



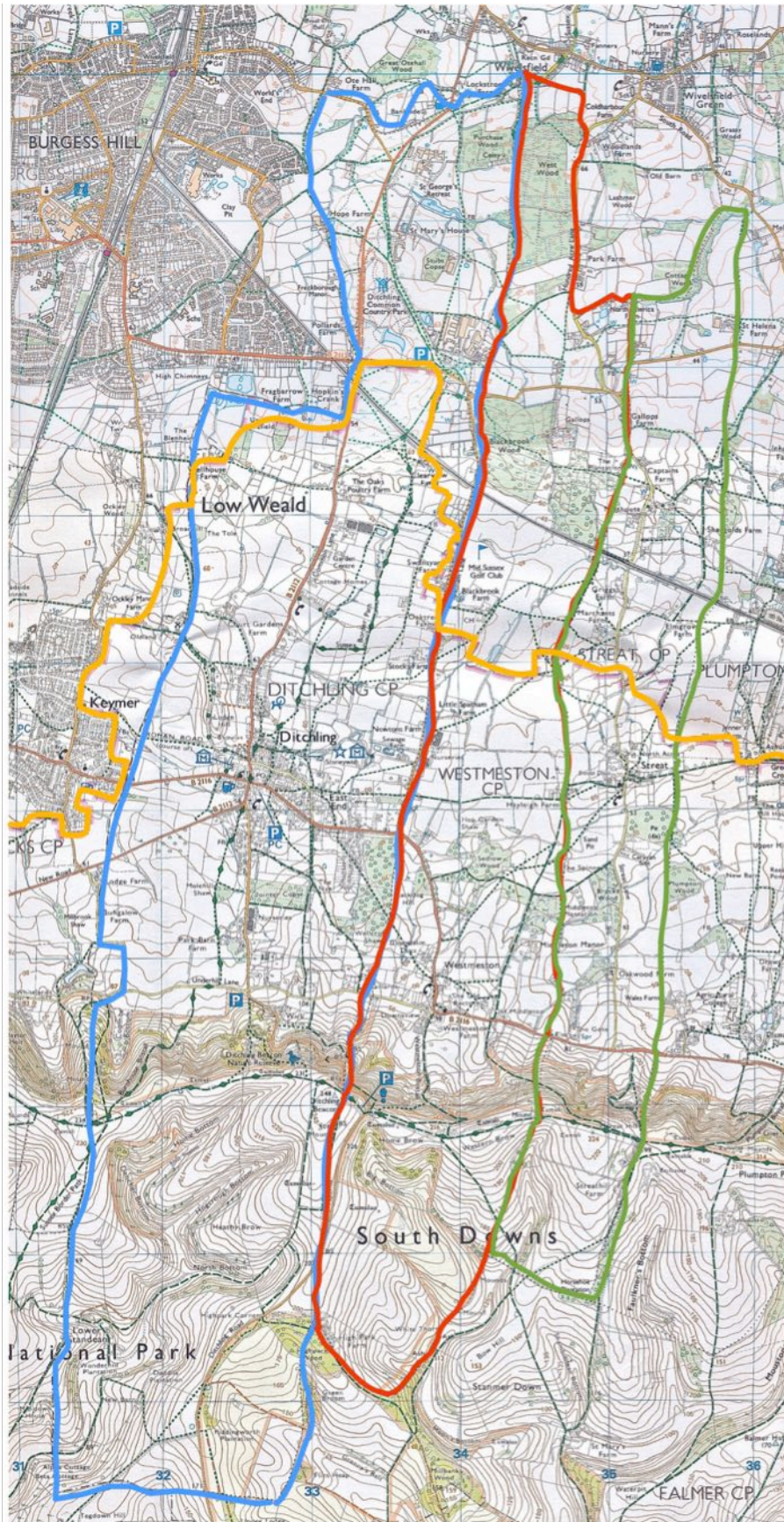
Ditchling Streat and Westmeston neighbourhood plan

Pre submission consultation draft



March 2016





KEY

Ditchling

Westmeston

Street

Northern boundary of South Downs National Park

The three beacon parishes of East Sussex



Jointly prepared and published by the three parish councils
March 2016

How to comment

You can comment on this draft plan until **Tuesday, April 26th**.
This should be in writing to:

Mrs Michelle Warner
Clerk, Ditchling Parish Council
1 The Hollow, Lindfield, West Sussex RH16 2SX
e-mail: ditchlingpc@btinternet.com

or

Tony Gedge
Chairman, Streat Parish Meeting
Streat Cottage
Streat
Nr Hassocks, BN6 8RU
e-mail: a_gedge@hotmail.com

or

Rob Mills
Chairman, Westmeston Parish Council
Hooks Acre
Lewes Road
Westmeston, BN6 8RH
e-mail: hooksacre@btinternet.com

or

Tom Dufty, chair of the project management group:
e-mail: tomdufty@hotmail.com

All the plan documents are held on:
www.beaconvillagesplan.co.uk/

and for more general information on the three villages go to:
www.ditchling.com

Contents

	page
1 Introduction	5
2 Characteristics of the neighbourhood plan area	9
3 National and local planning policy context	17
4 Vision, objectives and key issues	25
5 Plan production and community engagement	29
6 Neighbourhood plan policies	33
7 Achieving sustainable development	57
8 Implementation	63

Appendices (available on request from Tom Dufty)

e-mail: tomdufty@hotmail.com

A Community engagement report

B Focus group reports

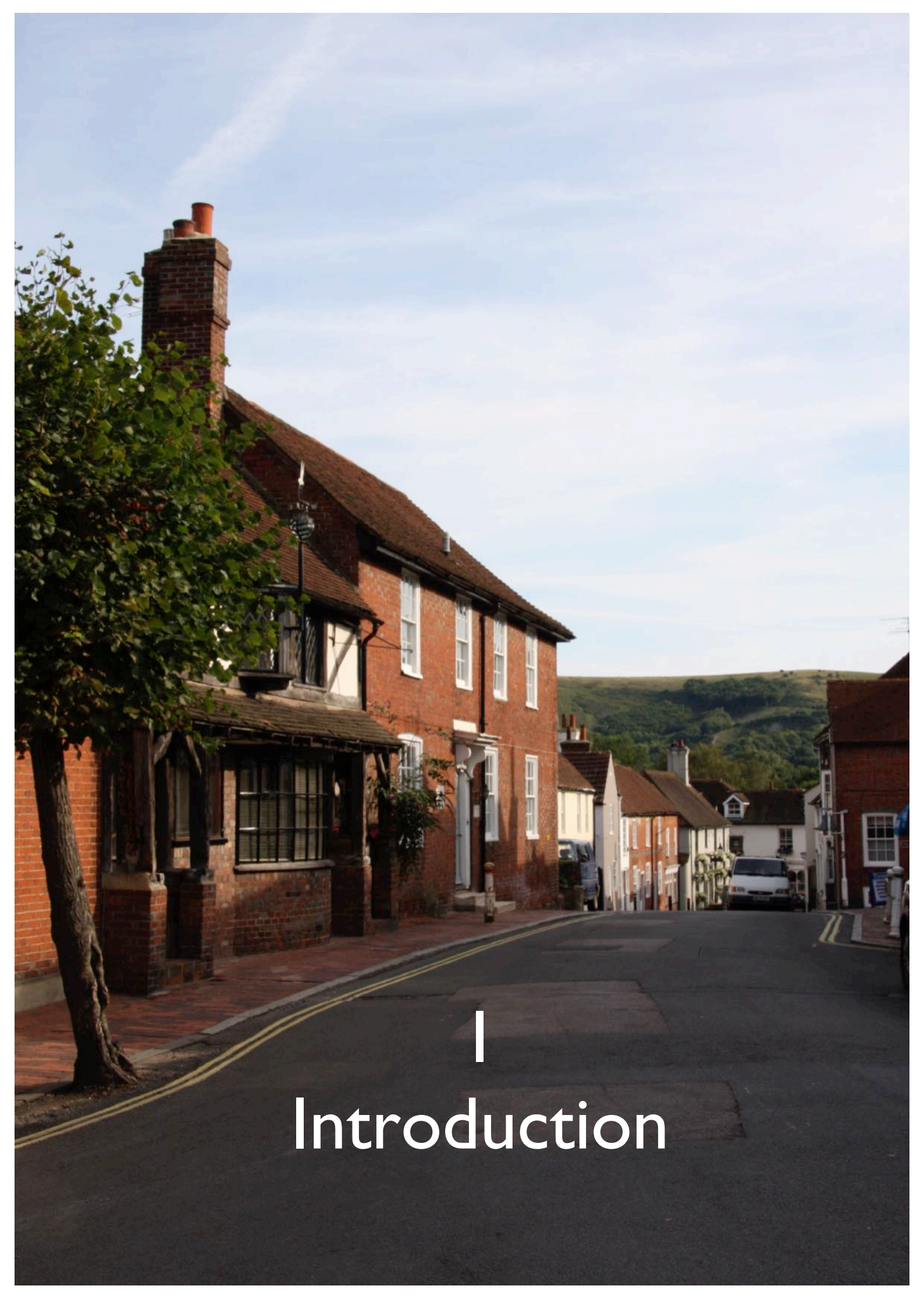
C Vistas

D Letter from Simon Sinnatt

E Topic maps

Abbreviations

BOA	Biodiversity Opportunities Area
BVPIT	Beacon Villages Plan Implementation Team
CLT	Community Land Trust
CIL	Community Infrastructure Levy
ESCC	East Sussex County Council
LDC	Lewes District Council
LVP	Local Volunteering Plan
MSDC	Mid Sussex District Council
NP	Neighbourhood Plan
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NPPG	National Planning Practice Guidance
PMG	Project Management Group
SDNPA	South Downs National Park Authority
The Beacon parishes	The parishes of Ditchling, Streat and Westmeston
WSCC	West Sussex County Council



|
Introduction

What is a neighbourhood plan?

The Ditchling, Streat and Westmeston Neighbourhood Plan aims to make the three parishes an even better place to live, now and for future generations. It covers the period 2016 to 2030 and recommends a review every five years.

Neighbourhood plans provide people with a valuable opportunity to develop and deliver a shared vision for the future development of their local community. They empower communities to set out planning policies covering the social, economic and environmental issues that are seen as important locally. So the plan includes policies on issues such as the type of local housing needed, conserving and enhancing the most valued aspects of our natural and built environment, and gives guidance on the location, type and design of development. Once approved by a planning inspector and a local referendum of all residents, neighbourhood plans are part of the statutory development plan for the area, with legal status in determining planning applications. They are therefore a very powerful tool for local communities to guide development.

A neighbourhood plan is also an opportunity to set out a broader range of more aspirational local projects and initiatives. This plan includes several such additional policies.

How was the plan drawn up?

In an unusual step which reflects the unique nature of the area, the parishes of Ditchling, Streat and Westmeston have come together to produce a neighbourhood plan for the three parishes. This also reflects the role of Ditchling village as a 'service area' for the neighbouring settlements. The frontispiece map shows Ditchling in blue, Westmeston in red and Streat in green, all overlain by the national park in yellow.

To include as many people and opinions as possible and make the plan truly community-led, the three parish councils¹ delegated the task of drawing up the plan to a Project Management Group (PMG) made up of local residents with an advisory team of parish councillors. The PMG organised a number of public consultations and set up five focus groups dealing with the following topics:

- housing
- traffic and transport
- business and the local economy
- conservation and environment
- community facilities.

¹ Due to its size Streat does not have a parish council but instead holds parish meetings. For the purposes of this document the term parish council includes Streat.

