



CALL FOR SITES AND SITE SELECTION PROCESS

In April 2016 we launched our formal “Call for Sites” process, inviting local land-owners/developers/agents to consider offering sites for potential development in the Ashington Neighbourhood Plan (2016 – 2031). Despite setting a deadline for submissions of 30th September the window of opportunity remained open until 7th December as work on the Site Selection process had yet to be finalised. The Call for Sites was advertised in the local press, on village noticeboards, Sussex Local magazine, local Estate Agents, Parish Council website and Facebook page.

In April 2016 the Neighbourhood Plan Clerk began research into Site Selection Criteria and the Site Assessment Process. Other Horsham District Parish Neighbourhood Plan information was studied, as was information from further afield (via web searches). The process of preparing draft documents was begun and several amendments made. Advice was sought from HDC and further amendments made. The NHPlan Steering Group reviewed the work at its meeting on 25th October and agreed to split the Site Assessment draft document into two parts. Part 1 would assess basic compliance with the HDPF (which was adopted by HDC in November 2015) plus gather some basic site information, Part 2 would ask for specific proposals to be submitted. It was expected that Part 2 would not be completed by landowners/developers/agents until the State of the Parish Report and Vision & Objectives were available so that development proposals could be made in light of identified community needs.

A total of 26 sites had been submitted to the NHPlan Steering Group by 7th December 2016.

Sites were rejected at Part 1 if they were:

Housing proposals on greenfield or brownfield sites isolated from the BUAB (conflicting with Policies 1,2,3 & 4 of the HDPF) unless they were for a development proposal at that location in order to support an existing, viable business on the site (ie essential to the particular countryside location and therefore not conflicting with Para 55 of the NPPF and Policies 1,2,3,4 and 26 of the HDPF).

Sites were taken through to Part 2 if:

1. They were within the BUAB (greenfield or brownfield) – priority will be given to these sites
2. Abutting the BUAB (greenfield or brownfield) – proposals should meet an identified community need (from the State of the Parish report and in line with V&O) and be appropriate in size to a ‘medium village’ (as defined in the HDPF). Priority will be given to redevelopment of brownfield sites abutting the BUAB above greenfield sites abutting the

BUAB.

Part 1 Site selection process was completed in February 2017 and Site Promoters were informed of the decisions. An Appeal process was provided and one site did Appeal its rejection successfully (Site 14).

During the process a small number of sites originally submitted for consideration did gain planning permission and these sites were removed from the Neighbourhood Plan process.

The final list of Sites was published in July 2017.

The total number of new homes in Ashington that is appropriate had been determined by a Housing Needs Assessment July 2017. This identified that the number of homes should be in the range 123-200 and this figure was deemed acceptable by HDC.

Those sites that 'passed' Part1 Site Assessment were then subject to the following process:

1. Site visits on 6th October 2017 by Planning Consultant and NHPlan Clerk. Steering Group members/Parish Councillors were deliberately excluded from attending the site visits as some had personal and/or prejudicial interests in particular sites. Although, SG members were asked to submit any useful information about any of the sites to the NHPlan Clerk prior to the visits taking place.
2. The Planning Consultant (supported by the NHPlan Clerk) prepared draft site sustainability assessments (SA) for each site. These were made available on 20th November 2017.
3. Draft SA were presented to the SG for comment on 20th November 2017 and amendments made.
4. Draft SA were sent to site promoters on 6th December 2017 for comment (together with a covering letter and a map of all sites). A deadline for responses of 12th January 2018 was set.
5. By the deadline of 12th January 2018 responses had been received from Sites 1, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 15, 22, 23, 26. Other Sites had failed to respond so it was taken that they had no comment to make on the draft Site Assessment.
6. SA were updated and published
7. Community engagement activities were organized.

The NHPlan Steering Group are also well aware that specific site issues such as highways, access, ecology, impact on Listed buildings, sewage, surface water, landscape, utilities etc can all be dealt with at the planning application stage – planning conditions and mitigation measures can be put in place to minimize any harm. The Site Assessment process will not reject any sites on the basis of these issues.

Karen Dare
6 December 2017