

Neighbourhood Development Plan service offer to West Wittering Parish Council

February 2016

Introduction

This note sets out the Action in rural Sussex (AirS) scope of works for the purpose of providing to West Wittering Parish Council a full suite of professional services to complete a Neighbourhood Development Plan.

About us

Action in rural Sussex has over 80 years experience in supporting communities to achieve their aspirations. We are the market leader in neighbourhood planning and have a skilled and experienced team who are experts in community development, housing and planning. We directly assist communities with the process of gathering evidence and developing the plan documents. The process places much emphasis on rigorous community consultation and social inclusion, generating evidence that is representative of the priorities of the whole community.

To date we have worked on thirty two neighbourhood plans, seven of which have passed referendum; Arundel, Ferring, East Preston, Rustington, Nuthurst, Lindfield and Southbourne all having secured overwhelming 'Yes' votes for their Plans. Another four plans have also now passed their examinations. The Ferring NDP was also accompanied by the first successful Community Right to Build Orders in the country - for a new village hall and downsizing housing - which also passed referendum. The team comprises experienced and skilled community engagement and neighbourhood planning officers, housing and research specialists as well as back office support from our administration team.

The AirS Neighbourhood Plan service also includes professional planning and design expertise provided by our retained partner consultant. Our Planner, Allison Keech has considerable experience in advising councils on planning policy, and development options. She has substantial experience of working with local authorities and developing masterplans and development options for local neighbourhood areas. She also has experience in the environmental assessment of a wide range of development types and has undertaken a number of environmental impact assessments.

The scope of works assumes the following:

- the client understands the need to form a steering group, with clear terms of reference and membership drawn from existing parish councillors, together with representatives of community and business organisations.
- the client has resolved to undertake a Neighbourhood Plan and this is recorded in the minutes of full parish council (or neighbourhood forum) meeting
- the client has formally registered with the Local Planning Authority (LPA) its intention to prepare a Plan and that this has been approved;
- the LPA and client are able to provide all the necessary evidence (other than the community survey) to AirS and
- the client or the LPA is able to provide AirS with all the necessary Plan and image licences for use in preparing and publishing the Plan.

Management and Governance

It is important that the steering group and any focus groups work to an agreed Terms of Reference to ensure that clear reporting and accountability lines are established and agreed. Using our suite of materials, and experience from other Neighbourhood Plan areas, we will provide templates for a range of documents including: Terms of Reference, Register of Interests, Letters to Stakeholders (national, regional, and local) Guidance for Focus Groups as well as provide advice on branding and marketing. Together with the Steering Group, we will draw up a project plan with key deliverables, including statutory consultation periods, allocated roles and responsibilities and agreed dates for achieving milestones.

Community engagement and visioning

We use a variety of community engagement techniques to reach out to different sections of the community to promote public participation in the neighbourhood planning process. This can be done via focus group meetings, community consultation events such as open days and via various thematic working groups. These groups are supported to identify the key characteristics of the area as part of a community profiling exercise. This can be complemented by our comprehensive Sussex rural database of relevant information to define the key characteristics of the Plan area. This community engagement activity will identify the opportunities for individual projects or opportunities for change within the neighbourhood that reflect the community's needs and aspirations; targeting specific groups such as the business community, younger and older people (often harder to reach)

We will use our online Community 21 platform to deposit this information for the community to examine and discuss at future workshops. Community 21 is our online planning tool developed in partnership with the University of Brighton. We will use this as the online home and platform for the Neighbourhood Plan so that information can be shared and progress of the plan charted throughout the process. We will train members of the NDP Steering Group as Community Editors to use Community 21 and provide ongoing support to facilitate this.

During this stage of the Plan preparation we will facilitate a visioning workshop, the purpose of which will be for the steering group and key local stakeholders to discuss and agree the key principles of the Plan, to set its scope and to inform a debate about the content of the Draft Plan; including housing numbers, locations and types as well as other land use and infrastructure proposals. This workshop will also serve to define the focus of the evidence gathering and structure of the community engagement activity to be undertaken.

Completing & analysing the evidence base and community survey response

We will review the evidence base, comprising:

- the evidence base of the Core Strategy/Local Plan and other relevant, local development Plan documents, e.g. SHLAA, SA/SEA, Infrastructure Plan, Transport Strategy;
- current significant Planning proposals at pre-Planning and application stages;
- the community survey report and
- any previous, relevant community documents including Community Led Plan, Design Statement and Housing Needs Survey.

We propose to have an initial meeting with relevant officers of the LPA in respect of the first and second tasks above to ensure we fully understand the relationship between the Plan and Local Plan and the LPA's expectations of the robustness of the Plan. This will involve a review of the local plan and any other background documents relevant to the area such as flood risk assessments and conservation area/heritage issues, access and transport, housing studies. It may also be appropriate for us to meet with representatives of the developers that are promoting proposals on which the Plan will be expected to take a view. This can be done by organising a landowners' event following the call for sites exercise which we will advise upon.

We will support the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to undertake a community survey to obtain further information from households on their living, working, leisure and travel patterns; on their attitudes to development generally and key planning issues in the parish specifically. The cost of undertaking this process, the data inputting, analysis and writing of the community survey report will depend on the methodology used. During this stage we will work with the steering group to co-ordinate the community engagement activities to ensure local residents are aware of the plan, have the opportunity to express their views and get involved in the process.

