

# STEDHAM WITH IPING NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

## *Message from the Steering Group*

Dear Resident,

As we are now at an important stage of the neighbourhood plan making process, we thought it to describe the process involved in drafting this plan so that you can understand the background to it and the evidence that underpins it.

The Parish Council decided to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan for the parish in July 2017, a questionnaire was distributed and a Steering Group formed to gather the evidence on which the Plan would be based (this would later form part of the *Evidence Base*). Some members of the Steering Group are members of the Parish Council whilst others are local residents keen to get involved.

The first task of the Steering Group was to understand the aspirations of the community – using the responses from the questionnaire a Vision Statement was prepared and this is included in the plan. It reads:

**Stedham with Iping Parish will:**

- 1. Cherish its heritage, distinctive rural character, relationship with the River Rother and tributaries, together with its clear separation from Midhurst and the A272.**
- 2. Ensure that all new development results in a built and natural environment which is attractive and sustainable, ensuring growth is appropriate and takes account of the community's aspirations for the Parish.**
- 3. Promote inclusive community facilities and the creation of safe and integrated connections throughout the Parish.**
- 4. Promote the use of recreational spaces and opportunities that support and enhance the lives of all its residents and visitors.**

The purpose of the Neighbourhood Plan is to guide development over the next 15 years and will be a document used by the South Downs National Park Authority when determining planning applications. Because of this important status the plan must be based on sound evidence. We have prepared an *Evidence Base* which consists of seven different documents, each of which looks at a different topic. These are discussed below and have been used to inform the policies and content of the draft plan being consulted on.

Of these, the [Assessment of Potential Development Sites](#) has the potential to be controversial because of the difficulty of reconciling the interests of property-owners, neighbours and developers, the local demand for low cost housing and the requirements South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA).

Having learned that the SDNPA was proposing to include in its own draft plan a requirement for 18 dwellings in Stedham, the Steering Group sent out a Call for Sites to all landowners in the parish and published it on the Parish Council website. In response, we were notified of 11 sites, of which 7 were in, or adjacent to, Stedham Village.

These sites were then tested by the Steering Group against agreed criteria. The process is described in the evidence document which runs to 74 pages. If you read this, you will see the criteria which were applied to each site and the results of applying them.

Two sites met all the criteria and therefore made it through to the draft plan. The first was a site for 8-12 houses on the north east side of the Sawmills site, subject to conditions on landscaping, parking and protection of the Stedham Common SSSI. The rest of the site will remain allocated for light-industrial use.

The second was a site for up to 8 affordable homes west of West Lodge, Rotherhill. This site is outside the settlement boundary and is therefore proposed to be for affordable, not market, dwellings. The draft plan provides for up to 8 affordable homes with the restriction that they should be a mix of small self-build starter homes and bungalows suitable for the elderly and infirm. This site may be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment and there are conditions relating to planting, the environment, parking and layout additionally the homes will only be available for those living or working locally.

Although none of the other sites in the village of Stedham met the criteria for housing, there were some outside the settlement boundary which could be considered suitable in the future as '*rural exception sites*'. These are not included in the Draft Plan, but a policy is included for unallocated residential development where small-scale development might be appropriate. The Steering Group feels that small-scale development would ensure the whole parish continues to thrive.

Alongside the Site Assessment is the Review of the Settlement Boundary. The boundary has been re-drawn by our planning consultant using the methodology provided by SDNPA. The exercise has resulted in a few changes to the Settlement Boundary, mostly to exclude large gardens and include the proposed housing on the Sawmills Site (but excluding the land designated for industrial use). The evidence document includes maps showing the existing Chichester 1999 Settlement Boundary, the Settlement Boundary as drawn in the emerging SDNPA Local Plan and the Settlement Boundary which the Steering Group proposes.

Obviously, in a rural parish such as ours the character of our surroundings is hugely important. The Evidence Base includes a document on the Natural Environment which describes the SSSI on Iping & Stedham Commons, as well as the 8 wildlife sites in the parish.

