

Newick Parish Council

Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Newick Parish Council held at 7.00 p.m. on Tuesday, 16th December 2014 in the Sports Pavilion, King George V Playing Field, Allington Road, Newick.

Present: Councillors C. Allen, N. Berryman, R. Houghton, J. Lucas (Chairman of the Parish Council), G. Parker, Mrs J Smerdon, Mrs M Thew, and Mrs C Wickens.

In Attendance: Mrs S. Berry (Clerk)
Mr James Garside, Lewes District Council Planning Officer
Twenty seven members of the public were present

An audio recording was made of the meeting

- 1. Apologies for Absence and to consider whether to approve reasons given:** – Apologies had been received from Cllrs. C. Armitage (conflicting engagement), C. Jago (conflicting engagement), and Mrs J Sheppard (conflicting engagement). It was resolved to approve the reasons for these absences.
- 2. Disclosure by Members of personal interest in matters on the agenda, the nature of any interest and whether the Member regards the interest as prejudicial under the terms of the Code of Conduct:** - No disclosures were made.
- 3. Questions or Statements by Members of the Public**

The Chairman confirmed that statements by members of the public would be restricted to three minutes each.

Mr Cumberlege, speaking on behalf of Newick Village Society (NVS), thanked the Parish Council for the hard work that had gone into preparing the Neighbourhood Plan and commented that the resulting plan was in the best interests of the village. He stated that the Neighbourhood Plan referendum should be delayed until after the Lewes District Council (LDC) Joint Core Strategy had been determined as this could be advantageous. He stated that members of NVS considered it unacceptable that an examiner should come to Newick for one day and determine the future of the village for the next fifteen years.

Mr Loveman noted comments made by NVS in its December newsletter regarding the Neighbourhood Plan Examiner's Report and recommended that the Parish Council should reject the proposal on item 4 of the agenda. He put forward a list of questions to members of the council and suggested that, if the answer to any of the questions was no, the council should withdraw or refuse to amend the Neighbourhood Plan. He stated that there should be further consultation with the community on the amendments recommended by the Examiner and that, if the Neighbourhood Plan were to be withdrawn, the council would still be able to rely on the LDC Joint Core Strategy to restrict the number of new homes to be developed.

Two members of the public joined the meeting at 7.08 p.m.

Mrs Lightfoot supported comments made by Mr Cumberlege in recognising the work that had gone into producing the Neighbourhood Plan and highlighted the fact that the Examiner had spent a week reviewing the plan and one day in Newick. She raised the matter of 'Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space' (SANGS) which she felt had not been addressed in the Neighbourhood Plan but which had been identified by the Examiner as an issue that must be resolved. She stated that if LDC were to purchase a site of 100 acres within four miles of Newick this would have mitigating capacity for over 2000 new homes and that the current target of 100 or even 200 homes would be just the beginning for the development of Newick.

Mr Turk commented that the Parish Council must be disappointed that the Examiner had not placed an upper limit on the number of new houses and suggested that this made it likely that there would be more development in addition to the four sites identified in the Neighbourhood Plan. He stated that this was not what the council or the residents had intended. He supported the comments of previous speakers regarding the amount of time and effort that had gone into producing the Neighbourhood Plan, however, he hoped that the 'rush' to complete the Neighbourhood Plan would not take priority over the need to consult with residents on what he described as 'massive changes' and urged the council to carry out further consultation. He suggested that the referendum could be delayed until after the LDC Joint Core Strategy had been adopted.

4. Neighbourhood Plan - Consideration of proposal to agree to accept the changes to the Neighbourhood Plan proposed or recommended by the Neighbourhood Plan Independent Examiner and to proceed to a referendum.

The Chairman explained that the Extraordinary Meeting had been called because, since the Parish Council meeting held on 9th December, it had become clear that if the Neighbourhood Plan referendum was not held at the earliest opportunity, i.e. 26th February 2015, there would be no chance of holding a referendum until after the elections in May 2015 and that the present Parish Council would, by then, no longer exist. He noted that in order to achieve this deadline LDC Planning Officers and members of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group would have to work over the Christmas and New Year break.

