



Ditchling, Streat  
Westmeston  
NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN



*Welcome to this newsletter bringing you the latest news  
on the Ditchling, Streat and Westmeston  
Neighbourhood Plan*

*August 2016*

First, can we thank everyone who has sent good wishes to Tom Dufty, our chairman, who was taken critically ill, but is now happily making a recovery. We have been soldiering along as best we can in his absence, but our progress has inevitably been slower than we had planned.

Second, a huge thank you to everyone who took the time to make helpful and constructive comments on the draft plan earlier this year. We received 177 emails and letters from residents of all three parishes as well as representations from various local authorities and other organisations.

All comments, both the many that supported the proposed policies, and those expressing concern, are being taken into account in a revised plan which will be published in the autumn.

You can see the analysis of responses at:

[www.beaconvillagesplan.co.uk/response\\_rview\\_complete.pdf](http://www.beaconvillagesplan.co.uk/response_rview_complete.pdf)



## What is the plan and what does it cover?

A neighbourhood plan is a community-led plan for shaping the development and conservation of the area. Its primary purpose is to inform development and planning: through it we can influence types of development and housing, and where such development is.

It can also influence other issues such as the environment, traffic and leisure facilities.

The final plan has to be put to a referendum for all residents to vote on. It will only be adopted if more than 50% of those who vote approve it. Before the referendum the plan also has to be approved by the South Downs National Park Authority and an independent examiner to make sure it complies with various laws and policies.



## How has the draft plan been drawn up?

The draft plan has been drawn up by resident volunteers for the benefit of the community as a whole. It is based on YOUR views and priorities, following consultation through public meetings, a questionnaire, open days and the 6-week consultation in the spring. The project team is overseen by the parish councils of the three villages.

## Housing development sites

To meet national targets the South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) and Lewes District Council has to identify sites for a certain amount of housing. As part of this Ditchling has been told to find sites for 15+ dwellings. This has not been easy, given the densely built nature of the village and other considerations such as the environment. In the consultation we put forward all possible options that had been offered by landowners, and were not ruled out by other factors. In this way we hoped to further the debate around balancing the need for housing, especially lower cost homes, with landscape protection. We understand that no one wants development 'in their back yard' but we do have to find those sites. If we don't identify them in the neighbourhood plan, the planning authority will decide for us.

## What is the next step?

As a result of the consultation, and advice from the SDNPA, some housing sites have now been ruled out and others have come to light. We are therefore going to consult further on the remaining sites. To do this we need more detailed plans for each site so residents can clearly see what is proposed. We hope to have these by early autumn 2016.

## Designation of green spaces

We are also proposing to designate around 18 important local green spaces to protect them from development. The full list and the reasons for their designation will be part of the next round of consultation.



## FAQs

**Q.** If a site is included for development in the neighbourhood plan, does that mean it is outside the normal planning process?

**A.** *No. It means the site is considered suitable IN PRINCIPLE but it still has to go through the normal planning application process, and an application will not necessarily be approved by the planning authority (SDNPA or Lewes District Council).*

**Q.** Can planning applications be made for developments on sites not included in the Plan?

**A.** *Yes. Anyone can still make applications as before. But the planning authority has to take the neighbourhood plan into account.*

**Q:** Is there a housing allocation for Streat or Westmeston?

**A.** *No. Both Streat and Westmeston are rural areas with no 'settlement' in planning terms.*

**Q.** Why has the former nursery site on Beacon Road been excluded?

**A.** *The SDNPA rejected this site because it is some way outside what is known as the settlement area; the houses when built would be visible from the scarp and because there are valuable areas of ancient woodland between it and Ditchling village.*



## FAQs

**Q.** How long will it be before the final plan has been approved?

**A.** *If all goes well we hope to submit the plan to the South Downs National Park Authority (which will hold its own 6-week consultation), and then to the independent examiner, early next year. We hope the final plan will be approved in principle by the spring of next year, and submitted to all residents in a referendum shortly after.*

**Q.** What about planning applications for extensions and single dwellings?

**A.** *These will be assessed as before by the planning authority. However they will be subject to Plan policies such as those on design.*

**Q.** What have the authorities said about our traffic plans?

**A.** *East Sussex County Council has now ruled that our previously approved traffic plan (LATS) is no longer valid but has agreed to work with us and the SDNPA to produce a successor plan that they can support, provided we find the money.*

## How can I find out more?

Our job is to create the best consensus for the village overall, given that there are many differing opinions on every topic. We want you to have the facts on which to base an informed opinion, and are always happy to answer your questions about anything to do with the plan. The neighbourhood plan website contains much information that will help.

If you have any questions or want clarification on any aspects of the plan, we put all information on [www.beaconvillagesplan.co.uk](http://www.beaconvillagesplan.co.uk) or please contact us at [beaconvillages@aol.com](mailto:beaconvillages@aol.com)

Mike Burr & Edwina Rowling  
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