

Neighbourhood Plan process

Posters will be displayed around the Parish when the first survey is ready to be completed. In order to keep costs to a minimum, the bulk of the surveys will be carried out electronically, with each household having one entry per survey. Those not online will have a paper version supplied by their area co-coordinator (names of your area Co-ordinator will be available on the Parish Council notice board shortly) and your completed paper survey will then be entered manually onto the electronic survey for you. The advantage of this is three fold;

Firstly, the data is “crunched” automatically and results and graphs are produced for publication and communication back to you electronically which will speed up the process.

Secondly, it allows the second and third surveys to be sent straight to respondents electronically.

Thirdly if you agree (subject to data protection), it allows for a community wide communication vehicle to be established which would allow the Parish Council to contact the majority of residents both quickly and easily if necessary at any point in the future.

Please remember, it is essential that everyone engages with the surveys as their results will dictate what decisions the Parish Council takes on your behalf for a long time to come.

The first survey will be for all businesses in the Parish, whether they are employers, home workers or just informal arrangements. We have a significant number of enterprises operating and it is key to ensuring that we not only understand what the local customers want from our key shops/pubs/clubs and post office etc, but also what businesses are missing, what support they need; it could even map potential future employment for local residents. Key infrastructure for growth can be checked (smart phones and broadband) as well as ability to function profitably in the area.

The second survey aims to identify the housing needs for the next 20 years. It will measure the “tightness” and “fit for purpose” of existing housing stock as well as the requirement (but not the right) for the next generation to put down roots and get a foothold in an area where affordability is a serious barrier. Included in this will be the need to ensure viable class sizes are maintained in the school are in balance, as currently 25% of intake is externally derived. As other Parishes will be producing their own neighbourhood plans, they will aim to rectify the shortfall in their school classes which in turn could impact upon our own School, something we need to be mindful of in advance. With an ageing population the older end of the spectrum needs just as much consideration as the younger end, with sufficient bungalow accommodation made available freeing up valuable larger properties and releasing equity along the way. We will all need to think what we will need in 20 years time, and now is the time we can ensure that it is in place to meet our needs!

Finally, the third survey will map our wish list for social infrastructure requirements and will be firmly based on a budget derived from the outcome of survey 2. Part of Localism means we have the power to identify from evidence gathered what, and only what, development is the absolute minimum required to keep the fabric of the village in balance. Once this is identified it will liberate funds from developers to be spent in the Village on building that infrastructure. So if we know we need only a small number of affordable homes, we will not have enough to upgrade a Village Hall or sports facilities and can then cut our cloth accordingly. Should we have a larger number required and this meets with approval at consultation stage then we will have more funds to play with.

We have set the order of the surveys to ensure that the “cart is not put before the horse” and whatever development requirements we might have (if any), will dictate at what level survey 3 is pitched in Sep/Oct

Remember, the Final Neighbourhood Plan will be consulted upon and it will have to meet with overwhelming approval by residents and both the Parish and District Councils so it has to be in balance. The plan will need to be ratified in the May referendum next year by everyone in the Parish and failure to successfully adopt a Neighbourhood Plan will mean the Parish has no defence to development of any sort, so we have to get this right first time.

I would also like to draw to everyone's attention the major progress made in getting Mid Sussex District Council to agree in principle to allocate an area of Constance Wood and/or Hay field for allotments, a community garden and (I am very pleased to say), a lasting legacy Jubilee Orchard. Obviously all o these are subject to the Neighbourhood Plan consultation and adoption of the Plan next May. However, the plan for a Jubilee Orchard involves an area which will contain a number of trees either donated or bought from any surplus funds raised from the Jubilee Celebration day itself. The aim is to create a mix of fruiting and productive trees as well as a “nuttery” for future generations to enjoy.

Mark Syrett,
Leader of the Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan Working Party