



Maresfield Parish Council

REPRESENTING THE VILLAGES OF MARESFIELD, NUTLEY & FAIRWARP

Minutes of a Meeting of the Neighbourhood Development Plan Steering Group

held on Wednesday 15th March 2023 at 2.30pm

Present: Cllr M Craddock (Chair), Cllr Mrs L Reeves, Cllr R Hunter, Mr F Taylor, Mr L Frost, Mr R Smith, Mrs M Turner and Ms R Karim (Asst. Clerk).

1. Apologies for absence. Cllr G Shaw, Mr L Frost

2. Ratification of co-option of non-councillor members – Fred Taylor, Maureen Turner and Robert Smith

Cllr Craddock proposed that Mr Taylor, Mrs Turner and Mr Smith be co-opted onto the NDP Steering Group; this was seconded by Cllr Reeves and unanimously **agreed**.

Cllr Craddock summarised the work that the sub-group, the Site Assessment Team, had been carrying out, including assessing housing sites against similar criteria to that used by Wealden DC and ranking them in order of preference. The Steering Group is now awaiting publication of the Draft Local Plan which will contain its proposed housing allocations for Maresfield; after this, the Draft NDP can be published, to include the preferred sites that would meet this allocation.

Referring to the current application for an extension to Ashdown Business Park, Cllr Craddock noted that the reference made in the Design and Access Statement was misleading and seemed to suggest that the Steering Group and, in turn, the Parish Council had endorsed the proposals. Mr Taylor agreed and said that the agent for the application had not even specified how many buildings would be proposed during their meeting, such was the lack of any detail provided. Mrs Turner said that the Team had not assessed it and would never have endorsed it and certainly not on behalf of the Parish Council. Cllr Craddock noted that much had been made by the agent of how he had informed the Parish Council of the Phase 2 proposals at a planning meeting when Phase 1 was considered. Cllr Craddock said that, in fact, only passing mention had been made, with the agent only saying that expansion was being considered but with no details as to scale, location, design, etc. It was agreed that the Asst. Clerk would circulate the Parish Council's representations to Wealden DC about the current application to the Steering Group.

ACTION: Asst. Clerk

Cllr Craddock suggested that the Steering Group should be mindful of ensuring a similar confusion did not arise for Site D+. He noted that while the Steering Group had met with the developer and Wealden DC about this site, it had been in an effort to ensure that *if* an application came forward for this site, a range of benefits would be afforded for the community; he said at no time did the Steering Group endorse any particular level of housing provision.

3. Report of meeting with WDC on February 10th

Cllr Craddock discussed the summary of the Zoom meeting held between the NDP sub-committee and Wealden DC on 10th February this year.

Reference was made to Hailsham Parish Council's NDP and Cllr Craddock suggested that members read the document. He suggested it was mostly aspirational, as opposed to providing policies, which may have made it more palatable to Wealden DC.

It was noted that Maresfield seemed to be the only parish holding out to be able to allocate sites in its Draft NDP. Cllr Craddock said the Draft should not be published with allocated sites until the housing numbers in the Draft Local Plan were known. Cllr Hunter agreed and said if the Draft NDP included allocations, it would be difficult to object to future applications on those sites.

Mrs Turner expressed her disappointment that Mr Frost appeared to be no longer on board and said his input and detailed knowledge to date was invaluable. She suggested that Cllr Craddock ask him if he would be willing to maintain some input, perhaps in terms of reviewing drafts and giving advice. Cllr Craddock agreed to do this. **ACTION: MC**

It was pointed out that Wealden DC would require a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to be carried out if the Draft NDP allocated sites. However, it was noted that Mr Frost had in fact sought screening and scoping opinions (with responses from the EA and Natural England) and had produced a draft SEA in February 2021. Mrs Turner suggested Mr Frost could revisit this draft and determine if it needed to be amended in any way.

Mr Taylor agreed to find the latest version of the draft NDP, reflecting comments from Wealden DC, and circulate to the Steering Group. It was noted that Wealden DC had expressed a willingness to provide comments and guidance throughout the various iterations of the Draft. **ACTION: FT**

4. WDC latest information on their Draft Local Plan

Cllr Craddock noted the continued delay in Wealden DC producing their Draft Local Plan, in part caused by the NPPF consultation. Referring to Mr Taylor's note of the sub-committee's meeting with Wealden DC on 10th February, he said it was a possibility that the Plan would not be adopted until 2026.

5. Progress report of Site Assessment Team

Mr Taylor read from a document produced by the sub-committee, which was subsequently circulated to those present and discussed in detail.

6. Future actions and time-table going forward

Given discussions around whether or not to allocate sites in the Draft NDP, it was **agreed** that the sub-committee would carry out a SWOT analysis of the following:

- continue with objective of allocating sites, in order of preference, based on the assessments carried out and in consultation with Wealden DC;
- abandon objective of allocating sites but continue to liaise with Wealden DC to understand their view of sites;
- cease work on the NDP if it is considered it will have little effect on Wealden DC's policy intent.

ACTION: FT/MT/RS

7. Any other business

None.

8. Date of next meeting – Wednesday 5th April at 2.30pm was suggested but this is to be confirmed.

Post meeting note: Meeting confirmed for 7pm, Thursday 6th April, Parish Council office.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 4pm