Site review/sifting for housing allocations

This work involves producing a mini SHLAA document for the sites put forward for residential development. It will be accompanied by a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). This will consider the environmental impact of each site. These two tools will allow the steering group to sift out those sites that are not suitable to be included in the

Neighbourhood Plan. The neighbourhood plan SHLAA will assess the deliverability and suitability of sites against an agreed list of criteria and constraints. This will result in a robust framework for the consideration of possible housing sites. The steering group can consider those within the Local Planning Authority SHLAA and from those identified following the West Wittering neighbourhood plan call for sites to be undertaken.

Draft Plan preparation

We will prepare the Draft Plan, which will include a summary of the evidence base, the draft vision, objectives, land use allocations, planning policies, infrastructure investments and a delivery plan (setting out how each policy and proposal will be financed and implemented). It is anticipated that the Draft Plan may comprise a combination of firm proposals and options for the scale and location of development, on both of which the community and other stakeholders will be invited to comment during the six week consultation period. It will also include a proposals map showing the spatial distribution of the proposed land use allocations and other policies and infrastructure proposals.

In partnership with the NP steering group we expect to organise and attend an open day exhibition of the Draft Plan and to prepare the exhibition materials (assuming a combination of display boards of written content, colour Plans and images, and a consultation response form). We will ensure that community engagement is maintained throughout this stage of the process to ensure an ongoing dialogue with local residents about the development of the plan, including via Community 21.

Draft Sustainability Appraisal (SA) & Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

We will undertake the Strategic Environmental Assessment and the Sustainability Appraisal of the Plan. A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) involves the evaluation of the environmental impacts of a plan such as a Neighbourhood Plan. While an SEA is concerned with *environmental* effects, the Sustainability Appraisal is an iterative process that considers the *environmental, social and economic* consequences of a plan and its policies, and seeks to identify ways of achieving a proper balance between these three considerations. For simplification, the report is referred to as the Sustainability Appraisal.

We expect that the SA will be an important means of demonstrating that specific proposals can be supported or should be rejected in the Plan. It must therefore be prepared with care and have sufficient robustness to withstand the scrutiny of those whose proposals are to be rejected. An SA is an especially important element within this plan given that the area includes a Ramsar site, an SSSI, an SPA and the Chichester Harbour AONB.

We will prepare the Draft SA, comprising a schedule of sustainability objectives (derived from the Local Plan SA) and will show how each specific proposal (and each option, if options have been included) measures up against each relevant objective. Where negative sustainability impacts are identified, we will indicate how such impacts may be mitigated.

Before we work on the SA, we will undertake a Scoping Report and this will include a consultation exercise with the statutory authorities. The Draft SA will be prepared as a single report. It will be ready to accompany the Draft Plan for the consultation exercise.

Submission Plan, Sustainability Appraisal (SA & Strategic Environmental Assessment)

We will advise on how best to collect and log the representations made during the consultation exercise. We will then support the steering group to review each representation in order that they can put forward an appropriate response (either agree and amend or disagree) in a single schedule.

We will also refer to the Draft SEA where this has helped shape a response to an issue or indicate where there may need to be changes made to the Submission SEA. On the assumption that the LPA and the Steering Group are able to agree the proposed response to each representation we will then prepare the Submission Plan and SEA in the same format as the drafts (unless advised otherwise).

We will then support the NP steering group to complete the Consultation Statement to accompany the Submission Plan and SEA. We will begin the preparation of the statement at the beginning of the project and update it to capture information on all the consultations and engagement exercises of the project. We will also support you in preparing the Basic Conditions Statement. The Basic Conditions Statement is a summary report which demonstrates that the Plan has met all the basic conditions required in the process of preparing the final Plan.

Examination and Referendum

We expect that from the Examination onwards the LPA will play a lead role although we can prepare written representations and/or review the Examiner's report if required. AirS will continue to support the steering group and Parish Council during these stages to maintain the active community engagement on the Plan and so ensure a good turnout at referendum.

Key Project Stages and Duration

In terms of project duration, we believe the following timetable is achievable for the above activities:

- Inception: Governance set up and visioning workshop – within two months of appointment
- Community Engagement - ongoing with initial activities aimed at maximising public participation within the first 2 – 3 months;
- Draft Plan & SEA – completed within 6 - 9 months of appointment for Steering Group approval;
- Public Consultation – a minimum of six weeks;

- Schedule of Representations & Responses – completed within two weeks for Steering Group approval and
- Submission Plan & SEA – completed within two months for Steering Group approval to submit to the LPA.

This scope of works and the NP Project Plan will be discussed and agreed with the steering group at project inception.

The AirS Team

The team comprises experienced and skilled community engagement officers, housing specialists and professional planners and designers. We will designate a Project Manager, who will be your main point of contact for the duration of the project. The manager will ensure that the project plan is adhered to and the services provided meet your satisfaction.

Fees & Budgeting

This scope of works provides a general guide to the breadth and depth of the service offered by AirS. We recognise that your requirements may differ and therefore some amendments may be required but based on this scope of works it is estimated AirS will be required to input a total of 38.5 days for the duration of the project: the total fee for which is £15,450 + VAT + expenses.

This is exclusive of an SEA / SA. Should this not be required from us then this will require an additional 5 days and £2250 making the total fee £17,700 and 43.5 days.

For any further information relating to this service offer, then please contact:

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