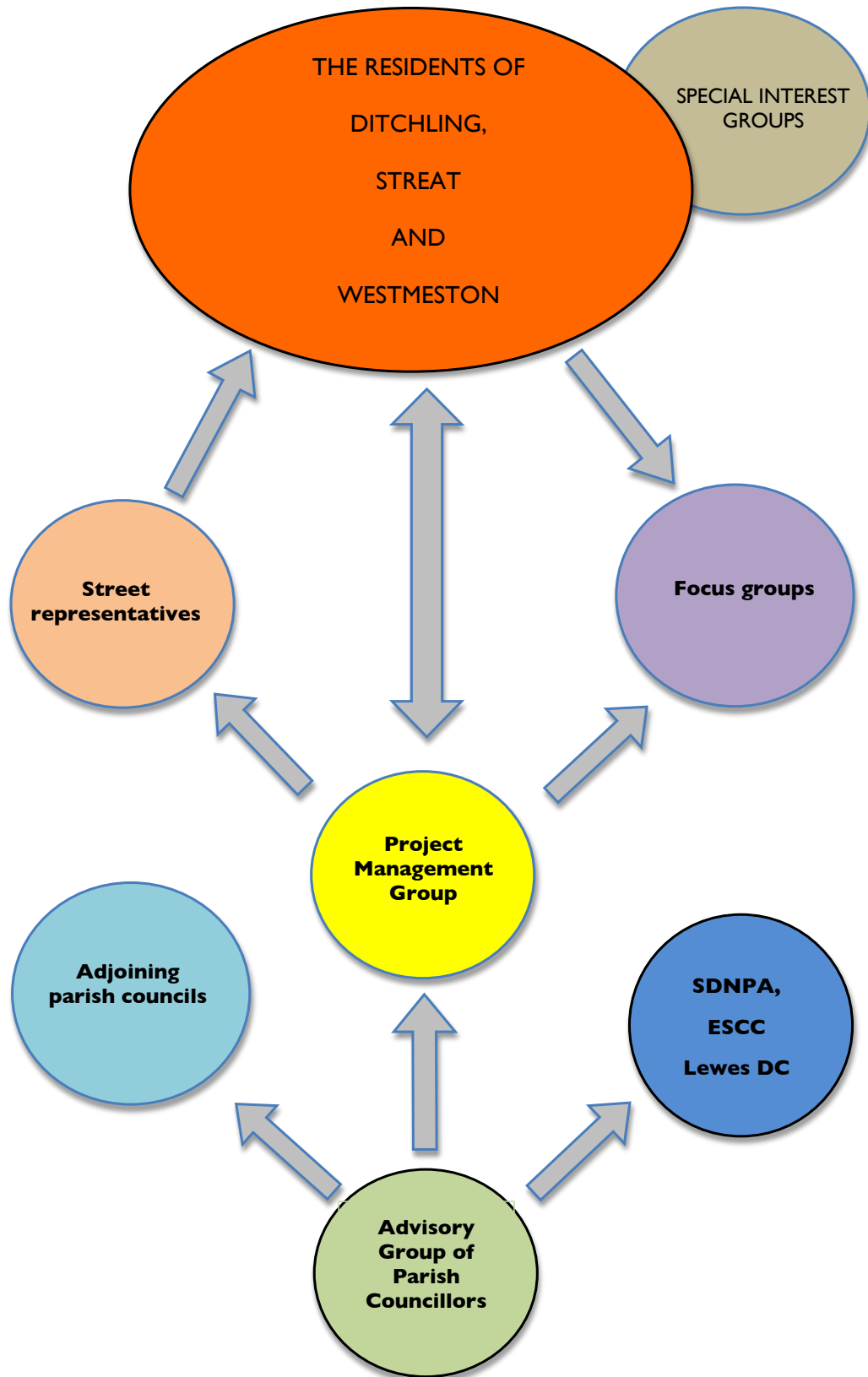
Residents volunteered as street representatives covering every street in the area, delivering information and giving feedback. This two-way flow of information and ideas between the PMG and local people has been important throughout the plan preparation period.

Six-week public consultation – 16th March to 26th April 2016

Following two years of work and consultation of many forms, we have now reached the stage of publishing the Ditchling, Streat and Westmeston Neighbourhood Plan for a formal period of consultation (required by law) before it is submitted to the South Downs National Park Authority which checks it complies with all the relevant regulations.

All the responses received will be considered, and the plan amended as appropriate. An independent examiner will then consider the plan and recommend modifications if necessary. Once any modifications have been made, a referendum will be held on its adoption.



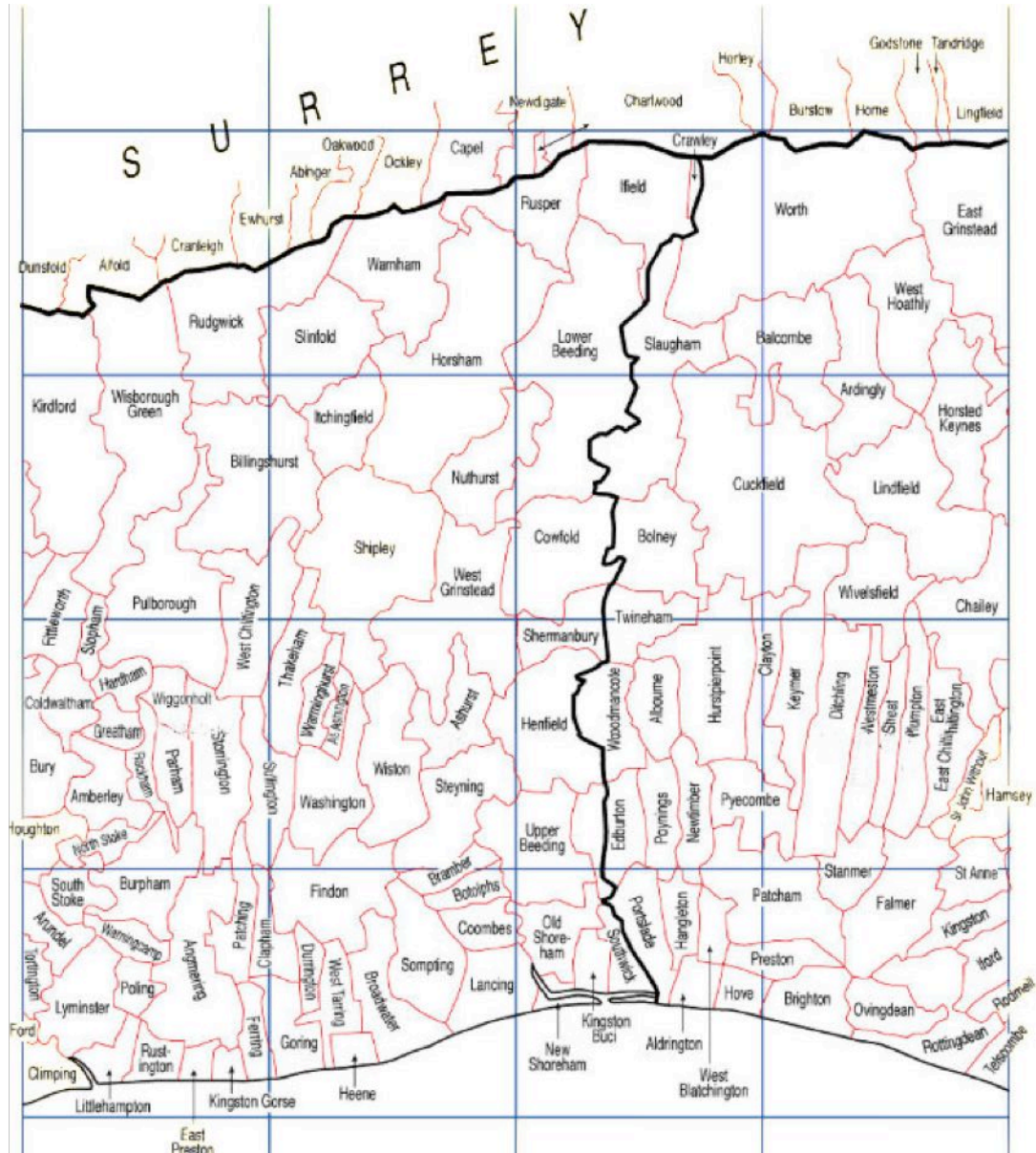


The Beacon Parishes Neighbourhood Plan: communication network

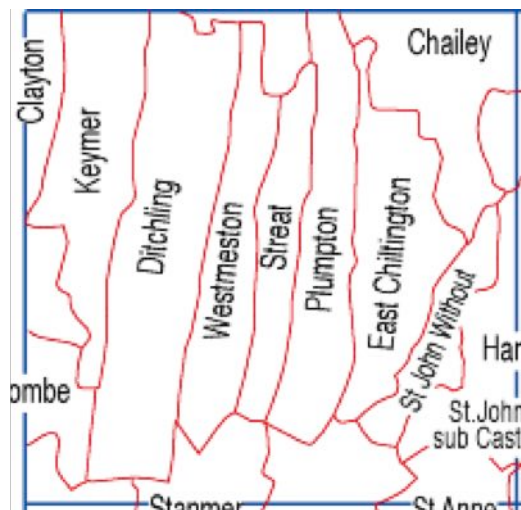


2

Characteristics of the neighbourhood plan area



Strip parishes of mid Sussex



Local detail

Location

Ditchling, Streat and Westmeston are three rural downland parishes of East Sussex that have come together to jointly produce a neighbourhood plan. All three are still recognisably based on the layout of the original Saxon strip parishes, administrative areas that are special to Sussex, with a long history dating back to before the Norman Conquest. These parishes have a south/north orientation extending from the relatively remote and extensive rolling downland landscape in the south that extends as far as the rural fringe of Brighton, via the north facing scarp slope of the South Downs, to the generally flatter rural landscape area of the Sussex weald to the north.

History

The Beacon parishes traverse a range of geological formations with chalk downs in the south, gault clay at the foot of the Downs, lower greensand in the middle and Weald clay in the north. This orientation and set of geological formations has directly influenced human settlement from Neolithic/Bronze Age farming and burial sites to their historic role as Saxon strip parishes, with a distinct agricultural system serviced by ancient north/south routes connecting the Downs and the Low Weald across the scarp slope via a series of bostals (ancient trackways) in each of the parishes. In 1843 Ditchling parish contained 24 farms with cattle grazing patterns based on this weald and downland juxtapositions. Many of these still exist.²

In Saxon times Ditchling under Alfred was the most significant settlement in Sussex³, after which Lewes gained pre-eminence. Until the early 18th century, it was still the largest community in Sussex after Chichester in the west and Lewes in the east.

Geology and industry

The geological landscape in and around the villages has yielded a variety of minerals over many generations and alongside agriculture the industrial exploitation of these contributed to the self-sufficiency of this scarp-foot settlement. In Saxon times, the north of present day Ditchling had the only iron works in this part of Sussex, and traces of copper were found on Ditchling Common⁴. Chalk, lime and marl, all readily available from the chalk pits, the lime kilns and the marl pits, were used to improve the land. Clay from Ditchling Common, flint minerals, mainly for use in agriculture and building, chalk and lime again from the Downs, sand from the lower greensand bed and paludina limestone from the Common, were all used in making bricks, tiles and slabs⁵.

² Ditchling: a weald and downland parish: submission for Ditchling's inclusion in the SDNP, Ditchling PC, Aug 2002

³ <http://www.thekeep.info/places/eastsussex/parishesandsettlements/ditchling/>

⁴ <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/sussex/vol7/pp102-109>

⁵ British Geological Survey Sheet 318/333, 1984

The settlement

It was because of its former pre-eminence as a rural industrial and agricultural settlement, and the wealth that flowed from this economic activity, that the area has some of the finest old buildings in Sussex. There are over 80 listed buildings in the three parishes, of which two are Grade I (Wings Place and St Margaret's Church), and two are Grade 2*. Others worthy of mention include Streat Place (Grade 2*), the only Elizabethan manor house in the area. Most of the remainder are included in an Article 4 Direction in the conservation area, grouped around the former Ditchling crossroads, the High Street and East End Lane, and lined along the former drovers' and coaching roads⁶. A number of other fine buildings that are worthy of listing also lie within the conservation area and towards the Common.