He stated that the Steering Group had studied the Examiner's report in detail and considered the amendments proposed to be relatively minor and that eighty to ninety percent of them would not affect the policies. He highlighted the statement by the Examiner that Neighbourhood Plans could not place a cap on the number of new homes to be developed and that it would be up to the District Council with the Core Strategy to limit the number of new homes. It was noted that this matter would be explained by James Garside later in the meeting. It was understood that, once the LDC Core Strategy had been adopted, the only development permitted would be the one hundred homes planned for, plus windfall development within the planning boundary, plus some permitted development of agricultural buildings outside the planning boundary.

Notes of meetings of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group held on 8th and 15th December 2014 were circulated at the meeting. The Chairman highlighted three main areas where amendments had been recommended by the Examiner which could be considered to be contentious:-

- 1) The proposed 'Green Gap' between Newick and Chailey could not be included in the Neighbourhood Plan as most of the area referred to was in Chailey parish which was outside the area covered by Newick's Neighbourhood Plan.
- 2) The proposed policy regarding no street lighting for Newick would not be acceptable as there might at some time be a requirement for street lighting on safety grounds, although this could be included in the Plan as a 'Community Action'.
- 3) Phasing of the development of identified sites could not be imposed in the Neighbourhood Plan, however, the Steering Group considered that there would be natural phasing as the owners of one of the sites would not be ready to develop their land for some years.

It was noted that the Steering Group would recommend that the Parish Council should accept the Examiner's recommendations, albeit somewhat reluctantly, as it considered that the parish would be in a stronger position with an adopted Neighbourhood Plan in place than without one. It was also noted that the Parish Council would be participating in the LDC Core Strategy Examination Hearings and would be using this opportunity to make the opinions of the village known to the Core Strategy Examiner.

At 7.40 p.m. Standing Orders were suspended in order to allow James Garside to clarify issues that had been raised and to answer questions.

Mr Garside, Planning Officer for Lewes District Council, congratulated the Parish Council on successfully getting the Neighbourhood Plan through the examination and clarified the following points:-

- The Independent Examiner's report could not be challenged and it should be regarded as guidance for the council.
- Lewes District Council's target for Newick was for 100 new homes and it would be defending this number during the examination hearings for the Joint Core Strategy.
- The wording in the Joint Core Strategy of a 'minimum' of 100 new homes reflected the possibility of additional windfall development within the settlement boundaries.
- Neither the Joint Core Strategy nor the Neighbourhood Plan could set a 'cap' on the number of new homes as it would not comply with national policy.
- Lewes District Council did not currently have a five year housing land supply but this would change once the Joint Core Strategy had been adopted, hopefully in the summer of 2015. In the meantime, housing restriction policies contained in the LDC Local Plan (2003) could carry no weight, which left settlements vulnerable to development outside the planning boundary.

Mr Garside answered questions from councillors and from members of the public on issues including the calculation of the five year housing land supply, the difference between sites identified in the SHLAA document and in the Joint Core Strategy, the choice of Independent Examiner for the Neighbourhood Plan, the removal of phasing from the Neighbourhood Plan, the soundness of the Joint Core Strategy, and the definition of 'windfall development'.

At 8.14 p.m. Standing Orders were resumed.

Cllr. Lucas proposed and Cllr. Houghton seconded that, subject to some minor modifications, the changes to the Neighbourhood Plan proposed or recommended by the Independent Examiner should be accepted. This was unanimously agreed.

It was further proposed that arrangements should be made for a referendum on the Neighbourhood Plan to be held in February 2015. This was unanimously agreed.

It was noted that the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group would be assisting Lewes District Council in making the necessary modifications to the Neighbourhood Plan and that copies of the Referendum Issue of the Plan would be printed in time for the public question sessions that would be arranged in due course.

The meeting closed at 8.16 p.m.

Signed:Chairman

Date: