**WADHURST PARISH COUNCIL**

**THE MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE FULL WADHURST PARISH COUNCIL**

**HELD AT THE PAVILION, SPARROWS GREEN RECREATION GROUND**

**ON THURSDAY 06 SEPTEMBER 2018 AT 7.30PM**



Present: Cllrs. Bishop, Buckle (arrived 20.05), Dunnett (Vice Chair), Giblin (arrived 19.55), Kent (left at 20:45), Meredeen, Murphy, Standley, Wells (Chair), and Wynne

Also in attendance: 4 members of the public

1. Apologies from Cllr Bullock, Gadd, Harvest, Morris, Clerk & RFO

2. Introduction by the Chair providing the background to this extraordinary meeting, noting that the purpose was to discuss issues arising from the draft Wealden Local Plan (WLP) to inform the Parish Council’s ‘Submission’ to the Planning Inspector in his/her review examination of the WLP. The WPC Planning Committee has reviewed elements of the draft WLP at its last three meetings, with recommendations for consideration by Full Council for subsequent submission to the Planning Inspectorate. This meeting was established to enable the Full Council to receive comments from Wadhurst residents, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (NPSG), the WPC Planning Committee and individual Councillors.

It was agreed to remit the comments arising from the meeting to the WPC Planning Committee to formulate the draft WPC response, since WPC’s Submission has to be sent to the Inspector before the date of the next full WPC Meeting.

These minutes aim to log the main issues for raising with the Inspector rather than detailing on the very broad debate and wide range of views.

3. Declarations of interest – personal non-prejudicial interests were noted by Cllrs Wells and Standley.

4. Public Forum. Recognising the importance of this issue, the Chair permitted members of the public to comment and seek clarification of issues raised in discussions following the section reserved for public comment. The following issues were raised:

* High Street Congestion & Air Pollution. Concern was expressed that this issue has not been sufficiently recognised in the draft WLP. Further housing provision will only exacerbate the present and increasing gridlock at certain times of the day.
* Justification of Demand for Housing Requirements. The proposed number of additional homes was questioned when Rightmove shows 84 houses for sale in Wadhurst. Since the whole of Wadhurst is an AONB the potential allocation has already been substantially reduced compared with other places in the District and County. Cllr. Standley cautioned that if the WLP is not agreed, identifying a sufficient land supply to enable the presently allocated housing numbers, then the Inspector could require more strategic sites to be identified to meet higher housing numbers that could be allocatied to Wadhurst.
* Old Station Road Site. The inclusion of this as a strategic site was questioned, a previous planning application having been refused by the planning inspector and WPC’s previous objection to development on this site.
* Crest Farm Site. This site was suggested for consideration, recognising that it is a brownfield site - in the early 1950s there were a large number of brick-built hop pickers houses on this field.

5. Councillors discussed the report submitted by the WPC Planning Committee:

* Fracking. We should seek clarification whether the WLP should set out conditions under which extraction of shale gas takes place.
* Housing Density. A higher density of housing can/should be encouraged in the centre of the village, however there is no provision in the WLP to designate a ‘Core Area’ within the Development Boundary.
* Periodic Review. Confirmation should be sought that, every 5 years, a review of the housing demand will be undertaken along with the consequential requirement/need for a supply of housing land. Specifically, if housing demand reduces the proposed sites should not be developed.
* Old Station Road. Councillors felt that they should restate their previous objection to developing this site and to suggest that alternative sites be considered, that did not draw traffic through the village i.e. sites in the North (East & West) will have the least direct impact on traffic congestion within the Village.
* Other Sites. A number of other sites were raised in the discussion though no specific determinations or clarifications were agreed for putting to the Inspector. Councillors discussed whether the Development Boundary was too tightly drawn. It was suggested that a number of conversions might be achieved to assist in the housing numbers if Mayfield Lane continued to be included in the Development Boundary.

6. The submission by the NPSG was discussed with a number of suggested points to be raised with the Inspector for his/her review:

* Mobile & Broadband. The WLP should place a greater emphasis on the provision of ubiquitous high-speed broadband and mobile connectivity.
* Tourism. Greater emphasis on the importance of Bewl Water and the Train Station in promoting sustainable tourism. Overnight accommodation and better transport linkages (including bike paths/trails) between the Station, the Village and Bewl should be a priority.
* Windfall totals. Clarification should be sought on why 50 was chosen as the maximum number of dwellings for which sites could be allocated in the Neighbourhood Plan. Given we have an active NPSG and a plan in preparation (and the draft WLP allocations identify 59 windfall homes in Wadhurst), WPC believes that 60 or 70 would appear more appropriate for Wadhurst.
* Other wider draft WLP issues. Questions were raised (a) why the draft WLP does not present any evidence that the mitigation measures proposed to protect the Ashdown Forest and Pevensey levels will be effective and (b) why is Wealden District Council seeking to deliver the full Objectively Assessed Housing Need (OAHN) for the district given the massive environmental challenge arising from this quantum of growth?

The meeting closed at 21.05