The servicing of this agri-industrial community was maintained until well into the 20th century by local traders and artisans, thereby making the parishes more than totally self-sufficient. It was the inter-relationship between the Downs and the Weald that made this integrated system viable and neither the Downs, the Common nor the settlement could have existed in isolation. Although modern transport and changes in employment patterns have removed the need for self-sufficiency, the identity of the community still has its roots in the composite whole of Downs, the settlement and the Common.

Environment

The natural environment is enhanced by the existence of extensive tracts of woodland particularly in the north of the parishes and in the central belt between Ditchling and Streat extending towards the scarp slope of the Downs. The latter, together with a variety of streams and ponds, other natural assets such as the SSSI⁷ at Ditchling Common country park⁸, Stoneywish nature reserve and the downland landscape to the south, all contribute to the rich ecology and biodiversity of the area.

The enjoyment of the natural environment and use of the countryside for recreational purposes by residents and visitors from adjoining towns and further afield, is facilitated by a dense, well-established and maintained network of public footpaths and bridleways. These include historic routes based on the old Roman Road (Greensand Way) extending from Keymer through Ditchling to Westmeston, and other paths based on historic links to the Downs. Ancient routes such as the South Downs Way cross the downland landscape. A particular characteristic of the three settlements is their well treed nature which softens the built environment, and which is particularly evident when viewed from the downland scarp in the south.

⁶ See map in Conservation section

⁷ Site of Special Scientific Interest

⁸ <https://new.eastsussex.gov.uk/leisureandtourism/./ditchlingcommon/>

There are urbanising influences associated with the larger settlements of Haywards Heath to the north and Burgess Hill and Hassocks/Keymer adjoining Ditchling parish to the west. The latter include increasing volumes of through traffic using unsuitable routes through Ditchling and via Spatham Lane with consequent environmental impacts from the encroachment of housing development towards, and potentially into, the very important open countryside gaps separating Ditchling from Keymer to the west and Burgess Hill to the north, which preserve the distinct character and identity of the village. The local environment is under further threat from this secondary traffic adding to the already unacceptably high and intrusive through-commuter traffic volumes between Brighton and Haywards Heath, and commercial vehicle movements between east and west, all centred on Ditchling village crossroads.

The Beacon parishes today

It is the beauty of the medieval housing and the landscape, rather than local employment opportunities, that now attracts people to live in the Beacon villages,. At the last census in 2011⁹ the population of the three Beacon parishes was 2,582. Ditchling is by far the largest, but its economy and community have been through many changes over the centuries. From a self-sustaining village providing employment and services to most of its residents – as well as those in neighbouring settlements – there is today a more dependent economy. Shops, banks and other services have closed or moved to the nearby larger villages and towns of Hassocks, Burgess Hill and Lewes. Employment has fallen and the parishes have experienced a significant influx of people who are much more likely to work in neighbouring towns or in Brighton or London, and whose income levels are sufficient to sustain the local high cost of living (particularly for housing and transport). An increasing number of residents are now working from home again, this time by exploiting internet-based business models, but the high cost of living deters the young and mitigates against traditional entry point employment opportunities. The area also contains a higher than average proportion of retired, predominately professional, people, again with higher than average incomes.

The two settlements of Westmeston and Streat, while sharing many of these characteristics, are more spread out and rural in nature, relying traditionally on Ditchling as their nearest local centre for shopping and other services including health, education, post office and other community facilities.

The three parishes now present a picturesque and tranquil rural setting with highly attractive and distinctive landscapes and memorable views, dominated by the presence of the Downs and the scarp slope. Agricultural or countryside uses still predominate outside the villages, though there are outcrops of development in the northern portion of Ditchling parish comprising the industrial estates of Ditchling Common and Tidy's and the St. George's retirement complex.

⁹ <http://www.eastsussexinfigures.org.uk/>: Ditchling 2081; Westmeston 343; Streat 158



Wing's Place



Streat Place

Society

There are more than 40 socially active clubs and societies in the three parishes that cater for a broad range of cultural, social and sporting interests¹⁰. Ditchling in particular is the focus of a nationally important arts and crafts movement that emerged in the late 19th century. It celebrates this heritage with its award winning museum of arts and crafts¹¹, and the three villages retain a very active artistic and craftwork community.

Most of Ditchling parish, with the exception of its northernmost part, is in the South Downs National Park, as are more than half of Streat and Westmeston parishes. The factors which influenced the incorporation of much of the neighbourhood plan area within the park, including the unique history of the ancient strip parishes, and its intrinsic natural beauty, are well summarised, for example, in ‘Ditchling: A Weald and Downland Parish’, the submission prepared by Ditchling Parish Council in 2002 that successfully argued the case for the parish to be included in the South Downs National Park (see right).

It is this common history, combined with the beauty of the landscape, the medieval townscape and vibrant local community, that the people of the three parishes are determined to preserve and conserve as far as possible, giving rise to their overwhelming support for a neighbourhood plan that ensures our historic villages will be protected.



¹⁰ See the village web site: Ditchling.com

¹¹ www.ditchlingmuseumartcraft.org.uk/



St George's retirement complex, Ditchling Common

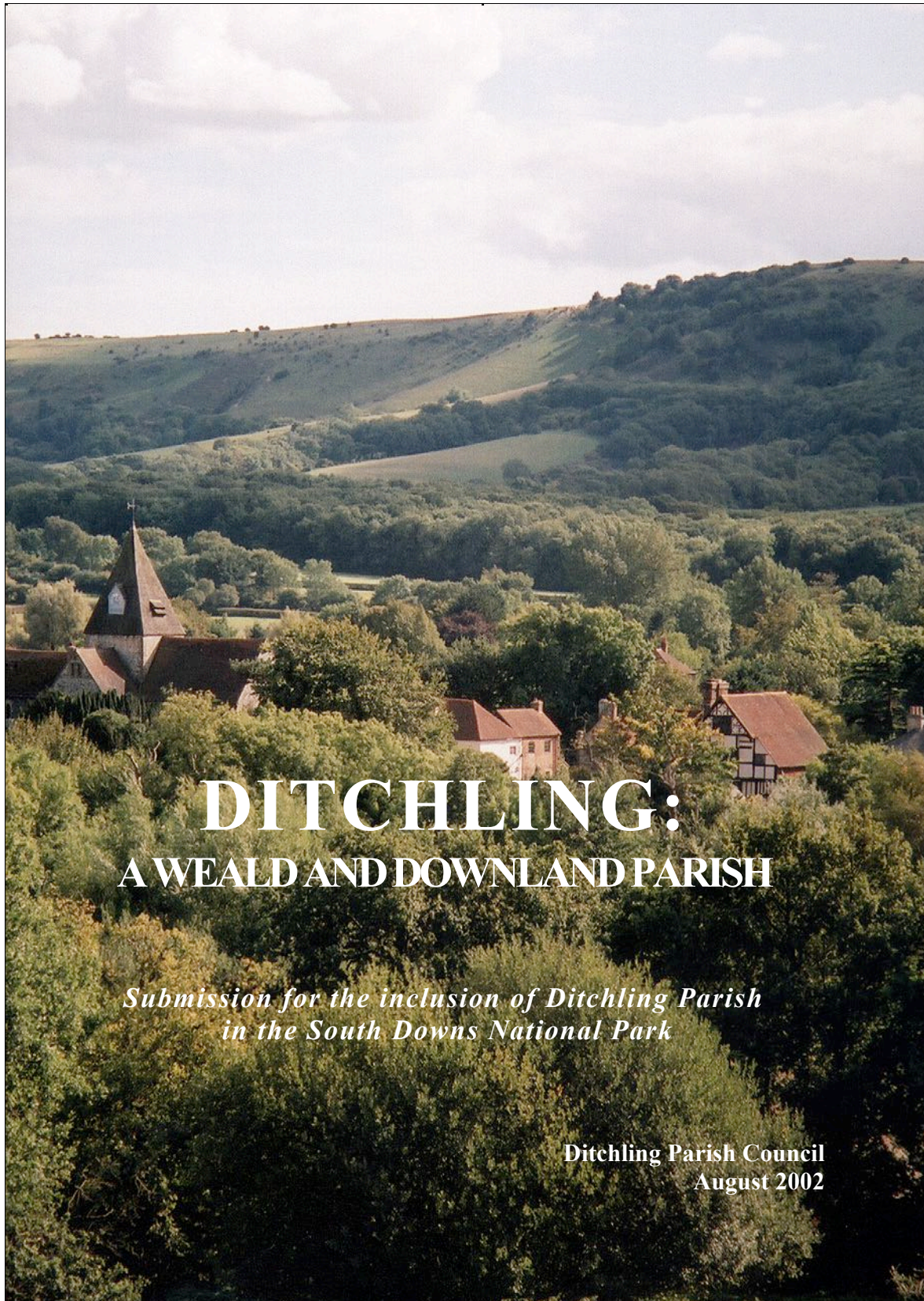


The Downs from Streat churchyard



3

National and local planning policy context



DITCHLING: A WEALD AND DOWNLAND PARISH

*Submission for the inclusion of Ditchling Parish
in the South Downs National Park*

Ditchling Parish Council
August 2002

Introduction

The neighbourhood plan area includes the whole of the parishes of Ditchling, Streat and Westmeston. However the South Downs National Park boundary cuts across each parish, leaving a small proportion of each parish outside the national park. These areas will remain under Lewes District Council for planning policy matters.

The Ditchling, Streat and Westmeston Neighbourhood Plan has been drawn up following guidance issued by the Secretary of State. It follows a framework established by national policies. Here we identify the applicable national and development plans, and the key guidance which has shaped the plan.

What documents are used in the guiding policy framework and what is their status?

At the **national** level, relevant guidance is found in:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and its companion National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)
- Circular 2010, English National Parks and The Broads, UK Government Vision

Although it is not a development plan containing planning policies, we have also considered the **South Downs National Park Partnership Management Plan** which sets out the priorities and aspirations for the future of the national park.

The NPPF sets out the government's planning policies for England and how they should be applied. These policies must be taken into account in local and neighbourhood plans. The NPPG provides more detailed practical guidance on the application and implementation of government policy, and also includes advice on preparing neighbourhood plans.

Circular 2010 is relevant because approximately two-thirds of the neighbourhood plan area is in the South Downs National Park.

Neighbourhood plans have to conform with the strategic policies in the adopted development plan for that area. We have considered and taken into account the following documents:

- **Lewes District Local Plan Part I, Joint Core Strategy** – produced by Lewes District Council and the South Downs National Park Authority.
- **South Downs National Park Local Plan, Preferred Options, (September 2015)** produced by the National Park Authority.

The Joint Core Strategy has been produced as a strategic plan for the whole district by Lewes District Council and the South Downs National Park Authority working together, and covers the whole of our neighbourhood plan area (although when the South Downs National Park Local Plan is adopted (expected in mid 2017) it will cover the neighbourhood plan area that is in the national park).

The Joint Core Strategy covers the period to 2030 and replaces the Lewes District Local Plan originally adopted in 2003. Although the Joint Core Strategy has not yet been formally adopted, the neighbourhood plan has been drawn up to conform to its up-to-date policies, rather than those of the old Lewes District Local Plan, as adoption is expected soon following independent public examination.¹²

Although the South Downs National Park Local Plan is still at the consultation stage, it has also been fully considered and taken into account in preparing our neighbourhood plan. We continue to work with the national park authority to make sure our neighbourhood plan is consistent with the emerging national park local plan.

