



SWAB Neighbourhood Plan

Monthly Report to Steyning Parish Council 7th November 2016

Headlines

- Henfield Neighbourhood Plan overturned by High Court.
 - Henfield decision may have an impact on remaining work to be completed on SWAB NP.
 - Likely delay pending recruitment of new Neighbourhood Planning Officer at HDC.
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Henfield NP overturned

On 17th October HDC announced that the High Court had overturned the decision to adopt the Henfield Neighbourhood Plan following a Judicial Review requested by housing developers Stonegate Homes Ltd and Littleworth Properties Ltd.

Apparently, the plan excluded certain land to the west of the village on the basis that the local community believed that development at this site this would result in significant traffic disruption. Despite the plan having been accepted by the independent examiner and approved by referendum, the judge found that there was insufficient evidence to support the decision to exclude the site in question.

Commenting on the High Court decision, Leader of HDC Cllr Ray Dawe said *"We will also review what other measures may need to be put in place to ensure that the chances of such circumstances occurring against other neighborhood plans are minimised."*

Impact of the Henfield decision upon SWAB

The SWAB team has always aimed to base site assessment decisions as far as possible upon clear evidence against agreed assessment criteria and to avoid placing too much emphasis upon anecdotal statements we receive from time to time where these are not supported by an appropriate evidence base. For this reason we believe the housing assessment recommendations to be basically sound, however the Henfield decision is a timely reminder that we should review our recommendations and the associated evidence at the pre-sub stage.

Of more concern is the expectation, as alluded to by Cllr Dawe above, that HDC may now seek to introduce new measures to minimize a repeat of the Henfield decision. Hopefully, if HDC decide simply to audit the criteria we have used for site selection and the associated evidence base, any delay may be minimal. However, if HDC take a more proscriptive approach they may decide to introduce their own set of site assessment and selection criteria, then we may have to embark on a very significant rework exercise, which could have implications upon funding and resources. Either way we have been informed that HDC will be taking a more "hands-on" approach to NP support.

At the same time, HDC are in the process of recruiting a replacement for Neighbourhood Planning Officer Maggie Williams, with whom we have consulted to date. The new officer will be in post from mid-November, and we understand HDC will be organising a Neighbourhood Planning Conference early in the New Year.

Update on housing & local green space recommendations

One land owner has withdrawn their offer of land for new housing, namely sites 15a,b & c at Maudlyn Farm, Bramber.

Three sites that were initially not recommended, are being re-evaluated to ensure that our current recommendations are sound, and whether there could be a case for adding one or more of these sites (all of which are outside the SDNPA) to our new housing development recommendations in the Pre-Sub.

SWAB NP Timescale

The SWAB pre-sub document is now close to completion and our expectation prior to the Henfield decision was to be ready to commence the next public consultation phase in December 2016. However, given the current uncertainty it is not possible to commit to this, and we will need to await further guidance from HDC before we can advise on a revised timetable for the SWAB Neighbourhood Plan.

Steve Northam