined Plan for future consideration.

39 Housing Survey Results

Mr Woodward reported that the Housing Survey consultation deadline was 31st August, and that only 29 replies had been received, which represented around 1.5-2% of the population, which was disappointing.

He is in the process of extracting the data, but early indications are that residents want to downsize but stay within the village.

Members NOTED this information.

40 Consideration of Site Allocation

Given the decision to recommend to Council that the best approach is for a combined Plan, a discussion on site allocation for the Copthorne Plan did not take place.

41 Review Action Plan to date

Given the decision to recommend to Council that the best approach is for a combined Plan, a discussion on a review of the action plan for Copthorne Plan did not take place.

42 Date of next meeting – to be advised.

Meeting closed at 18.00 hrs

Chairman: _____

Date: _____