

Notes of the meeting of the DOVER NORTH Neighbourhood Forum held on 21 April 2009 at East Langdon Parish Hall at 7.00pm.

Present:

Parish Councillors David Hart Chairman

Kent County Councillor Eileen Rowbotham

Other Councillors, officers and 5 members of the public.

Apologies: Tilmanstone Parish Council
Aylesham Parish Council

1. Chairman's welcome

The Chairman welcomed representatives and facilitators to the meeting.

2. Notes of the previous meeting

Notes of the Forum meeting held on 21 January 2009 had been circulated. The Chair explained that following the last meeting a letter had been sent to Kent Highways Services requesting information on specific problems. It had taken 3 months to get a reply but one had now been received which would be circulated to all the parish councils.

A letter had also been sent to the Secretary of State but to date only an acknowledgement had been received by the forum. One attendee pointed out that there is a website called "They work for you.com" where you can contact your MP and chase outstanding responses. Cllr Rowbotham suggested a group should visit the Houses of Parliament to lobby the MP.

The Chair also read out a letter that had been received from Michael Howard MP, Folkestone and Hythe.

3. PC Simon Ashford, Kent Constabulary

PC Ashford spoke briefly to highlight the role of Special Constables within Kent. He stated that at present they do a lot more work alongside Police Officers than they once did and make a significant contribution to policing, although still on an unpaid and voluntary basis. They are looking for more volunteers and PC Ashford directed attendees to handouts in the room or to contact him for further information.

4. John Hughes, Planning Aid

- Planning Aid is a charitable organisation that gives free, independent and professional advice to individuals, communities and groups.
- To be able to influence planning decisions you should act early and have a clear idea of what you want to achieve. You should also focus on the planning issues and material considerations.
- Sustainable development is the core principle underlying the planning system.

- Local Development Framework (LDF) – looked at the stages. Aware that there are concerns around the LDF – particularly that the local authority may be aiming for a level of growth that is over and above what it needs to regenerate the area.
- The ‘Local Development Scheme’ (DDC Policy) is an essential part of the LDF process as it sets out the policy for producing the LDF and related documents. It allows the community to see what the planning policies are and sets out the programme including a timetable.
- ‘Statement of Community Involvement’ - Its purpose is to set out the Local Authority’s policy for involving the local community but some representatives were unaware of this.
- The ‘Sustainable Communities Strategy’ – for East Kent. One purpose is to provide the framework for the LDF. Are they consistent?
- Planning Policy Statement 3: Housing sets out density standards. Previous policy – 30-50 minimum density per hectare. New one says minimum of 30.
- Be aware that national policy changes – all feed into development control which deals with planning applications
- Section 106 Agreement (S106) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 allows a local planning authority to enter an agreement with the developer to address matters necessary to support provision of services and infrastructure such as highways, open spaces, education, health and affordable housing.
- Question – Do Parishes have any control if a S106 agreement affects their parish? Answer – No but they should be more involved. S106 agreement – is also known as development contribution.
- With regards to S106, the developer’s contribution towards education within an area normally has to be spent within 2 miles of a primary school, or within 3 miles of a secondary school. However, with health the PCT have argued that it should be spent within 15 miles.

John Hughes then answered the following questions:

- Do S106 agreements apply to all developments? – No, only the larger ones, for example those that have 10+ houses. In the current climate there are lots of S106 agreements being renegotiated.
- Village Design Statements – there is a concern that Dover District Council doesn’t have to take any notice or consideration of these. Villages that have produced them include Sutton and Great Mongeham. The status has changed as the Local Authority should now take into account and accept that both Village Design Statements and Parish Plans are part of their ‘higher plan’.
- DDC hasn’t as yet produced a second version of the site document contained with the Core strategy of the LDF. Is there a timetable that dictates when this should be done? – There should be a timetable and it should be on the DDC website.
- Concerned with the position of SEEDA. How can Parish Councils interact with SEEDA and get involved in the scrutiny process as SEEDA is an unelected quango? – Unsure. Not aware if the legislation that gives SEEDA certain powers has even gone through Parliament yet.
- What is the life span of a planning application? - The project has to be started within 3 years. If nothing has been done within the 3 year period the permission expires.

- If you start and then stop do you have to renew the permission? – No, because a start would have been made this is seen as having implemented the application.
- Does the national policy govern the development plan? – Yes, but the national policy is more general.
- Can LDF overrule a Planning Inspector's decision? – Yes, if it has an explanation why. The planning law works on a precedent, but is a 'plan-led' system. If the LDF can justify it in terms of new needs/demands/legislation.
- Would it have to pass the same soundness test? – Yes
- How is Planning Aid funded? – A grant is obtained from the Department of Communities and Local Government, it receives donations as a charity and the RTPi is funded by subscriptions paid by its members.
- John Hughes then asked the audience what they would like to know about planning in order to help future publications and guidelines. The response was:
 1. Why are there so many retrospective applications?
 2. Role of the Parish Councils
 3. Role of DEFRA in certain applications
 4. Enforcement.

The Chair thanked Langdon Parish Council for their help and effort in campaign against the windfarm on behalf of the forum. Langdon responded that they couldn't take all the credit and had been helped by Anthony Hyde of Langdon Action Group, Guston and Whitfield Parish Councils.

The meeting ended at 8.50pm.

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Additional information from the Forward Planning Section of DDC obtained from DDC's Principal Planning Officer in the Forward Planning Section, after the Forum meeting:

"I am slightly bemused that nobody appeared to know about the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI)! This was one of the first LDF Documents that we prepared and it is available on the DDC website and it did go to various meetings of the Council/LDF Working Group.

The text on the DDC website states:

The LDF places great value on meaningful community involvement. The SCI is one of the documents within the LDF and it identifies when our community will be involved in the development of the LDF and how we will consult our community on planning applications.

The SCI has been the subject to an independent examination. An Inspector, appointed by the Secretary of State, has examined the SCI. We now have to make sure that the development of our LDF documents, and future planning application processes, are consistent with the commitments made in this statement.

Reflecting the purpose of the SCI, the District Council is committed to involving the community in developing the SCI. Many different groups and organisations, representing a number of different issues, interests and local areas, were invited to contribute to the development of the SCI.

The process of SCI development involved several phases of community involvement:

- ➤ Interviews with individuals representing specific sectors (e.g. health, business) and also individuals with experience of community involvement.
- ➤ **Community workshops** with people representing the views of different community groups including residents, developers, local businesses and service providers.
- ➤ **Workshops with Town and Parish Councillors** to gain their views and discuss their role in supporting community involvement in planning and development.
- ➤ Wider consultation with the community on the SCI, before it was finalised and submitted to the Secretary of State.

A draft version of the SCI went to and was agreed by Council on the 7th April 2005 and the adopted SCI (which is still in force) was agreed by Council on 26 April 2006. For further information, please direct people to the adopted SCI on the DDC website. "