

Woodmancote Neighbourhood Plan Vision Paper

November 2014

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to capture the outcome of the Woodmancote Neighbourhood Plan (WNP) visioning workshop held with the Steering Group on 3rd November 2014 and to make recommendations for the consideration of the Steering Group. These recommendations relate to:

- The vision, key objectives and land use planning policy scope of the WNP
- Further community engagement activities and evidence analysis
- The project plan through to the submission of the WNP

The recommendations reflect not just the outcome of the workshop but also initial insights into the national and local planning policy context of the WNP. Specifically, the WNP must meet a series of 'basic conditions' relating to its general conformity with that policy context. The examination of the WNP in due course will focus on how those conditions have been met, before it goes to referendum.

The context indicates very clear environmental – natural, heritage and sustainability - parameters that guide growth and change with the parish and prevent isolated growth elsewhere in the parish. It appears from the workshop that those parameters are likely to match the views of the local community on where and how change should happen.

The Draft WNP will provide an outline of the policy context and the environmental parameters as a justification for its emerging policies. It will also be shaped by the recommended engagement activities set out below and by the anticipated adoption of the Horsham District Planning Framework, Proposed Submission (Local Plan).

Finally, the paper avoids a discussion at this stage about the number of houses to be planned for in the WNP. It is estimated that the vision outlined below could deliver a small number of new homes over the plan period, but this will be dependent on there being an identified and agreed local need and sites that are available and in acceptable locations. There has been no recent review of those capacities or of potential sites. This work will be done as part of the Draft WNP preparation.

Vision

The vision of the parish in 2031 is:

“Woodmancote will have remained an attractive Parish in its Sussex setting and preserved its distinctive rural character. Each of the settlement areas that make up the parish will have retained their own distinctive character and will have remained

separate with the quality of the landscape spaces between them continuing to define their shared identity.

The parish will enjoy a positive relationship with the South Downs National Park which will be more accessible for recreation and leisure by the local community and there will be a shared ambition to protect the setting and views.

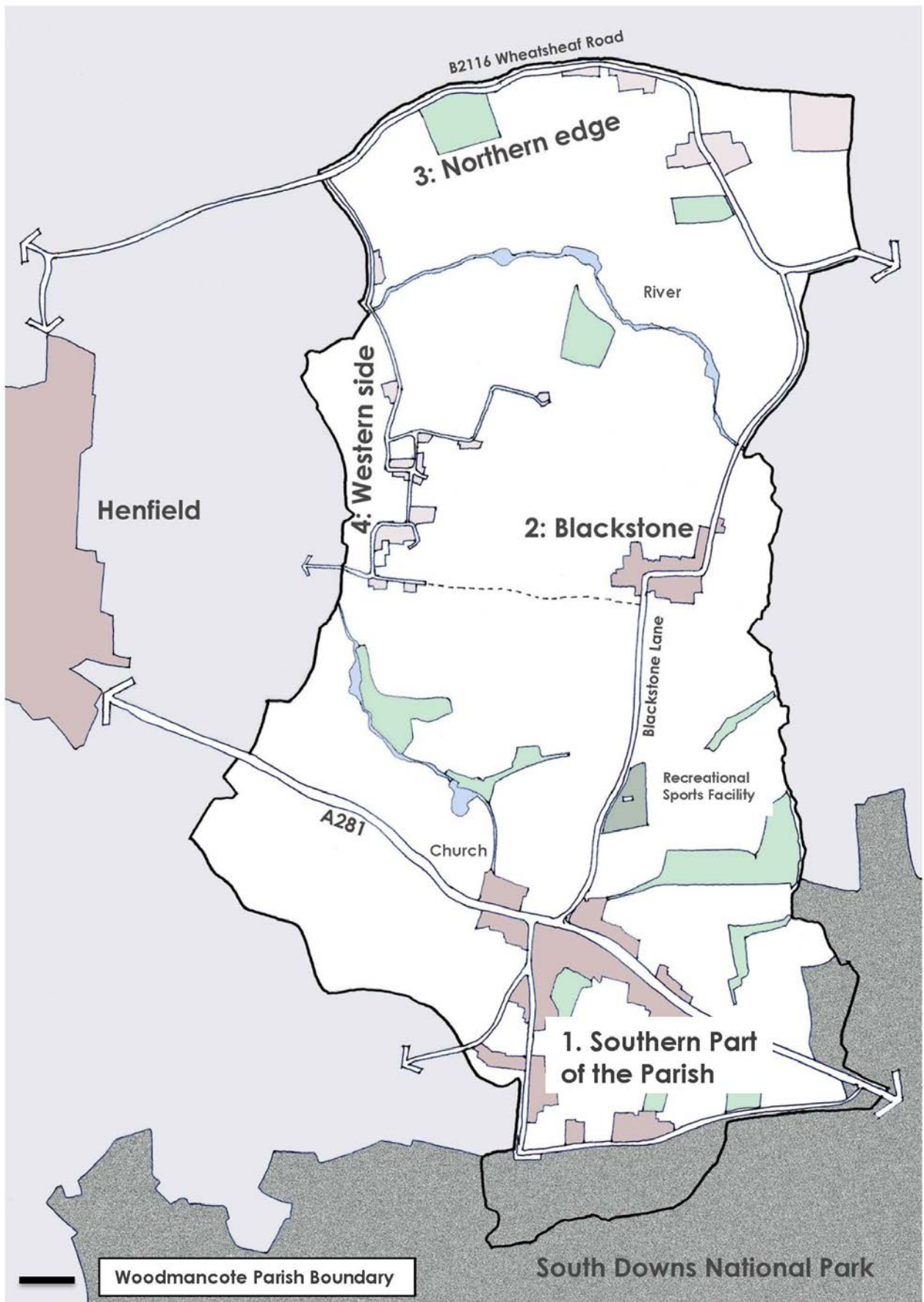
There will have been a modest growth in housing numbers through the provision of new homes, purpose designed to meet local needs including elderly downsizers. These new homes will have been provided in small clusters on sites that do not detract from the character and setting of the parish.

