

Date: 23 September 2019
Project Ref: 0002
Project Name: STEYNING COMMUNITY PLAN



UPDATE ON THE STEYNING COMMUNITY PLAN

This note has been prepared to provide an update on the progress that has been made on the Steyning Community Plan and advise the Parish Council and members of the Steering Group on timescales and the likelihood of meeting Horsham District Council's (HDC) 30th November deadline.

This note is split into several sections, namely:

1. Status of documentation
2. Timeline & next steps

1. Status of documentation

Having a solid evidence base is vital to ensure the plan can progress smoothly and the policies contained within the final plan are appropriate and justified in the parish context.

Work on the various evidence base documents have been progressing at different speeds, in most cases these are to be prepared by volunteers with consultant support. A summary of the current state of play is below:

Document	Commentary	Status
Housing Needs Assessment	A housing needs assessment has been prepared by AECOM which was funded by central government. This report has concluded that the parish has an overall housing need figure of 14 dwellings (rounded) per annum, or 165 dwellings over the Neighbourhood plan period, 2019-2031 (12 years). This document also considered a number of other matters relating to housing need including tenure and affordability.	Complete
Physical, Social and Economic Infrastructure	Document intended to review current infrastructure provision, whether there are any gaps in existing provision and make policy suggestions to the Steering Group. Initial study drafted by volunteers in February 2019 and comments provided by consultant in March 2019. To our knowledge no further work has been undertaken on this report following the provision of comments/feedback.	In Progress
Open Space Assessment	Work has begun on this in July 2019 with the identification of spaces for assessment. Consultant will then provide a template report to allow volunteers to undertake the assessments.	In Progress

Document	Commentary	Status
Consultation Statement	Whilst this is a statutory document required at submission to detail the events of the Regulation 14 consultation it is best practice for this document to set out all consultation activities undertaken throughout the plan preparation process. It is understood that this document is at an early stage of production	In Progress
Character Assessment	This element of work was originally tasked to volunteers in early 2019. It is understood that work has now begun on this in July 2019. Status of documentation unknown.	In Progress
Site Assessments	<i>Being undertaken by Squires Planning</i> - Given the questions around whether the plan would seek to allocate sites for housing development work on the Site Assessments was delayed ensuring that abortive work was not carried out by consultants. Following recent confirmation that the plan would seek to allocate housing this work is now in hand.	In Progress
Biodiversity	Work on this began at the start of May 2019 although it is understood that the volunteers has been unable to complete it due to other commitments. To date we have received the Sussex Wildlife Trust Biodiversity Search Report for the Parish.	In Progress
Climate Change	Work on this began at the start of May 2019, a draft report was prepared in July 2019 which has been reviewed by consultants. The document has subsequently been tweaked again and distributed to the environment working group for comment.	In Progress

Alongside the evidence base there are the statutory documents which need to be prepared, these are:

Document	Commentary	Status
Neighbourhood Plan	To date work has not begun on preparing the 'plan' as the information which would have been used to inform it has not yet been prepared.	Not started
Neighbourhood Plan Map	The map will be informed by the evidence base and plan policies which have not yet been prepared. As a result, it has not yet been possible to prepare this.	Not started
Sustainability Appraisal / Strategic Environmental Appraisal	If the plan includes site allocations, which is the current intention, this document will be required. It is also intended that this document is prepared by AECOM so that it is funded by central government / Locality. Unfortunately, the previous application for support submitted earlier this year has encountered issues and as a result a new application has been requested by Locality. Production of this document is likely to take in the region of 3-4 months from approval of the support by Locality. This document should be prepared for the Regulation 14 Consultation.	Not started

2. Timeline & next steps

The timeline to produce the Steyning Community Plan has always been tight given the need to ensure it was at an advanced stage before the Horsham District Local Plan is published for consultation.

The timeline produced for the Steering Group on 24/04/2019 (see **Appendix 1**) illustrated this and set dates by which certain pieces of work should be completed to enable submission of the plan in December 2019. From this timeline you will see that:

- Majority of evidence documents needed to be completed by the start of June 2019.
- All evidence documents needed to be completed by the start of July 2019.
- Successful Locality grant application needed to occur in mid-May 2019.
- Regulation 14 consultation would need to start at the beginning of August 2019.

A recent clarification email from Barbara Childs has confirmed that HDC consider the submission deadline to be 30 November 2019. This brings to the submission deadline forward one month from the project timeline, at the same time the previous targets have been missed.

The timeline has now been reworked considering the above factors. This produces the following targets:

2 nd August 2019	All documents ready for Reg.14 Consultation (including evidence base, draft plan, plan map, SA/SEA, draft Consultation Statement)
w/c 12 th August 2019	Full council meeting to sign-off of plan for reg.14 consultation
16 th August 2019	Reg.14 Consultation Start
27 th September 2019	Reg.14 Consultation Finish
15 th November 2019	All documents updated & ready for submission.
w/c 25 th November 2019	Full council meeting to sign-off of plan for submission
30 th November 2019	Reg.15 Submission

With the above in mind we would therefore have just over three weeks from the preparation of this note to complete all evidence documents, consider and choose housing sites, prepare planning policies, prepare the plan and plan map, commission and prepare the SA/SEA. We would also need to review all documentation once completed to ensure it meets the necessary legal tests. Regrettably, the **Steyning Community Plan as currently proposed will not be ready for submission on 30th November 2019.**

Should there be a desire to meet the HDC deadline and reach Reg.15 by 30th November 2019 it is suggested that the plan is pared back, we shall call this Option 1. The following elements would need to be removed:

1. Housing allocations – by not including housing allocations it is likely that a SA/SEA will not be required. Site Assessments will also not be required. It would also remove the element of the plan that absorbs the most volunteer time and tends to be the focus of meetings.
2. Any topics where the supporting evidence is not completed by the 19th July.

Option 1 would be hard to achieve. It would likely secure policies on climate change and designate Local Green Spaces as a minimum. It would also ensure that the Parish Council receives an

increased % of CIL from when the plan is made. I would hope that given the absence of controversial matters it would also be met with general support locally.

HDC's position regarding the 30 November deadline is understood when it comes to the delivery of housing. However, it is suggested that the Parish Council enquire with HDC whether a plan absent of policies relating to the delivery of housing could reach Reg.15 in Spring 2019. Such an approach would allow a neighbourhood plan to be prepared in a timely and thought out manner whilst not conflicting with their emerging plan. Option 2 is therefore to seek to prepare a plan without housing sites which is not bound by the 30 November 2019 deadline. *N.B. in seeking to adopt such an approach HDC would still require clarification on whether the Parish Council will undertake a n.plan review in a few years to allocate sites or whether they should be allocating sites through the Local Plan review.*

If Option 1 or Option 2 above are not considered appropriate, it is with regret that I must recommend that work on the neighbourhood plan is put on hold until such a time as HDC are at an advanced stage of their Local Plan Review.



Andrew Metcalfe

Director | MPlan MRTPI