

Ticehurst Neighbourhood News No. 20 – March 2018

Ticehurst Neighbourhood Plan.

Thank you for your views.

A big thank you to everyone who attended a consultation event, filled in a consultation questionnaire or sent us an individual response. We have had 314 questionnaires returned and have also had more than 50 written or emailed responses from both parishioners and other interested parties (such as utilities, developers). Our thanks are also due to the street champions for their part in raising awareness, clarifying queries and encouraging participation.



Most of the parishioner responses came from Ticehurst, but we had good responses from Flimwell, Stonegate and the outlying areas of the parish.

From the consultation responses, there are three main issues of concern to Ticehurst residents:

- Green Spaces (Policy R2)
- Housing Allocations (Policy H2)
- Highways (Policies R4, E6 and INF1 and some community actions).

Firstly, we must apologise for the fact that we did not manage to contact the owners of the designated Green Spaces until just before the plan was published. This was a big mistake and we can only say that it was unintentional. We will review the Green Spaces and consult with their owners before producing the final plan.

Allocations of housing sites in any Neighbourhood Plan are contentious. Many Flimwell residents have made clear their opposition to the allocation of the land behind Wardsdown House. However, we **must** conform to the Rother District Council plan which gives us a target of at least 9 more houses in Flimwell (and RDC will **not** allow us to move this allocation to either Stonegate or Ticehurst). We will once again review the possible sites in Flimwell.

We will publish any changes to Policies R2 (Green Spaces) and H2 (Housing Allocations) in News & Views before we change the draft plan, and we will also inform the landowners.

The other issue, Highways, is more difficult. We have already had several discussions with East Sussex CC Highways Department. They have major budget constraints and Ticehurst never seems to come high in their list of priorities. We will, however, be using your comments to make as strong a case as we can to them for further work in the parish.

So what happens now?

- We review all comments received from parishioners, from the questionnaires and from written and email comments on specific policies.
- We review all input from statutory consultees (Rother DC, National Grid, Historic England etc.)
- We review all input from other interested parties (landowners, developers etc.).
- We consult with key parties (Rother DC, East Sussex CC Highways, local GP practice, landowners, large employers etc.).
- We review the AECOM report on our Evidence Base and improve it as required.
- We strengthen some areas of the plan, based on comments received and further developments locally.
- We publicise any revisions on Green Spaces and Site Allocations.

As you can see, there is a lot to do and we think this will take several months. Other neighbourhood plans have tried to do this work quickly and given themselves major problems at the next stage. We do not want to do this.

Final Stage

Having considered all the information, we will then:

1. Revise the Strategic Environmental Assessment if necessary.
2. Revise the Ticehurst Neighbourhood Plan from draft into final version.
3. Produce the other reports required for the next stage. These are:
 - Consultation Report which includes:
 - all the work done over the past two years in consulting with the parishioners and other interested parties
 - all the comments received during our recent Regulation 14 Consultation period, and how we will modify the draft plan as a result.
 - Basic Conditions Report which answers the following questions:
 - does the Ticehurst NP conform to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)?
 - does it also conform to the Rother District Council Core Strategy?
 - does it meet all other necessary legal conditions?

Note that the NPPF is due to be revised in the Spring, so we are aiming at a moving target.

4. Submit these reports, together with our Evidence Base, to Rother District Council. They will then publicise them for another six-week consultation period, when you will again be able to submit your comments.

Following this, an Independent Examiner is appointed to see whether our Neighbourhood Plan meets all legal conditions. His examination will recommend one of three things:

- the plan cannot go ahead without major changes which require rework and further consultation;
- the plan must be modified exactly as he specifies before it can go to referendum;
- the plan can go straight to referendum.

As you might expect, he usually recommends the second of these three.

Having responded to the independent examination, the (probably modified) plan goes to referendum in the whole parish. Then, providing there is a simple majority of the voters, it becomes a legal document which must be used in deciding planning applications in our parish.

This final stage seems to be taking a considerable time with some other plans – it is a year since Robertsbridge submitted their plan to Rother and they have still not reached a referendum. And both Hawkhurst and Sedlescombe were unable to accept the independent examiner's changes as they stood, making it necessary for them to go back for further consultation and adding another year to their timetable.

Nevertheless, some local plans are finally reaching fruition:

- Hawkhurst held a referendum on their plan on 8th February. 91% of 1,250 people voted in favour of it.
- Sedlescombe will hold their referendum on 15th March.

Other parishes are making good progress. Crowhurst is just finishing their draft plan consultation, and Rye, Battle and Fairlight have nearly reached this stage.

Please continue to have patience with us. We will keep you informed of progress in News & Views.

Ticehurst Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Development on OUR terms