What does national policy require of neighbourhood planning?

Neighbourhood plans give local communities the power to set planning policies which will help determine planning applications. However it is stressed in the NPPF that:

‘The ambition of the neighbourhood should be aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider local area. Neighbourhood plans must be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the local plan.’

and

‘Neighbourhood plans should reflect these policies and neighbourhoods should plan positively to support them. Neighbourhood plans and orders should not promote less development than set out in the local plan or undermine its strategic policies.’

Provided they conform as above, a neighbourhood plan’s policies ‘take precedence over existing non- strategic policies in the local plan for that neighbourhood, where they are in conflict ’ (NPPF paras 183/185).

The key message is clear: neighbourhood plans must conform with the relevant local plan but there is scope to develop and promote made-to-measure policies for the local area.

The details of the practical implementation guidance on neighbourhood planning contained in the NPPG is not reviewed here, but has been taken into account in preparing the plan.

¹² We expect that the Joint Core Strategy will come into force before the neighbourhood plan is submitted to the South Downs National Park Authority.

What does national policy cover?

The NPPF makes it clear that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development which, although not precisely defined, is considered as having three critical dimensions: economic, environmental and social. It places a ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’ at the heart of the planning system, and this should be reflected in all plans and decision-taking (NPPF Paras 6-16).

The NPPF contains detailed policies and approaches covering a range of different topic areas. Among others, guidance in the following areas has been of particular relevance in preparing the Ditchling, Streat and Westmeston Neighbourhood Plan:

- supporting a prosperous rural economy
- promoting sustainable transport
- delivering a choice of high quality homes
- promoting good design
- promoting healthy communities
- meeting the challenge of climate change
- conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Two areas in particular are worth highlighting.

First, the location of most of the neighbourhood plan area within the South Downs National Park brings into focus NPPF guidance relating to the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment. It emphasises that:

‘Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in national parks, the Broads and areas of outstanding natural beauty (AONBs), which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. The conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage are important considerations in all of these areas’ (NPPF para 115).

The special status regarding the level of protection afforded to landscape and natural beauty in national parks is also reflected in Circular 2010. Particularly relevant is the guidance on the key purpose of the national parks which is to:

‘...conserve and enhance natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage and to promote opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the national parks by the public’(Circular 2010, para 6).

There is also an additional duty placed on national park authorities to seek to foster the social and economic wellbeing of the local communities when delivering these two key purposes.

Second, the NPPF gives the power to local communities, through a neighbourhood plan, to identify areas of local green space of particular importance for special protection, and to apply a level of policy protection ruling out development ‘other than in very special circumstances’. This is equivalent to the level of protection in the green belt, and is an important planning policy tool in locations such as ours where there are significant areas of local green space which are an essential part of the character and identity of the area.

What guidance is provided by the development plan?

The Lewes District Local Plan Part I Joint Core Strategy establishes a ‘vision’ for the whole of the district by 2030, including the rural elements of the Low Weald and the rural areas of the South Downs National Park. This vision is translated into a series of strategic objectives, a spatial strategy and core delivery policies.

The spatial strategy guides where development and change should take place and has been a key consideration in preparing the neighbourhood plan: limited change in terms of new development is envisaged in that part of the district covered by the three neighbourhood plan parishes.

Ditchling is categorised as a ‘service village’ required to provide a minimum of 15 new housing units over the plan period. There is no identified housing requirement for either Streat or Westmeston which are defined as hamlets. While the plan also seeks to increase land use for employment (‘employment floorspace’) there is no specific requirement to be met in our neighbourhood plan area.

The strategic core delivery policies of the Joint Core Strategy also need to be taken into account in the neighbourhood plan. The following are of particular relevance:

Core Policies 1 and 2 – affordable housing and housing type, mix and density.

Core Policy 4 – encouraging economic development and regeneration. In addition to wider economic development, the latter deals with two key areas for the neighbourhood plan area. First, promoting the development of sustainable tourism having particular regard to opportunities provided by the national park and second, providing high speed communications/IT infrastructure and encouraging home working.

Core Policy 5 – supporting the visitor economy.

Core Policy 6 – promoting and enhancing the identified role of centres in the retail hierarchy. In this respect, Ditchling is a ‘local centre’ where the provision and retention of local shops and community facilities will be encouraged.

Core Policy 7 – protecting, retaining and enhancing community infrastructure.

Core Policy 8 – protecting green infrastructure.

Core Policy 10 – conserving and enhancing the natural environment and landscape character.

Core Policy 11 – achieving high quality design, conserving and enhancing the built environment and safeguarding heritage assets.

Core Policy 13 – promoting sustainable travel.

Core Policy 14 – supporting renewable and low carbon energy and sustainable use of resources.

(Note: Policy numbering relates to the draft plan. It may change when formally adopted.)

The Joint Core Strategy also retains certain ‘saved’ 2003 Lewes District Local Plan policies including Policy CT1 which establishes planning boundaries for Ditchling and Tidy’s Industrial Estate next to Ditchling Common. There are no settlement boundaries for either Streat or Westmeston which are treated as falling within open countryside for planning purposes.

What guidance is contained in emerging plans?

The South Downs National Park Management Plan establishes a strategy for the future of the park. This includes setting a vision which is well summarised by the phrase ‘thriving communities in inspirational landscapes’, and identifies the seven special qualities of the national park. These seek to encapsulate what has attracted people to the area and what needs to be nurtured and enhanced. In summary the qualities are:

- diverse inspirational landscapes and breathtaking views
- tranquil and unspoilt places
- rich variety of wildlife and habitats including rare and internationally important species
- an environment shaped by centuries of farming and embracing new enterprise
- opportunities for recreational activities and learning experiences
- well conserved historic features and a rich cultural heritage
- distinctive towns and villages and communities with real pride in their area.

The emerging plan aims to manage development over the next 15 years. It is founded on meeting the statutory purposes of national parks and aims to build on the special qualities of the South Downs set out above. It provides a strategic policy framework for communities within the national park such as Ditchling, Streat and Westmeston who are preparing neighbourhood plans.

It contains core policies relating to the overall principles of development, together with strategic policies designed to achieve the overall vision for the park linked to its special qualities.

Core policies, for example, promote a positive approach reflecting the presumption in favour of sustainable development (Core Policy SD1), and establish the general approach to planning and growth in the five broad areas of the park. Those parts of our neighbourhood plan area in the park are categorised as falling within either the Scarp Slope or the Dip Slope (Core Policies SD4/SS and SD4/DS).

The strategic policies deal with the conventional range of topics e.g. landscape, housing, design, historic environment and green infrastructure, though it is clear that they have been formulated having regard to the requirement ‘to consider landscape first’ (Para 1.18).

With regard to development strategy, the draft plan identifies settlements that are able to accommodate some growth and which have defined settlement boundaries within which the principle of development will be supported. Within our neighbourhood plan area, this includes Ditchling, but not the hamlets of Streat and Westmeston (Policy SD22). Development will not normally be permitted outside of settlement boundaries, where the countryside will be protected apart from in exceptional circumstances. The allocation for a net addition of 15 homes in Ditchling matches the allocation in Lewes District Council’s Joint Core Strategy.

A landscape photograph showing a wide, open field of dry, golden-brown grass in the foreground. In the middle ground, there is a dense line of green trees and shrubs. The sky is a clear, bright blue with scattered, light-colored clouds. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

4

Vision, objectives and key issues

Vision for 2030

The three parishes will have continued to foster their strong and thriving communities, benefiting from interdependence while maintaining their discrete individual characteristics and identities.

The unique character of the plan area, based on three narrow ancient Saxon strip parishes, together with their high quality historic and natural environment and pristine landscapes, will have been protected both within and outside the National Park. At the same time opportunities will have been taken to protect the distinct character and identity of Ditchling village and the hamlets of Streat and Westmeston.

High quality sustainable and diverse new development of appropriate scale will have been provided to meet local housing, commercial and employment needs and Ditchling's role as a service centre for residents of the plan area and visitors to the National park will have been maintained and enhanced.

Residents of the area and visitors to the park will have benefited from a safer environment in which the volume of traffic has been reduced, speed is controlled and congestion is reduced and that this will have contributed to sustaining the viability of the area's shops and services.

The effects of new development, traffic measures and car parking on the local landscape will have been carefully and sensitively managed.

Overall objectives

Housing

The parishes will support residential development that:

- provides a broad mix of housing including affordable housing for rent or purchase for residents of all generations and economic circumstances and particularly for young people who have grown up or are employed in the area
- is small scale and eco-efficient, and blends with the local style and character of the area
- is primarily contained within the built boundaries existing in 2015.
- Ensure that all new development has provision for off-street residents' parking.

Environment

The parishes will:

- Conserve the strategic 'greenfield' gap separating the area from the urban developments on its west, north and east.
- Conserve the distinct rural identity, landscape setting and historic character of the area including:
 - greenfield sites and public open spaces
 - key views and vistas
 - biodiversity and wildlife networks
 - the natural and historic built environment.

Traffic and transport

The parishes will:

- Promote schemes that will lead to a significant reduction in the volume of through traffic and HGVs on all roads from 2015 levels and create conditions that force traffic to proceed in a safe, orderly way and a slow pace.
- Make the area known for its cycle-friendly policies and facilities, building on the national reputation of Ditchling Beacon.
- Promote sustainable and convenient public, or voluntary, transport facilities to enable access by residents to community facilities; to the Downs for recreational purposes; and to the principal urban centres for facilities not available locally.

Local economy

The parishes will:

- Create conditions to ensure a thriving local economy, particularly for new agriculture and craft-related businesses, with advanced communication technology and services available throughout the area.
- Encourage employment opportunities for young people in the area, particularly those growing up in the parishes, in occupations that require creativity and skill and fit with the nature of the area.
- Promote opportunities for part-time and voluntary employment for older people in occupations that both benefit the local community and contribute to their welfare.
- Encourage a positive visitor-friendly environment that attracts visitors to use the commercial and cultural facilities in the area in the interests of maintaining their year-

round viability for residents and visitors while ensuring an appropriate balance between meeting the needs of visitors and preserving the private lives of residents.

- Promote more off-street parking spaces for residents and visitors to help maximise use of the community facilities and sustain their year-round commercial viability.

Community services

The parishes will:

- Support cultural, sport and recreational pursuits for residents of all ages, especially teenagers, and ensure that the recreational benefits of the area's location within the national park have been fully exploited.
- Provide suitable shopping, service and community uses for residents which will reduce the need to travel and improve the area's sustainability.

This vision statement and objectives have drawn heavily on the responses to the household questionnaire of 2014 and the responses of residents to the draft policies of the Plan in 2015 including the public Open Day in November 2015.



Westmeston village hall



5

Plan production and
community engagement



Appendix A (available separately: see p3) sets out the plan management, production and public consultation process.

