

Slaugham Parish Neighbourhood Plan

Beginning in January, 2012, Slaugham Parish Council undertook to write a Neighbourhood plan for the four villages comprising the Parish. SPC was among the first councils in the country to do so. Unfortunately, that version of the plan, although described by the Independent Examiner in September 2013 to be “a good example of positive planning”, did not meet all the requirements of EU legislation and needs further work before it can go to referendum.

Despite that setback, the need for a Neighbourhood plan has not gone away. Following Examination, SPC took advice from the District Council and the Department of Communities and Local Government, and debated the issue at a meeting very well attended by the public whether or not to continue with the NHP. The decision to do so was unanimous and it was resolved that work should begin again. The NHP Committee has been tasked to produce that NHP, take it to Examination and a referendum of the Parish.

To accomplish that, the NHP committee has gone back to work. The committee has had several significant changes. First, it has been reformed, with new terms of reference. The aim was to make the committee more representative of the Parish population and now has 6 members from Handcross, 4 from Pease Pottage and 2 each from Warninglid and Slaugham. Second, Chris Hinchey has stepped down as Chair and Debra Logan has been elected by the new committee to replace him.

The situation in the country and in Mid Sussex has changed as well. All of the parishes in Mid Sussex are working on plans and the Cuckfield NHP was passed on the 24th of July by an overwhelming majority. Mid Sussex has appointed a Neighbourhood Planning Officer to assist all Parishes in the district with their NHPs.

The advice from MSDC which was repeated again at a recent meeting with Mark Bristow the Neighbourhood Planning Officer is that ALL Parishes within MSDC need an NHP in place as soon as possible. No rushing, but efficient forward progress is needed. MSDC will not be able to demonstrate a five year land supply until their new District Plan is in place (probably mid 2015 at the earliest) and until then our Parish remains vulnerable to any and all development. The aim of the Plan is not to prevent development; because there is no doubt that new housing stock is needed to meet the demands of a growing population. House prices are getting out of control again and increasingly out of reach to new home buyers, young couples and growing families. There is also a lack of provision for homes to meet the needs of a growing retired and increasingly elderly population, who may wish to move out of bigger homes and into smaller more manageable accommodation, but still want to have ‘their own front door.’

It is important to understand that planning applications that have been approved for the Parish, particularly the Hyde/Hallam proposal in Handcross, will figure in the plan going forward. **All previous proposals for sites in the published plan are off the table and sites will be re-examined.** It is also important to understand that although that the Hyde development is a large one for the area, it almost certainly will not meet all of our needs. Without a plan there is no guarantee that more applications will not come forward and be approved. In fact, without a plan, it is almost certain that they will.

The close connection between the village and the Hyde is a positive feature and the family and their advisors are working closely with the SPC to make sure that development does not go forward without some consultation with the community. But, the Hyde development is not the only consideration for the NHP, though it is a most important one.

The aim of the plan is not just to set a development path for housing but also to tackle other important environmental, social and economic issues. Traffic calming, preservation of green space and the countryside, provision of necessary facilities including a replacement for the Parish Hall in Handcross, preserving what we all value and providing what we need in the future are also part of it. The plan also encompasses all four Villages, not just Handcross. There is at least one pending application in the Pease Pottage area, a development of up to 95 houses at the old Golf driving range, that will have infrastructure implications for all four villages, especially in terms of traffic, environmental impact and schools. Just because any proposed development is not in your back yard does not mean it will not affect you. It will.

There will be new public consultations on the revised plan which will take place later this year and early next year. While the committee does not yet have a firm timeline that takes us to the point of having a referendum, it is working toward that. It is meeting regularly on the first Monday of each month in the Handcross Pavilion, beginning at 7:30. You will soon see banners advertising the NHP. All relevant information will be posted on the SPC website and regular updates on progress will appear here in the Parish Magazine. The committee welcome all members of the public to the regular meetings and to participate in the any consultations that take place.

The NHP will affect us all and we all have an opportunity to be involved and make our voices heard. The aim of the SPC and the NHP committee must be to reflect the wants and needs of the residents of the Parish. Unless you make those wants and needs known, that cannot happen. There are many ways to participate. Please help us create the plan that you, the residents of the parish, want.

Debra Logan
Chair, Neighbourhood Planning Committee

Sue Hance
Chair, Slaugham Parish Council

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