

Sompting Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2015 - 2031

Post Hearing Notes

Prepared by

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20th July 2018

1. As part of my examination of the Sompting Parish Neighbourhood Plan, I held a hearing on Thursday, 19 July 2018 at Worthing Town Hall. The hearing was attended by Cllr Ann Godley and Cllr Caroline Baxter, respectively Chairman and Vice Chairman of Sompting Parish Council, Moira Hayes and Cat Hutchins from Adur District Council, Rob Clark Head of Planning at Persimmon Homes Ltd, Dan Ramirez from Turleys Persimmon's planning consultants, Mike Tristram from Sompting Estates, Craig Noel from Strutt and Partners and Keith Colin and Liane Webb, both from Sustainable Sussex.
2. The purpose of the hearing was to explore the issues set out in my Initial Comments Note dated 6th June and the Guidance Notes for the Hearing dated 28th June 2018.
3. After my introductory remarks, I invited Cllr Godley to make an opening statement on behalf of the Qualifying Body, Sompting Parish Council. She pointed out the work on the plan began in 2012 and that matters had moved on significantly since that time. The Pre- Submission Version have been prepared and consulted upon over three years ago and the Submission Version of the plan have been dated June 2016.
4. Since that time there have been major changes in the planning context with the adoption of the Adur Local Plan and Persimmons developing their plans and engaging in pre-application discussions regarding their proposals for the housing allocation. Whilst working with the Adur planners on updating the supporting text at my request, particularly the planning context, the Parish Council had reviewed the submitted plan. The membership of the Parish Council was now an entirely different body, with all the original parish councillors, who had been involved in the preparation of the neighbourhood plan were no longer on the council. In addition, they have employed a new and very experienced Parish Clerk who had assisted with their understanding of the process.
5. It was clear but the plan that have been submitted was no longer the version of the plan that the Parish Council wished to pursue and it now wished for the plan to be amended. In particular, it had concluded that the provisions related to the design zones, the cycle paths and other aspects were over prescriptive including matters dealt within the Design and Estate Guide. Many of the requirements set out in Policy 6 of the Local Plan were now explicitly supported by the Parish Council and did not need to be repeated in the neighbourhood plan. It no longer wished to press for the new community building and fully supported the proposed community farm. Furthermore, the Parish Council no longer supported the requirements in Policy 2 for a new retail store as this will introduce HGV movements into the development.

6. The Parish Council had attended a meeting with Persimmons and Adur planners the day before the hearing, which had been extremely positive and constructive and the Parish Council were now open to a dialogue particularly on design matters. There were issues that the Parish Council still have strong views over, particularly the issue of buffer zones to address issues of outlook and privacy and to provide wildlife corridors, the need to design development so was to become a number of small discrete communities thereby avoiding a large “estate” feel and the need for the new housing to respect the vernacular of the original Sompting village, rather than to reflect the design of the village’s post-war estates. We heard that the Parish Council remained concerns over the overall housing numbers, notwithstanding the Local Plan policy referred to a *minimum* of 480 units, as well as still having fears regarding congestion levels on the A27 resulting in “rat running” through the village.
7. It became increasingly clear to me that the plan that the Parish Council wishes to promote is not the plan before me for examination. I explained that I was required by law to examine the plan as submitted to the LPA and that the extent to which I could make modifications, was limited to those required to meet the basic conditions, which could retain policies within the plan that the Parish Council no longer supported.
8. At this juncture, the two Parish Councillors indicated that their preference was to withdraw the submitted plan from examination. I explained that I could not formally accept their statement of withdrawal as the definitive decision without a formal resolution of the Parish Council. Cllr Godley indicated that they could arrange an extraordinary parish meeting to confirm that.
9. In the meantime, they agreed that the Parish Council representatives would be happy to meet with the developers and Adur planners on a regular basis, in order to help “shape” the new development. The representative from Persimmon Homes had previously indicated that they would, as a company, welcome a dialogue with the Parish Council and whilst they were expecting to submit a hybrid planning application by the end of the year, they were realistic that no planning decision would be likely to be issued for further 12 months so there will be opportunities for any new plan to influence the final development.
10. In view of this request to be allowed to withdraw the plan, I concluded that there was no point in further pursuing my detailed questions or invite further representations but that was an appropriate juncture to draw the hearing to a close. I did offer to prepare some notes which may assist the Parish Council in preparing a future version of the neighbourhood plan. These are attached as a separate note and offer guidance only. If the plan is withdrawn and the decision is taken to prepare a new version of the neighbourhood plan, it will be necessary for the new plan to go through its

statutory processes, including Pre- Submission Consultation and SEA and HRA screening.

11. I therefore formally declare that the Sompting Parish NP examination stands adjourned until I received confirmation from the Qualifying Body via the Local Planning Authority that it has requested that the submitted version of the neighbourhood plan be withdrawn. Should the Parish Council make a decision not to withdraw the submitted plan, I will reconvene the hearing and conclude my examination.
12. Finally, I wish to record my thanks to all participants for the helpful and constructive way they all contributed to the hearing.

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Independent Examiner of the Sompting Parish Neighbourhood Plan.

20th July 2018

Notes for Qualifying Body

1. Be clear as to what constitutes a planning policy and what is supporting text. It is the wording of the policy that will be used to determine any planning application, not a paragraph in the supporting text. There appears to be much policy/aspirations, included within the text following the policies e.g. guidance for the design zones. If a matter is to be a requirement of the neighbourhood plan, then it should be clearly shown as emboldened policy.
2. There is no need to duplicate matters already and adequately covered by a local plan policy. The Adur Local Plan covers the parish and there is no need to designate, for example, the shopping areas that are already identified in the local plan. I would also point out that replacement shops in retail premises or putting in a pop-up shop into an existing retail unit, does not require planning permission so this policy would not come into play under any circumstances (Policy 4).
3. If the plan seeks to prepare design guidance, it is necessary to be clear as to the status of any design guide. If it is to be part of the neighbourhood plan, then it should be attached to the plan as an annexe and also be subject to the formal Regulation 14 Consultation. Many plans have a separate design policy and then include a separate Character Assessment document which defines the existing character of the different parts of the parish. This policy then will be applicable to all residential development that takes place within the plan area, rather than just the strategic allocation.
4. As the emerging South Downs Local Plan is still a draft plan, it is not possible to give it a development plan status, by the requirement for applicants to comply with the South Downs National Park development plan. (Policy 6).
5. Regarding housing numbers, I appreciate the Parish Council's concerns regarding community acceptance of 480 as a *maximum* BUT the adopted local plan refers to the strategic allocation as a *minimum* of 480 homes and the neighbourhood plan cannot provide for less development plan than the local plan.
6. I would refer you to paragraph 58 and 61 of the NPPF which deals with what development should be delivering in terms of good design. If the plan is to have a policy regarding landscape buffers, I believe it needs to be explain more fully what the objective of the buffer. When referring to the rural edge, the plan should make clear whether, for example, whether the expectation is for development to front or back onto the farmland. Is it to screen or visually soften the built-up edge or allow the new homeowners a view across the

countryside. If the concept is as a wildlife corridor will that be achieved if the plan requires a boundary wall to the rural edge? The integration of the new development with existing development will need careful consideration but I question whether that would be delivered by a planting belt rather than a sympathetic layout that avoids overlooking etc. You may wish to show some illustrative material in the plan as to what you would be looking for.

7. Be clear as to what the plan is actually expecting when it refers to houses for downsizing – how different would it be from a house for a young family for example?
8. The Proposals Map needs to show the proposed location of the community orchard/garden/allotments if it is to be retained in the new version of the plan.
9. The plan needs to be clear as to the expectations for the public park, is it to be playing pitches or parkland and is it not better for play equipment to be located in incidental open space close to people's homes?
10. Finally, and most important still be bold in your aspirations for this new development. Look for the new homes to become part of your village community, rather than just a development attached to your community. I was particularly encouraged by much of the aspirations I heard articulated at the hearing.

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Independent Examiner of the Sompting Parish Neighbourhood Plan

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6th June 2018