

FILE NOTE

Project: Arundel NP2
Date: 29 January 2018
Circulation: Project Steering Group

Organising the Project

The 'shadow' project steering group met on 23 January 2018 to discuss the first review of the Neighbourhood Plan made in April 2014. The main purpose of the meeting was to discuss and agree the project governance and management arrangements and ways in which the local community will be engaged in the project this time round.

Governance

It was agreed that those attending would form the project steering group, to be inaugurated at its first proper meeting on 21 February. At that meeting, the Town Council will propose the terms of reference for the group and an outline project plan/calendar will be proposed, alongside some other admin tasks.

Importantly, the group will also spend some time reflecting on the successes and failures of the 2012 Plan and on the changes to the planning context for the town since then, notably the progress made on the respective Arun and South Downs Local Plans. The RCOH report of January 2017 will be circulated to inform the discussion, as much of its content is still relevant.

Management

At the group meeting, Neil Homer, recommended that the group considers a different approach to managing the review, to the generation of new policy ideas and to community engagement. Essentially, rather than using thematic task groups and themes for engagement, he recommended that a single task group be set up for each of the 'Old Town' and 'New Town' areas, with the A27 the dividing line between the two.

The approach has three main benefits:

- It reflects the very different planning issues facing each part of the town, which continues to function as two separate entities, albeit with some reliance of the New Town on the services and jobs in the Old Town
- It will allow for each to think through the specific blend of these development, traffic, environmental, heritage, business and social infrastructure issues to generate place-specific planning policy ideas

- It will enable each community to be engaged with on very local matters and in ways that work for each community (although communications should be timed to coincide as part of one plan)

The obvious risk is that the divide accentuates the 'us and them' perceptions and hinders rather than helps the project. However, with the two teams reporting to the steering group, it ought to be able to anticipate and avoid such problems.

If this approach is adopted, then each task group should be chaired by a member of the steering group, who will be responsible for reporting back to the group and liaising with the other group chair. The membership of each task group should comprise members of the steering group and others from each area with an expertise/interest in the subject matter. It will be important that each group is confident it understands local current community opinion on planning matters, even if it may be necessary to lead and change that opinion over the duration of the project.

Each group will commence with a two hour, facilitated workshop to consider how land use and development change could and should happen and to identify the evidence that needs to be gathered and analysed to inform policy choices. OH will prepare a report setting the brief for each task group to progress and complete its work. OH has also set aside some time to assist with technical work (e.g. site assessment).

Once finished, OH will work with the steering group to blend together the policy ideas as early draft proposals for community engagement. Thereafter, the policy development work will be undertaken as a steering group activity unless the group thinks it will be helpful to reconvene one or both task groups to reconsider some issues.

The Pre-Submission Plan will be drafted by OH following the instruction of the steering group once the policy scope and intentions have been agreed. It is expected that the planning authorities will require the Sustainability Appraisal of the made Plan to be revisited and refreshed to assess the new policies. Once the scope of the new plan becomes clearer, this process will be commenced with a consultation with the authorities and the other statutory bodies to agree the approach to be taken to the revised Appraisal.

Project Plan

Attached is a project plan indicating the work programme over the year, aiming at a submission by the end of the year. This includes time for an informal 'testing of the water' with the local community in June before policy commitments are made in the Pre-Submission Plan in October. This is not an obligation, so if there is value in speeding up the process and the group is confident in the technical and political credentials of its draft policy proposals, then that activity can be deleted.

Community Engagement

On community engagement, Neil has also recommended that a separate communications team be set up to report to the steering group. The team should comprise a small number of people with an expertise/experience in communications/community engagement/social media etc. The task will be to plan for and deliver the online and offline engagement activities through the project, culminating in drafting a short Consultation Statement, which will be submitted as part of the final documentation for examination at the end of the project. The team should be allocated a project budget for engagement expenses, e.g. room hire, publicity materials etc.

Issues to Consider

- What demographic, commercial and social changes/pressures are impacting on the town? Can these changes be influenced by the use and development of land to encourage positive change and prevent harmful change?
- What parts of the Arun Local Plan (Main Modifications version of January 2018) are important in framing the NP2? What is agreed with and not? Why? What factors outside the neighbourhood area will have an effect, e.g. Ford?
- Although absent from the thinking of the South Downs National Park Local Plan, much of the town, including the Castle and its grounds, lies in its area – what kind of change in this part of the area should be planned for?
- How will Government decisions on the preferred route of the A27 affect the project? Will there be different scenarios depending on the choice made?
- Should we plan for development up to March 2036, i.e. five years later than the Local Plan? What are the pros and cons?
- Are we clear about the expectations of the two main Estates? Is there a transparent and consistent process for dealing with them and other land interests? Should we instigate our own 'Call for Sites' if the ADC is considered out of date?