At the outset, the three parish councils asked villagers to form a project management group to steer the process. The group held regular three-weekly meetings throughout the preparation period, all open to the public and publicised on the website and on notices in all three parishes. The key events and dates are:-

2012

Ditchling Parish Council resolves to prepare a neighbourhood plan 18th December

2013

Initial public presentation in Ditchling village hall	8 th June
Full public meeting in the village hall advertised by posters and leaflet drop	11 th August
Project Management Group (PMG) holds first meeting	24 th October
Advisory team of parish councilors established	6 th November
Letter to SDNPA and Lewes DC applying for three parish NP	13 th November
Street representatives group set up	20 th November

2104

Web site launched	February
Streat and Westmeston officially join	February
Household questionnaire designed and distributed	April-May
Letters written to all neighbouring authorities	April onwards
Meeting with ESCC and WSCC traffic engineers	9 th May
Screening opinion received from SDNPA	15 th July
Questionnaires returned	31 st July
Questionnaire results posted on line	1 st September
Questionnaire results presentation open day 1 Ditchling village hall	4 th October
Ditto open day 2	21 st October
Letters written to landowners & statutory authorities	October

2015

Focus groups study and prepare reports	January-September
Meeting with SDNPA re CIL, Roads in South Downs, grants, etc	20 th August
Focus Group reports published on website	October
Village hall open day of focus group work, and ratification of draft policies	14 th November
Meeting with ESCC engineers and councillor	18 th November

2016

Draft policies vetted by SDNPA and LDC planning officers	February
Draft report prepared	January-February
First draft informally presented to parish councilors at monthly meeting	23 rd February
Ditto formal presentation at special meeting	9 th March
6 week statutory consultation period	16 th March-26 th April



Policy options
open day

Ditchling village hall
14th November 2015



6

Neighbourhood plan policies

These policies are the end result of a comprehensive public consultation and study programme¹³. The five focus groups took as their starting point the results of the household questionnaire, the LDC/SDNPA Joint Core Strategy provisions¹⁴, and national policy planning frameworks and guidance¹⁵. The SDNPA continues to issue development guidelines which we will incorporate: for example ‘Roads in the South Downs’¹⁶, jointly written with the constituent highway authorities, has particular relevance for the Beacon villages.

The plan covers the period up to 2030, its policies being reviewed every five years therein.

The three parishes have significant differences in development constraints. New housing and other development will be largely confined to Ditchling and the two smaller rural parishes will maintain their rural aspect, with limited building of new homes (such as rural exception sites to meet local affordable housing needs). Under the current local plans no housing development is proposed for Streat and Westmeston.

The focus groups’ full reports¹⁷, containing first draft policies, were tested at public open day events, where they received an 85%-95% approval rating and were further refined. They were then critically reviewed by SDNPA and LDC, and the revised lists presented here should be referred to, rather than the earlier draft proposals contained in the focus group reports.

The final results are presented by focus group topic:

- Housing
- Traffic and transport
- Business and tourism
- Conservation
- Community infrastructure.

Each topic has two sections: [land use policies](#), that are the statutory part of the neighbourhood plan, and [aspirational policies](#), whose scope falls outside the statutory framework. Aspirational and options policies include:

- policies that sit outside the neighbourhood statutes, such as traffic, but which are important to the villagers and which will be pursued in parallel with statutory issues;
- options for land use developments, principally housing and car parks; and
- follow-on studies and work programmes needed for policy implementation.

¹³ See section on community engagement, and Appendix A (available separately)

¹⁴ www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/joint-working/lewes-district-joint-core-strategy/

¹⁵ e.g. National Planning Policy Framework, DEFRA National Parks circular and vision

¹⁶ ‘Roads in the South Downs. SDNPA, Hampshire, West and East Sussex CCs, Brighton and Hove CC June 2015.

¹⁷ Refer to Appendix B (available separately)

Housing

Introduction

The Housing focus group's main task was to:

- identify suitable and acceptable sites for housing in Ditchling
- draw up policies to guide development in Ditchling, Streat and Westmeston.

The SDNPA is required by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)¹⁸ to identify 'available, achievable and deliverable sites to deliver housing'. The Government recognises that National Parks are not suitable locations for unrestricted housing. The expectation is that new housing will be focused on meeting affordable housing requirements, supporting local employment opportunities and key services.

To meet housing need, the SDNPA has laid down target numbers of dwellings that villages and towns should accommodate over the next 15 years. The area covered by the Ditchling, Westmeston and Streat Neighbourhood Plan that is not in the national park is covered by LDC which has made similar allocations¹⁹.

The three parishes have significant differences in development constraints and opportunities. New housing and other development will be largely confined to Ditchling – within the settlement boundary or at allocated sites and the two smaller rural parishes will maintain their rural character, with limited building of new homes (only rural exception sites to meet local affordable housing needs).

Ditchling has been given a target of a MINIMUM of 15 planned new dwellings. This number does not include applications already agreed or what is known as 'windfall', i.e. one-off individual new houses. The target looks to planned and identified developments.

Land use policies

HSG 1: *Set out & apply acceptance criteria to housing applications*

Proposals will be supported that provide:

- small one/two bedroom houses and flats for rent/shared ownership or purchase;
- affordable two/three bed family houses for rent/shared ownership or purchase;
- housing units for an aging population in close proximity to village services and suitable for adapted living,

A proposal that does not meet the criteria set out above will not be considered acceptable. This applies to new build, to plot sub-division, and to the conversion of agricultural units.

¹⁸ https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/6077/2116950.pdf

¹⁹ http://www.lewes.gov.uk/Files/housing_choice_based_lettings_allocation_policy.pdf

HSG 2: Apply acceptable site density & layout rules

Proposed sites should be built at the maximum density appropriate to the location and return the maximum housing stock (units) into the SDNP/LDC area while retaining the character of the Beacon villages.

Outside gardens and off-street parking should be provided for every unit..

These rules also apply to the subdivision of existing buildings and plots, and the conversion of agricultural units.

HSG 3: Restrict development to within settlement boundary

Proposals outside the settlement boundary (Ditchling) will not be supported unless there is sufficient evidence of a greater 'good', ie local and evidenced housing need not being met on a sufficient scale elsewhere in the parish.

HSG 4 Critically review proposals to subdivide existing housing stock

Proposals for subdivision of existing housing stock will be supported where they meet the following criteria:

- adequate access, off-street parking and amenity space can be provided;
- the privacy and amenity of adjoining properties is not significantly adversely affected; and
- the scheme of conversion proposed is sympathetic in scale and character to the property concerned and its locality.

HSG 5 Minimise loss to housing stock

There should be no net loss to housing stock due to development.

Development through subdivision of land or demolition of existing building(s) (housing/commercial) should only be permitted if it complies with Policies 2 and 3.



Dumbrells Court sheltered housing

Aspirational policies

HSG 6: *Support provision of housing in rural communities*

The Beacon parishes support the aim of SDNPA policy (see SDNPA Housing Policy 48, 50 and Outcome 9) to provide sustainable, affordable housing in perpetuity. The applicability of community land trusts (CLT) for the Beacon parishes will be explored in accordance with SDNPA Rural Exceptions policy SD25.

HSG 7: *Prepare village design statement*

A formal village design statement will be prepared, as supporting guidance for developers on appropriate design criteria, to provide parish councils and developers with a reference guide for evaluating housing and other development proposals.

Development sites

Following the system used by Lewes District Council and the SDNPA to identify land for development²⁰, the neighbourhood plan management team's call for possible sites resulted in a number of responses. All sites were assessed using SDNPA criteria²¹ and additional local criteria developed by the focus group. However as the allocation of 15 houses only applies to Ditchling, only sites in Ditchling progressed to the second stage of detailed consideration. Full details of the evaluation process are given in the focus group report.

Sites that were not available were ruled out, as were sites that the SDNPA considers to be unacceptable. Notably, this includes the former Ditchling Nurseries site on Beacon Road. This site is outside, and not adjacent to, the settlement boundary²³, is clearly visible from the top of the South Downs and has an area of ancient woodland between it and the village. The reasons for this site being excluded are commented on here as it was frequently mentioned in the residents' questionnaire as a preferred site for development.

Visits to the remaining sites were held between the owners and two or more members of the focus group. Maps of these sites are shown overleaf. The sites visited were:

- Park Barn Farm, Beacon Road
- Land to the west of Nye Lane, Lewes Road
- Land to the south of East End House, East End Lane
- Land to the east of Walnut Tree Cottage, East End Lane (subsequently withdrawn).

²⁰ <http://www.lewes.gov.uk/planning/shlaa.asp>

²¹ <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/national-park-local-plan/evidence-and-supporting-documents/strategic-housing-land-availability-assessment-shlaa/>

²² See also Appendix C for a summary of SDNPA criteria

²³ note: the settlement boundary is much more tightly drawn than the parish boundary

HSG 8:

Allocate development sites

The site at Park Barn Farm is allocated for up to 13 houses. All but three of the total would be to meet the local need for a permanent mix of small, affordable, one/two or three bedroom houses, for purchase and/or rent, including shared ownership, with priority given to local people with connections to the parishes and young people with employment in the area (in accordance with the conditions set by the owner for this land to be available)²⁴. The site on the west side of Nye Lane is allocated for up to five small two and three bedroomed houses.

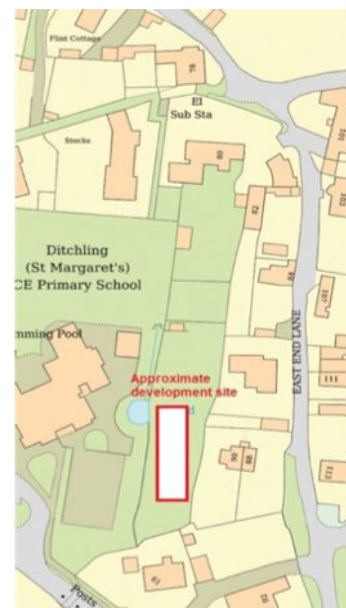
(Subject to SDNPA approval)



Land to the west of Nye Lane:
up to 5 houses



Park Barn Farm, Beacon
Road: up to 13 houses



East End House, East End
Lane: up to 3 houses

²⁴ See Appendix D, available on request

Traffic and transport

Introduction

The focus group report presents an analysis on the nature of the three parishes, followed by an update on the transport policies and evaluation processes of East Sussex CC (ESCC), and the impact of the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA). It goes on to argue the significant advantages to be gained by resurrecting the local transport plan (LATS) and presents a refinement to that plan based on the household questionnaire and the focus group's discussions.

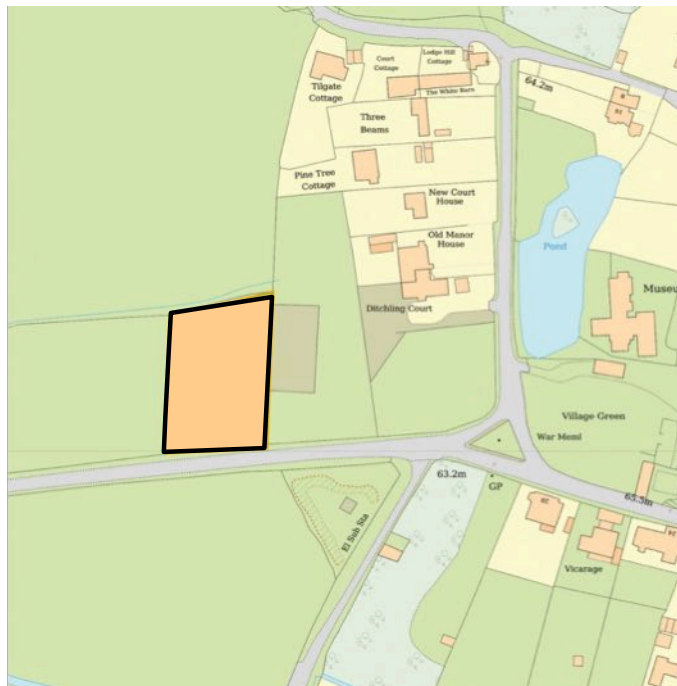
Land use policies

With the exception of the off street car parking proposal TRANS I, traffic policies do not come under land use but under the jurisdiction of ESCC, and are hence categorised as aspirational.

TRANS I

Provide off-street car parking

It is confirmed that the current parish council proposal to introduce a car park to the west of the war memorial in Keymer Road on the fringes of Ditchling village will be implemented on land to be safeguarded for this purpose through a long lease arrangement with the owner. Because of its environmentally sensitive location, its design will incorporate hedge/tree screening, grasscrete surfacing and limited street signing but no lighting or ticketing machinery. See focus group report for detailed site selection, evaluation and justification.



