

Nuthurst Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2015-2031

A review at the end of year one

In October 2015, the Nuthurst Neighbourhood Plan was “made” by Horsham District Councillors. At that point it became a legal part of Horsham District Council’s (HDC) Planning Framework and Policy. It is thus used by HDC to help determine planning applications. Although reviews are not required by legislation, it is sensible for the Parish Council to review both how the Neighbourhood Plan has operated in practice and its continued appropriateness.

1. PART 1: The operation of the Neighbourhood Plan

In order to review the Neighbourhood Plan, it is necessary to revisit the objectives of the Plan. These objectives all reflected the express wishes of the vast majority of residents.

(i) to prevent large scale development in the Parish.

Evaluation

Thus far, the Neighbourhood Plan has been very successful. The proposed large housing development at Saddlers Farm, Mannings Heath, was refused planning permission by HDC on the grounds that it was not an allocated site in the Neighbourhood Plan.

(ii) to manage housing development by setting a viable number of new houses, as well as the localities and type of housing to be built in the Parish between 2015 and 2031.

It was agreed that approximately 50 new houses should be built in small developments, geographically distributed across the Parish. Furthermore, concern about the relatively high cost of housing in the Parish led to a further objective: that some of the new houses should be small and less expensive so as to encourage younger people to live in the Parish, and to enable older people to downsize, thus releasing existing larger homes for growing families.

Evaluation

The Neighbourhood Plan allocated eight sites for small developments, dispersed in all the settlements except for Copsale and Sedgwick (where the sites put forward by landowners were considered unacceptable on planning criteria). So far, four of these developments have made some progress towards achieving the necessary planning permission.

1) Great Ventors, Monks Gate

The applicant has received outline planning permission for access only. The applicant is required to make a full planning application within three years covering all the other matters, including the layout and design of the houses, landscaping, the disposal of surface water to prevent flooding and the disposal of foul sewerage.

2) Swallowfield Nursery, Mannings Heath.

A planning application is currently with HDC but it has not yet been determined. The application is for four large houses, without any small ones (which is inconsistent with the Neighbourhood Plan).

3) Land opposite the Dun Horse pub in Mannings Heath.

A planning application is currently with HDC. It has not yet been determined. There are concerns about the safety of the access road onto the A281. The applicant needs to satisfy West Sussex County Council's Highways Department about a safe access.

4) Micklepage, Nuthurst.

Planning permission has been granted by Horsham District Council for houses and this is consistent with the allocation in the Neighbourhood Plan.

No planning applications have yet been received from the owners of the other four sites listed in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Residents of the Parish were anxious that building work should be phased over time to spread the upheaval and disturbance associated with developments. There is time for the developments at the other sites to come forward as the Neighbourhood Plan runs until 2031.

(iii) An over-arching objective is the retention of the largely rural nature of the Parish

Evaluation

In a Parish where there are few, if any, strictly-defined "brownfield" sites, it became inevitable that parts of some of our fields would have to be used. Conscious of this, Neighbourhood Plan policies associated with the development sites require the retention of trees and the preservation of hedges to try and screen new housing and keep the sites as green as possible. Since producing the Neighbourhood Plan, the Parish Council has prepared and agreed a Parish Design Statement that further seeks to retain the largely rural nature of the Parish. The Parish Design Statement is currently before Horsham District Council and awaits adoption as supplementary planning guidance.

Overall evaluation of the Neighbourhood Plan

- The strength and worth of the Nuthurst Neighbourhood Plan was evidenced at the Public Hearing held by the Planning Inspectorate. This was into an appeal by the owner of land to the north of the A281 at Monks Gate against HDC's refusal of planning permission. The appeal was dismissed and the reasons given included that the site had not been allocated in the Parish's Neighbourhood Plan. It is hoped that this decision by the Planning Inspectorate has relayed a strong message to potential

developers that if their sites are not listed in Nuthurst's Neighbourhood Plan, then they would be very unlikely to gain planning permission.

- Residents of the Parish have taken very good note of the usefulness of the Neighbourhood Plan. In respect of the Saddler's Farm application, Horsham District Council received nearly 300 letters of objection from parishioners. Against the Monks Gate applications, there were nearly 400 letters of objection. These large numbers of objections from the public probably assisted in the applications being refused.
- **However, there have also been challenges to the status and operation of the Neighbourhood Plan**

(i) The owners of two sites have plans to develop their sites. Neither site is listed in the Neighbourhood Plan. One is for 4 detached houses in the side gardens of Hollyoaks and Keatings, Nuthurst Street, Nuthurst. The second relates to Ghyll House Farm, Broadwater Lane, Copsale, where the developer gained planning permission for six houses prior to the Neighbourhood Plan but now proposes to considerably increase the number of houses. These developments would raise the total number of new houses in the Parish far in excess of the 50 that the Neighbourhood Plan has planned for.

(ii) There have been oral and written threats of legal action to the Parish Council. From the start, the Parish Council was always mindful of the possibility of legal challenges to the Neighbourhood Plan. The Parish Council took extreme care to act in accordance with the legislation on neighbourhood planning and took professional advice from the Parish's planning consultants. Greater awareness of the Parish's caution should make any future threats of legal action less likely.

PART 2: The applicability of Nuthurst's Neighbourhood Plan

(i) At the end of the first year of the Neighbourhood Plan, there are no changes in the Parish that warrant any revisions to the Plan. For example, there have been no new or improved roads, bus services have not been extended, the school has not been enlarged to take more pupils and the Parish's boundaries have not altered. Indeed, the future of two facilities in Mannings Heath has become more insecure: the village shop and the Dun Horse pub.

(ii) The Neighbourhood Plan remains consistent with HDC's Planning Framework and HDC has a more than adequate five year housing supply. No more houses are needed in the Parish, other than the 50 that are allocated in the Neighbourhood Plan.

Conclusion

The Nuthurst Neighbourhood Plan is thus considered after this comprehensive review to remain fully appropriate.

This report was formally accepted by Nuthurst Parish Council at its meeting on 2 November 2016