The SSSI has the highest level of protection of any wildlife area in the UK. We are fortunate to have such a wonderful area in the middle of our parish, but with it comes obligations for its protection. Natural England has raised concerns about the harm that could be caused by residents of any new development walking their dogs and by cat-predation. To reduce the potential for damage, the draft plan proposes a buffer zone of 125m between the SSSI and any new residential development. You can see this on the map. Other measures include encouraging residents to walk on new or improved footpaths around Stedham which do not cross the Commons.

The Natural Environment evidence base document also looks at the Dark Skies Policy which we have always endorsed in our parish, as well as the risk of flooding and measures to mitigate its

impact. There is a policy in the draft plan to preserve the relative tranquillity of the parish in terms of light, smell and noise.

Alongside that is the Open Spaces and Key Views evidence base document. Twenty open spaces were reviewed to see which met the criteria required for designation as Local Green Spaces or Local Community Spaces and thus for special protection. Five were designated Local Green Spaces: the Recreation Ground, the allotments and the playing field at Common View, the sports ground and Rectory Field (the field behind the Memorial Hall). The following four met the criteria for designation as Local Community Spaces: the green spaces in Common View which are not verges, the two areas of common land north of the A272 and the land between Tye Hill and Stedham Bridge.

This document also looked at views in the parish. It assessed 20 and chose 8 as being Key Views. These were chosen around the parish and as the parish is in the South Downs National Park, many of them are views of the Downs.

As well as considering preserving the rural nature of our parish, we have looked at our Local Economy. In a small rural parish the constraints to the local economy are shortage of bus services and lack of other infrastructure, such as good broadband in outlying areas. To try to mitigate this we have included a policy to be positively in favour of infrastructure which improves current weaknesses, such as mobile-reception. The Steering Group did not wish to endorse large-scale enterprises, but did feel small workshops or home/work units should be encouraged.

The parish questionnaire last summer produced had one overwhelming request, which was to improve the parking situation in and around Common View. The Transport and Getting Around evidence base document looked at this, as well as other issues, such as public rights of way and safety on roads. Many of the measures required can be taken without the need to be included in the Neighbourhood Plan. However, this draft plan ensures that new development will not make the situation worse and that there will be a presumption in favour of providing new car-parking areas. There is also a requirement for better cycle and footpath access as part of new housing. Policies included in this draft plan also include proposals for shared spaces where pedestrians have priority over vehicles.

For many of us the attraction of the parish lies in the old buildings and historic structures and while many of these are listed and some are in one of the two conservation areas, there are very many which do not enjoy special protection. There is clearly a huge amount of work and research put into compiling the Review of Heritage Assets evidence base document. It includes a very interesting history of the parish from early times to the present, as well as a complete and thorough assessment of 31 potential heritage assets. These are buildings or structures which, while not statutorily listed, should nevertheless be protected from inappropriate development through designation as Parish Heritage Assets. 29 buildings or groups of buildings met the criteria and are listed in the draft plan. The Steering Group has also included policies to protect the sunken lanes and retaining walls which are such a feature of the northern part of the parish and the few existing unconverted barns from inappropriate development.

Finally, there are Community Assets which we have given additional protection to, such as the churches and the Memorial Hall. The full list is in the draft plan and this policy seeks to prevent development which could harm these assets.

As you see there are many strands to this draft plan. A lot of consideration and discussion has gone into forming what we hope is a well-rounded document with policies pertinent to our parish which, depending on what you say, could shape the look and feel of the parish for the next 15 years.

It is your Neighbourhood Plan and it is important that it reflects the views and desires of the whole Parish. We encourage you to read the draft Stedham with Iping Neighbourhood Plan and the accompanying Evidence Base and let us know the policies you want to endorse as well as those you disagree with. Please make sure you provide your comments in writing – full details of how to do this are available on the parish council's website.

We look forward to receiving your comments in due course.

Many thanks,

***The Stedham with Iping Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group*** (Adrian Hearle, Bill Crawshaw, Elizabeth Griffiths, John Wheelhouse, Lucy Petrie, Martin Drury, Morag Birch)