Proposed car park location

Aspirational policies

TRANS 2: *Seek special traffic zoning & recognition for parishes*

The unique qualities of the three parishes need special protection from the deleterious effects of excess road traffic. To this end, protected conservation status, funding and treatment will be sought. The national park authority will be lobbied to support this, and asked to agree with East Sussex County Council the terms of a special highways policy. With the support of Lewes District Council and the SDNPA a study will also be mounted to explore the wider interpretation of the Localism Act and its statutory instrument in support of the neighbourhood plan implementation.

TRANS 3: *Reinstate and fund the Local Area Transport Study (LATS)*

The highway authority will be asked to reinstate its support for LATS. The planning authority will be asked to challenge the environmental priorities of ESCC, in particular transport plan TP3 which has limited applicability for the Beacon parishes.

To achieve this the Beacon parishes will raise matching funds and apply for special regional funding such as are available from the EC regional grants system and other public or private institutions concerned with protecting fragile parts of the community.

The Beacon parishes will also investigate the possibility of funding under an innovative financial instrument such as a parish council bond or council tax levy, establish a vehicle for making local and national appeals for support, and direct appeals to residents.

TRANS 4: *Prepare detailed traffic & parking plan*

A detailed design, cost and implementation plan will be prepared incorporating all the principles proposed in the focus group report, in order to prepare for early substantive discussions with SDNPA, ESCC, and possible other sources of funding. This applies both to the traffic management schemes, and to the current proposal for off street parking (TRANS 1).



TRANS 5: *Discourage through traffic*

Through traffic movements of all kinds will be discouraged because of the damage to the ancient fabric of the villages, the impact on quality of life and the environment, the danger to pedestrians, and the resultant congestion.

Supported by the SDNPA, East and West Sussex County Councils will be asked to review the adequacy of main road signing on the surrounding network so that through traffic is persuaded not to pass through the protected zone but instead uses the primary road network.

West Sussex CC must be convinced of the need to improve key junctions on its part of the network where congestion levels presently force through traffic to divert through the villages on the secondary network. Commercial HGV traffic movements through the villages will be prohibited and enforced/penalised using number plate recognition technology.

Both highway authorities will be lobbied to put pressure on SatNav companies to re-route their devices away from the villages.

TRANS 6: *Reduce speed and improve pedestrian safety*

30mph traffic speed limits will be enforced as buffer zones on all outer boundaries of the Beacon Parishes. A blanket 20mph limit will be set and enforced within particularly sensitive areas. Thus in Ditchling: South Street, Beacon Road from the summit, Underhill Lane, Clayton Road, West Street, Lewes Road, the High Street, North End/Common Lane and East End Lane. Plus in Westmeston and Streat: Spatham Lane, Underhill Lane and Streat Lane. Traffic calming methods as set out in LATS will be applied to help achieve this, with particular advantage being taken of improvements in speed camera and number plate recognition technology. Associated warning signs and gateways will be placed at the buffer zone boundaries.

TRANS 7: *Protect countryside roads from the effects of traffic*

To alleviate the impact of through traffic, the parish councils will propose the introduction of:-

Quiet lanes: designed to make country lanes more amenable for pedestrians, cyclists and horse traffic. Through traffic and speeding are discouraged by applying special calming techniques suited to the rural environment. Techniques include 20mph limits, varying verges, soft landscaping, removal of signs and kerbs, and even planting grass strips in the centre of the lane. Unlike most of the rest of the country, neither East nor West Sussex has so far introduced any such schemes. Lanes suggested for treatment are: Spatham Lane, Streat Lane, Underhill Lane and Beacon Road (NB from the Beacon top gateway itself northwards).

Traffic gateways: providing both a visual and surfacing treatment impact to provide physical speed calming, and announcing to motorist that they are entering a specially protected area within the SNDP. In the case of country parks (eg the B2112 through Ditchling Common) they also help to alleviate the impact on grazing, wild life and walkers.

TRANS 8: *Improve pedestrian environment in High Street*

Through consultation with ESCC, Ditchling High Street carriageway and footway will be redesigned as a shared space facility, improving pedestrian and shop access with redesigned road surfacing and street furniture, plantings, etc, reinforcing the pedestrian-friendly aspect.

TRANS 9: *Improve local bus services*

Local bus companies will be lobbied for service improvement, particularly frequency of service, and the parish councils will work with other interested parties such as Ditchling Museum and Oldland Mill to plan improvement in shuttle bus services through the parishes. The parishes also welcome the cooperation of SDNPA in improving bus links between the Beacon and Ditchling village, and will seek to provide dedicated parking spaces for bus parking on the new Keymer Road site.

TRANS 10: *Provide for pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists*

A linked network of foot and cycle paths will be designed throughout the three parishes, including a route from Ditching Common, through the village and onto the Beacon, a new N-S route through Westmeston; and a second E-W route from the existing Westmeston pathway, through Ditchling and on to Keymer. Other accessways will be investigated, including E-W links between the three parishes.

Careful design of the network will build in equal accessibility and usability for all user categories.

Provision will be made for secure cycle parking in all car parks, and at locations from the Beacon top through to the centre of Ditchling village.

Traffic buildouts in North End will be adjusted to allow cyclists to pass along the kerbside edge.



Business

Introduction

The business communities of the three beacon parishes naturally look to their councils to provide positive leadership in lobbying for better local services that will enable businesses to thrive, and to generate more economic activity and employment. But the focus group found that while Lewes DC and the SDNPA classify Ditchling village as a Local Centre where existing retail units (A, A2, A3) will be safeguarded for retail use unless there is robust evidence comprising a marketing campaign of at least 12 months which demonstrates there is no market demand for retail use of the premises.²⁵, they regard it as being too small to be given any material recognition. And at the local level, Ditchling Parish Council (PC) itself was criticised in the surveys for not providing a positive lead. The local business community has partly taken matters into its own hands by forming the 'Visit Ditchling' consortium. This will be supported by the PC. Specific issues being tackled by the consortium include tourism, the lack of fast broadband, and the threat to survival of the remaining shops in the High Street. Also, the farming sector is under increasing pressure to diversify into more profitable activities to maintain a livelihood.

Land use policies

BIZ 1:

Retention of local shops

Local services and businesses that support the local community and contribute to its must be retained and supported. Beacon parishes will thus seek support and guidance from the SDNPA to introduce a planning development framework that actively encourages the retention of local shops, and deter them from becoming non-retail or residential units.



Ditchling cross roads

²⁵ Lewes JCS policy CP6, and the emergent SD local plan policy SD29

Aspirational policies

BIZ 2: *Lobby for faster more reliable broadband*

All established businesses, whether they be office based or home workers, express frustration with the slow speed and reliability of broadband, since it has a significant effect on business efficiency. Under SD policy SD54, and exploiting the emergent supporting work of East Sussex CC ('esussex')²⁶, the Beacon parishes will lobby for the early introduction of high speed networks throughout the three parishes without delay.

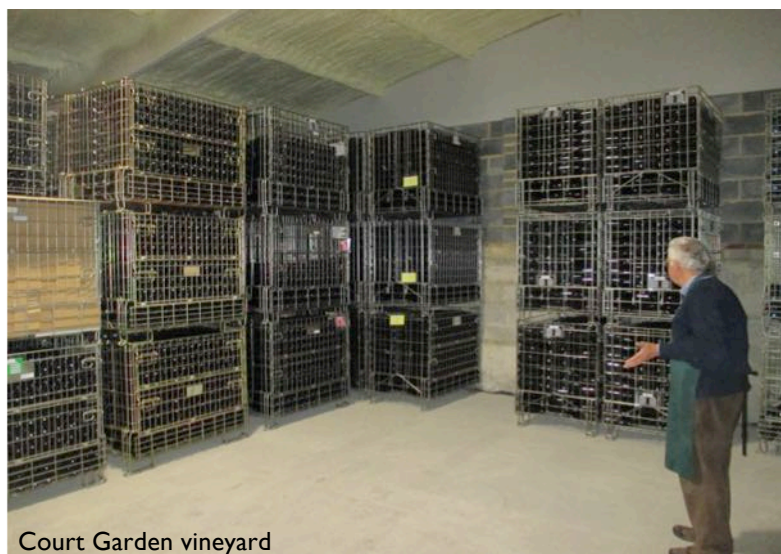
BIZ 3: *Provide positive support and leadership for business*

Ditchling Parish Council will lead and support initiatives such as a local commerce/small business forum to be set up alongside the Visit Ditching consortium that provides a lead in regenerating economic activity in the commercial business and tourism community. The parish councils will support shops to re-open in Ditchling High Street and the role of business in employment generation.

BIZ 4: *Support rural enterprise diversification*

The parish councils support appropriate expansion, development and diversification of local rural enterprises. The farming sector is under increasing pressure to diversify into more profitable activities to maintain a livelihood. Farmers' efforts will be supported by the planning authorities, and development proposals for farm diversification which are in line with national sustainability policies for rural development, and are of an appropriate scale, will be supported.

Existing farm buildings should be reused wherever possible and in accordance with SD development management policy SD47, which permits diversification where it is ancillary to farming operations.



Court Garden vineyard

²⁶ eastsussex.gov.uk/business/broadband

Conservation

Introduction

This focus group had a wide remit, so as recommended by SDNPA officers, its land use policies have been arranged in three groups:

- (1) general development & design,
- (2) conservation & environment, and
- (3) landscape

Policies have been developed to:

- protect the setting, character and identity of the Beacon parishes, the historic environment, heritage assets and archaeology;
- conserve and enhance the rural countryside character, the landscape and scenic beauty; maintain distinctive views and vistas, protect and enhance green infrastructure and related access networks and local green spaces, and preserve important open countryside gaps;
- conserve and enhance the area's biodiversity and wildlife networks, sustainable development; and
- promote high quality of design.

Finally, the South Downs National Park's north boundary cuts across the three Beacon, leaving the northern third outside its area, and therefore under the direct control of Lewes DC. In the interest of clarity and relevance, the focus group recommends that the parish councils should discuss with Lewes DC and the SDNPA whether the joint core strategy planning rules can be applied to the totality of the three parishes.



Three parishes, eastwards from Ditchling Beacon



Crossways and The Jointure

Conservation land use policies

(I) General development and design

CONS 1: *Permit development within established boundaries*

New development in accordance with the neighbourhood plan will be permitted on small- scale and infill sites within the settlement boundary of Ditchling village, particularly where this:

- meets identified housing requirements;
- supports its role as a service centre for the neighbourhood plan area; and
- provides facilities supporting its role as a “gateway” to the national park.

Development within the established boundaries of the two industrial estates adjoining Ditchling Common will generally be supported provided this does not entail a material increase in the scale of existing development, and can be accommodated without adversely affecting its countryside setting, the adjoining country park and the nearby SSSI.

CONS 2: *Limit development in the countryside*

Development in the countryside should enhance the distinctive rural landscape and character of the parishes, confined to:

- the provision of affordable housing meeting local needs on rural exception sites.
- the replacement or extension of existing dwellings providing the resulting building is not materially larger.
- small-scale development supporting agricultural and rural business.
- facilities for low-key countryside recreation and tourism, particularly those promoting use of the national park.
- reuse of redundant agricultural buildings.

Development will only be permitted in Streat and Westmeston where it preserves their rural setting and historic character.

Any proposals for further development at the retirement and elderly care complex at St George’s Park should be confined to locations within or closely associated with the established developed areas, integrated with its countryside setting and the surrounding managed parkland.

CONS 3

Set standards for design of new development

New development, extensions, alterations and replacements should be to a high standard of design in harmony with the distinctive character of the area, where:

- careful consideration has been given to the height (not normally exceeding two storeys), massing, scale, layout, appearance and landscaping of proposals.
- natural and local landscape features are protected and sensitively incorporated. Planting schemes should incorporate appropriate native species avoiding invasive non-native planting.
- it incorporates measures to protect and enhance wildlife.
- it is sympathetic to the character of established conservation areas and heritage assets.
- it is accessible and links with established rights of way, and enhances access to the countryside.
- it does not adversely intrude into important views (see CONS 9)
- it incorporates sustainable urban drainage principles and adequate flood protection and mitigation measures.
- it adopts sustainable construction methods and measures to enhance energy efficiency.
- it does not result in unacceptable levels of light, noise, air or water pollution.

Development which reflects local building styles and detailing, and which uses traditional materials such as brick, tile and flint, will be given particular encouragement, especially within and adjoining conservation areas. Proposals involving the removal, replacement or unsympathetic alteration of old flint or brick and flint walls will not be supported.

Modern design of high quality and the use of contemporary materials, will also be supported where this complements and enhances the character and context of adjoining development and surrounding areas.

(2) Conservation and environment

CONS 4: *Preserve dark night skies*

To preserve dark night skies, proposals for development entailing the provision of external lighting, including lighting of public thoroughfares, will be required to demonstrate that there are no adverse impacts on the night time environment in accordance with SD local plan policy SD9²⁷. Proposals for external lighting in prominent locations likely to be visible from the surrounding landscape and viewpoints, will not be supported.

Subject to this, support will be given to proposals within Ditchling village for lighting that enhances safety and security on public footways, while proposals in Street and Westmeston should preserve their presently unlit night time environment.

CONS 5: *Protect heritage assets*

Proposals for development will be required to preserve designated heritage features, including the four conservation areas, listed buildings, scheduled monuments, and that part of Stanmer Park located within the neighbourhood plan area.

Proposals should also minimise the adverse impact on non-designated heritage assets such as locally listed buildings. Any adverse effect on them will be resisted unless there is a compelling justification.

CONS 6: *Protect assets of archaeological importance*

Planning application on sites which include heritage assets of archaeological importance, particularly those within archaeological notification areas, should provide sufficient information to enable the effect on archaeological conditions to be assessed.

CONS 7: *Protect character of conservation areas*

Development proposals will be expected to make a positive contribution to the local character and distinctiveness of each of the designated conservation areas and have particular regard to the provisions of any adopted conservation area appraisal.

Within Ditchling village conservation area, proposals should also take into account the Ditchling Historic Character Assessment report. Support will be given to proposals that sensitively increase density and do not adversely impact upon key features including:

- locally listed, focal and positive buildings.
- historic shop fronts, street surfaces, lighting, and distinctive local street furniture and walls.
- important views, open spaces and vegetation

²⁷ www.southdowns.gov.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2015/08/Local_Plan_Master_240815_Whole_Document.pdf, p70

CONS 8: *Protect & enhance ecology and biodiversity*

Habitats and biodiversity will be protected and enhanced in accordance with SDNPA and national policies.

Proposals should clearly demonstrate that particular regard is given to ecological networks and areas with high potential for priority habitat restoration or creation and must: (a) retain, protect and enhance features of biodiversity and geological interest and ensure appropriate management of those features, and (b) ensure that any adverse impacts are avoided, or if unavoidable, minimised through mitigation with any residual impacts being compensated for (having regard to the hierarchy of designation). SD Local Plan Policy SD12 (Biodiversity and Geodiversity) sets a hierarchy of designated sites.

CONS 9: *Relevant proposals to be accompanied by a tree survey*

Proposals should be accompanied by a survey that establishes the health and longevity of any affected trees. Those that damage or result in the loss of hedgerows, ancient trees or trees of good arboricultural and amenity value will not normally be permitted.



Ditchling village roofscape looking north east towards Westmeston

(3) Landscape

CONS 10: *Conserve landscape and important views*

The distinctive landscapes, views and scenic beauty of the neighbourhood plan area should be conserved and enhanced, with priority given to landscapes within the national park. Proposals for development will only be permitted where they:

- respond appropriately to relevant published landscape character assessments, including the statement of local landscape character for the neighbourhood plan area;
- do not intrude adversely into key views from publically accessible locations and particularly those shown on the accompanying map; and
- preserve the landscape setting of the settlements of Ditchling, Streat and Westmeston.

See Appendix C: vistas, (available on request) for a presentation of some of the exceptional landscapes and views contained within the three parishes

CONS 11: *Safeguard green infrastructure*

The green infrastructure network (including ponds, streams and other water bodies) and access to it will be safeguarded from adverse effects arising from new development, and opportunity should be taken to secure enhancements to the network. See SD local plan, policy SD14 (p90). (Supporting map available on request)

CONS 12: *Protect local green spaces*

In areas designated as local green spaces on the accompanying map, development will only be permitted in very special circumstances, other than where it comprises:

- essential utilities infrastructure which cannot be located elsewhere.
- redevelopment of existing built structures serving established outdoor sport and recreation facilities, provided any new building is not materially larger than that which it replaces, and is located so as to preserve the openness of the local green space.

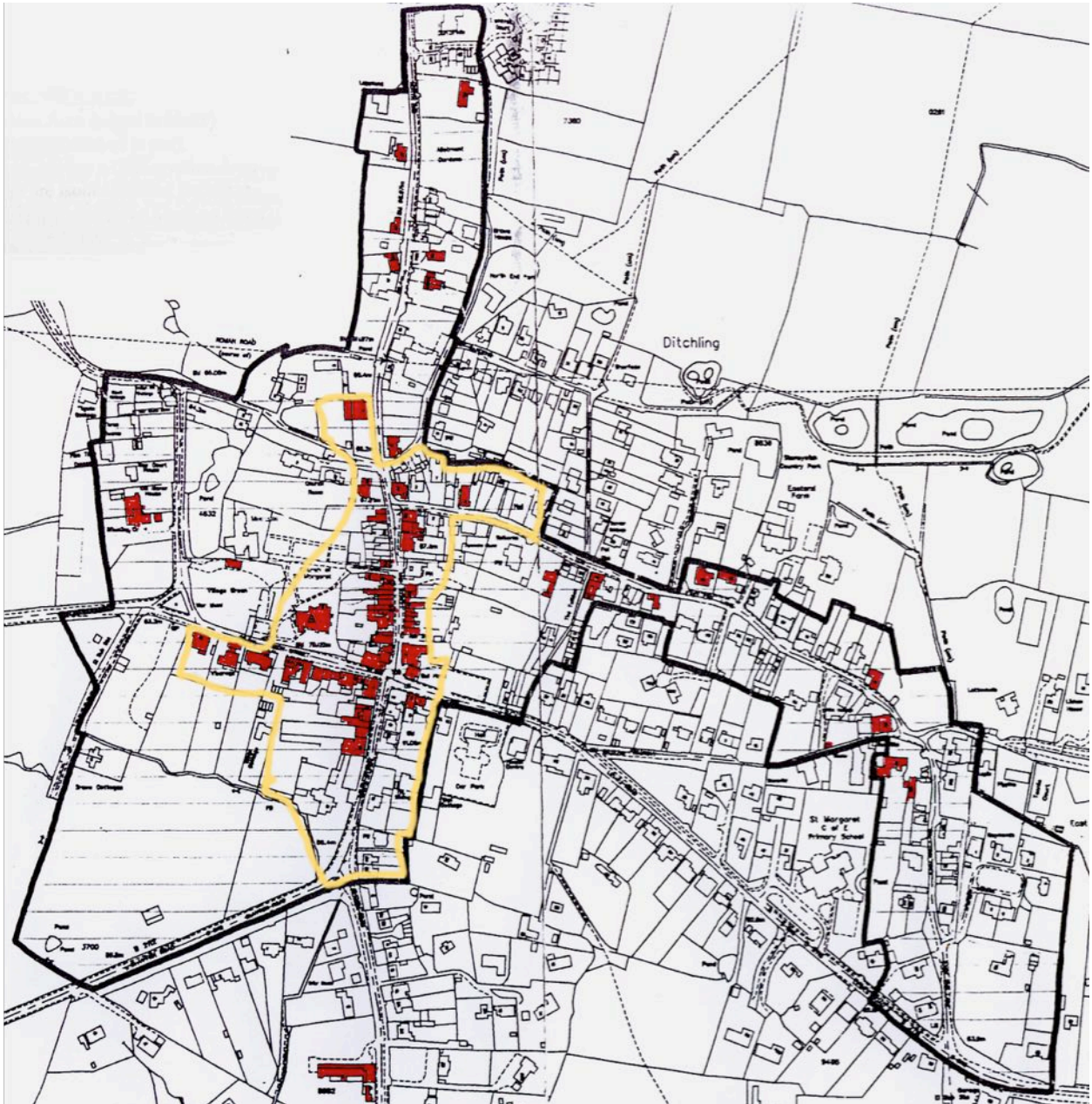
(Supporting map available on request)

CONS 13: *Protect important gaps between settlements*

Proposals for new development in the gap separating Ditchling and Hassocks/Keymer, either individually or cumulatively, will only be supported where they conserve and where possible enhance the open landscape character of the gap, and do not reduce the physical gap between settlements. Evaluation will be informed by the SD integrated Landscape Character Assessment²⁸. (Supporting map available on request).

²⁸ www.southdowns.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/ILCA-2005-Introduction.pdf

Ditchling village centre



Conservation area



Article 4 direction



Listed building



St Margaret's church

Wing's Place

Cotterlings

Grade 1

ditto

Grade 2*



Conservation

Aspirational policies & surveys

CONS 14:

Extend conservation areas

The parish councils will work with the SDNPA to:

- extend the conservation area proposed in the Ditchling conservation area character appraisal.
- complete the conservation area appraisal for Westmeston, including further assessment of extensions proposed in the draft document.
- prepare and adopt a conservation area appraisal for Streat.

CONS 15:

Encourage new wildlife habitats

A survey will be carried out in conjunction with the Sussex Wildlife Trust to propose appropriate new features or habitats for wildlife for incorporation within the development design, and specifically in the gap between Ditchling and Hassocks. Proposals designed in conformity with this survey that achieve a net gain in biodiversity will be supported, subject to other neighbourhood plan policies.

CONS 16:

Enhance ecological network

A further survey will be carried out to protect, enhance or better connect ecological assets areas of habitat and/or green spaces parishes. Particular encouragement will be given to schemes that enhance the ecological network of wildlife and improve the habitat connection between chalk grassland in the Stanmer and Ditchling downs Biodiversity Opportunities Area (BOA²⁹).

CONS 17:

Identify non-designated heritage assets

In conjunction with Lewes DC, a list of non-designated heritage assets will be prepared, and a review undertaken of local listings with a view to extension.

²⁹ https://www.biodiversitysussex.org.uk/file_download/133/

Ditchling fair on the village green



Ditchling recreation ground

Community infrastructure

Introduction

The Focus Group produced proposals and policies that addressed key issues relating to a wide range of community facilities - referred to as community infrastructure - within the Beacon Villages. It included in its scope all those facilities which provide opportunities for people to use local services e.g. community transport, health centre or to meet and share common interests either formally or informally e.g. Film Society, sports and recreation grounds etc.

Their work presents policies on recreation, health, welfare, education and community facilities together with supporting arguments and the evidence base.

Land use policies

COM 1: *Increase and protect our community assets*

Applications for development or changes of use that provide additional shops, enhanced public services or improved community facilities, will be encouraged, subject to conservation considerations/policies above. Those containing innovative proposals that introduce new community uses into existing community infrastructure (land or buildings) or which improve the delivery of existing services will be welcomed.

Conversely, applications that lead to the loss of existing shopping, public services or community facilities will be discouraged and refused permission unless it is shown that those uses are no longer viable. Applications for changes of use must therefore demonstrate that all efforts have been made to retain the current use or attract similar uses.



Aspirational policies

COM 2: *Secure funding for community infrastructure*

The Parish Councils will where appropriate provide, attract or help facilitate funding which enables community uses and community infrastructure to become viable e.g. through increased funding from statutory bodies such as the South Downs National Park Authority, the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), local charities or local fund raising.

COM 3: *Identify and register assets of community value*

In consultation with owners and appropriate community groups the parish councils will identify buildings and land at risk of being lost to the community. In accordance with the Localism Act 2011, the councils may then submit applications to Lewes District Council (LDC) for inclusion on the LDC register of “assets of community value”. The Parish Councils will regularly review the register and, following consultation, request LDC to add or remove assets as appropriate. Community assets in this context include shops.

COM 4: *Prepare a Sport and Recreation Development Plan*

Ditchling Parish Council will prepare a Sport and Recreation Development Plan (SRDP) for the Ditchling recreation ground in consultation with Westmeston and Streat Parish Councils, SDNPA, local sports clubs, other interested groups and residents. Providing they conform with the agreed SRDP, projects and programmes will then be implemented by Ditchling Parish Council and planning permissions, where necessary, granted.

COM 5: *Agree policy delivery between the 3 parishes*

The three Beacon Parishes will agree joint working arrangements in planning and implementing neighbourhood plan policies. These arrangements will also apply to other organisations involved in the delivery of policies.

COM 6: *Prepare joint Local Volunteering Plan*

The three Parish Councils will prepare a Local Volunteering Plan (LVP) that will promote and help deliver the vision and policies contained in the Neighbourhood Plan. The LVP will draw on best volunteering practice elsewhere and each element of the LVP will be agreed where necessary in consultation with the appropriate statutory agencies, local clubs, societies and charities.



7

Achieving sustainable development

In developing our policies we have followed the National Planning Policy Framework's guidelines on what is meant by 'sustainable development' as follows:

International and national bodies have set out broad principles of sustainable development:

Resolution 42/187 of the United Nations General Assembly defined sustainable development as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. The UK Sustainable Development Strategy Securing the Future set out five 'guiding principles' of sustainable development: living within the planet's environmental limits; ensuring a strong, healthy and just society; achieving a sustainable economy; promoting good governance; and using sound science responsibly.

There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:

- *an economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;*
- *a social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being;*
- *an environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy*

Pursuing sustainable development involves seeking positive improvements in the quality of the built, natural and historic environment, as well as in people's quality of life, including (but not limited to):

- *making it easier for jobs to be created in cities, towns and villages;*
- *moving from a net loss of bio-diversity to achieving net gains for nature;*
- *replacing poor design with better design;*
- *improving the conditions in which people live, work, travel and take leisure;*
- *widening the choice of high quality homes.*

We believe that within the limits of known and anticipated societal attitudes and technology advances our policies achieve these sustainability criteria. However, developments in technology in particular may result in significant changes in society's attitudes to its needs and present opportunities to progress faster towards economic, social and environmental sustainability. Our policies thus will be kept under continuous review, but we are clear that they will not compromise 'the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'. Here are our sustainability policies listed by topic area:-

Housing

Our housing policies will lead to a much greater mix and diversity of housing stock, particularly through the emphasis on the building of small, affordable, housing for purchase or rent. They will enable and encourage:

- the identification and development of sites that conserve the key landscape qualities and apply design standards that will allow for sustainable living
- current older residents to downsize, reduce their living costs and free up larger houses for family occupation
- the children of current residents to remain living in the area, with the lasting benefits this will have for inbuilt 'care in the community'
- employees of local businesses, particularly the young, to live close to their places of work conferring lasting benefits in reducing their travel costs, reducing air pollution etc
- more young people and young families to live here, conferring lasting benefits in retention of local shops and services and promoting and retaining a vibrant community

Community welfare

Our community infrastructure policies will lead to the retention of existing shops and services and provide the conditions under which they can develop and grow. They will also lead to enhanced and more diverse recreational opportunities for all age ranges and abilities. They will enable and encourage:

- the retention of Ditchling village centre as a 'service centre' for the residents of all three parishes conferring lasting benefits, particularly for the elderly, in reducing the need to travel outside the area to meet their basic living needs.
- residents to take up new recreational opportunities conferring lasting benefits for their mental and physical health.
- increased cohesion of the community and the lasting benefits this will bring in improved community awareness of the needs and welfare of its individual residents.
- innovative uses of community land and buildings to maximise the community benefit to be gained from them.

Conservation

Our policies will lead to the conservation of the very important national assets the area possesses in both its built and natural environment. They will enable and encourage:

- a greater awareness of the priorities involved in balancing the meeting of the development needs of today against the potential, irretrievable, loss of the landscape assets, which characterise the area, for future generations
- conservation of the rural nature of the plan area and the preservation of the rural gaps between the area and the neighbouring urban developments
- the development of the area as a 'gateway' attraction for visitors to the national park that will bring lasting benefits for the year-round economic viability of shops and services for the use of current and future residents and visitors
- retention of the discrete historic heritage of the three parishes while maximising the benefits of their interdependence
- conservation of the key open spaces within the area that will bring lasting benefits for recreation
- sensitive development, that has regard to the special characteristics of the area, though the setting of design standards to be followed by current and future generations

Business and employment

Our business policies will lead to the enhanced economic viability of businesses and to improved conditions and prospects for employment, particularly for young people. They will enable and encourage:

- the local community to provide leadership, through its elected councils, in the planning decisions affecting the sustainability and growth of local businesses
- provision of the services needed by businesses to sustain and grow that will have the lasting benefit of providing increased employment opportunities for local people
- the development of new businesses which are appropriate and compatible with the character of the area and make full use of its natural assets that will have the lasting benefit of ensuring their economic viability
- diversification of businesses, particularly in the agricultural sector, where necessary to sustain economic viability, without compromising key conservation assets
- full realisation of the opportunities presented by being in the national park to sustain and grow businesses and employment

Traffic and transport

Our traffic and transport policies will lead to safer, less congested, and more conservationally and environmentally appropriate, highway conditions from which residents, visitors and businesses stand to gain. They will enable and encourage:

- reinstatement and implementation of the ESCC³⁰ Local Area Transport Strategy (2009)
- identification of the social and economic benefits to be gained from improved highway conditions and the need for special case treatment
- the introduction of a 'cordon sanitaire' around the area within which measures appropriate to the specific circumstances of the area can be taken to reduce traffic and enhance safety
- the provision of more off-street parking, in combination with other measures, to facilitate use of village shops and services and help sustain their economic viability
- more public transport provision that will have the lasting benefit of reducing private car use, reducing travel costs and air pollution
- reduced dependence on private car travel and more use of environmentally sustainable and safe means of transport, including public transport, cycling and pedestrian.



³⁰ East Sussex County Council: the highway authority



East End Lane in 2000



8

Implementation

The plan has ambitious objectives. To successfully achieve them a number of key actions are necessary.

Working together

Ditchling Parish Council, Westmeston Parish Council and Streat Parish Meeting will set up a **Beacon Villages Plan Implementation Team (BVPIT)** which will meet quarterly. This team will have two key roles:

- monitoring progress in implementing the plan
- driving implementation of the plan and projects, particularly the aspirational policies.
- It will ensure the policies are:
 - delivered within agreed timescales
 - applied consistently throughout the plan area
 - reviewed annually to assess whether the vision and objectives of the plan are being achieved
 - still relevant and where not propose changes or additional policies.

The BVPIT will report back regularly to the three parish councils as the ‘accountable bodies’ for the neighbourhood plan and communicate directly with residents to inform them of progress.

Policies into action

Policies can only be successfully delivered if they are accompanied by practical actions which give tangible results. An early task will be to prioritise the policies for action, establish timescales and define how success will be measured.

The BVPIT will consider all options to maximise resources including:

- employing person(s) to undertake projects
- raising funds through Council Tax and/or grant-giving bodies

Actions the BVPIT will be responsible for include attracting funding towards **physical projects** to design and implement LATS and other traffic projects (TRANS 2 - 10) and to carry out improvements to the Ditchling recreation ground (COM 5). They will also include other **non-physical projects** such as working with local businesses to improve the area’s economic performance and tourist offering (BIZ 4).

Actions already underway to deliver certain policies (for example, lobbying the county councils to improve the traffic situation in Ditchling centre (TRANS 2), provision of more off street car parking on Keymer Road (TRANS 1), installation of new drainage to the football pitch at Ditchling recreation ground (COM 5)) should not be duplicated, nor does the BVPIT replace the responsibility or efforts of the councils in taking these actions.

Land use/planning policies

Planning policies are delivered by the two local planning authorities - the SDNPA and Lewes District Council - determining planning applications in accordance with the policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, Lewes District Council Local Plan and the Joint SDNP/LDC Core Strategy. The three parish councils and other statutory consultees are formally consulted on all applications. In responding, the parish council's state whether they 'support', have 'no comment' or 'object' to an application. If they object, then they are required to state one or more of the planning grounds listed in the current Lewes DC guidance note.

While decisions on planning applications will continue to be taken by SDNPA and LDC, they will have to take account of the planning policies included in the neighbourhood plan once it has been adopted (as well as taking account of emerging policies before adoption if they are material to a specific application and if they can be seen to have sufficient public support).

A process needs to be agreed between the parish councils and the local authorities (SDNPA & LDC) for considering planning applications in the context of whether they fit with the plan or not. The parish councils will therefore collectively liaise with the SDNPA and Lewes District Council to produce new guidance on the determination of planning applications for all councillors.

This guidance will ensure that councils' views are fully taken into account. It is critical that policies at the neighbourhood level are given proper weight in the determination process. Such guidance will ensure that the three parishes responses to the SDNPA and/or Lewes District Council are applied consistently throughout the plan area and that plan policies are not undermined by conflicting responses.

Where an application is considered 'significant' all three parish councils should work together to produce a combined response regardless of the location of the application. For example, Streat and Westmeston have an interest in preserving Ditchling's role as a service centre just as much as Ditchling itself. To achieve this all planning applications should be circulated around all three parish councils with each having the power to call for a combined response.

Permitted development rights

It may be that certain planning policies can be delivered more effectively through the use of permitted development rights for the neighbourhood plan area, under the Localism Act 2011. These permitted development rights would be contained in a Neighbourhood Development Order (NDO). The NDO would be formulated to reflect these specific neighbourhood plan policies and would allow for a more simplified procedure, allowing development to proceed without the need for a planning application. Should there be no NDO or for development which falls outside an NDO, planning applications would still be required. Further guidance will be sought on this from SDNPA.

Aspirational policies

Delivering the plan's aspirational policies is beyond the current budgets and staffing of the three parishes. They will therefore need to consider how to access and devote sufficient financial and human resources to the task.

Ditchling Parish Council has approved an increase in its 2016/17 budget of £12,000 to help fund implementation of the plan. This could continue into future years with Streat and Westmeston contributing as appropriate, particularly taking into account their smaller populations.

While nowhere near sufficient to deliver all the plan's policies, this money is seen as a means of pump-priming and attracting other funding e.g. localities funding, SDNPA, local authority, Sport England, charities, commercial sponsorship etc (e.g. Policy COM 3 securing funding for community infrastructure).

Initially the money will be used to employ a part-time plan officer whose job will be to:

- work with the BVPIT, local councillors, parish clerks, local businesses, SDNPA, local authorities and other statutory organisations, voluntary organisations and charities in identifying and prioritising projects
- attract grants and other funding in order to develop projects to feasibility stage and subsequently to design and contract stage
- establish working arrangements with key groups and organisations to take forward non-physical projects and where appropriate attract funding
- make arrangements to consult where necessary with local residents on the above e.g. organising local surveys and public meetings
- keep in touch with government policies affecting neighbourhood planning including funding regimes and be aware of progress on neighbourhood plans in other areas.