The parish will have continued to support local employment businesses and facilitated new employment opportunities within the parish for local people and to support the services within the parish."

Key findings of the vision workshop

The parish is designated as unclassified in the Horsham Settlement Hierarchy with few or no facilities or social networks and limited accessibility, being reliant on other villages/towns to meet its needs. It has no built-up area boundaries and is therefore considered to be in countryside, hence development will be strictly controlled. It is made up of a number of settlement areas that have grown up around the network of roads and lanes within the parish. These are;

1. Southern Part of the Parish; with the main residential concentration along the A281 and a more mixed layout, which includes offices, employment uses, Woodmancote Church, Parish Hall and a mobile homes park, along Bramlands Lane.
2. Blackstone; planned around a dogleg in Blackstone Lane and around 1 mile to the north of Woodmancote. Predominantly residential with some other uses related to agricultural operations and businesses.
3. The northern edge of the parish bounded by the B2116 Wheatsheaf Road, which is relatively undeveloped and includes residential properties, a pub/restaurant, business and employment uses and a commercial garden.
4. The western side of the parish, a network of lanes running south of the B2116 Wheatsheaf Road with connecting clusters of agricultural and residential buildings.



Visioning Diagram – Woodmancote Parish

The two key settlements in the parish in terms of size and concentration are The Southern Part of the Parish and Blackstone. The Southern Part is the larger of the two and given its location on the A281 is also the better connected and the focus within the parish.

Although each settlement area has its own individual identity, they share a common asset in the character and quality of their shared landscape setting which is an important part of their individual identities. The character of the roads and lanes around which the settlement areas have grown contribute to the character of the wider landscape setting with hedge lines, verges and embankments that contribute to the attractive rural identity.

As this setting provides a common and shared identity to the parish, any change to it through the development of the settlement areas will have an impact on all of them. It is therefore considered important that the WNP should seek to protect and retain the quality, character and extent of the landscape setting and to ensure the relationship of each settlement to this setting, and of each settlement to its neighbours, is not diminished through growth, change or the definition of settlement boundaries.

Two east west routes - the A281 which runs through the Southern Part of the Parish and the B2116 along the northern edge of the parish - provide connectivity with Henfield to the west which provides access to a wider range of services and shops. The rest of the roads in the parish are a network of rural lanes that are generally unmarked, unlit and without pavements.

The South Downs National Park (SDNP) covers the southern edge of the parish and is a recreation and leisure resource connected by footpaths and bridleways. Views of the Downs from the parish are part of the character and setting of the parish, and any development within the parish will need to be considered in terms of the impact of the setting of the Park.

The village hall along A281 is one of the key facilities in the parish. However, given the location of the recreational sports facility and cricket pavilion, located between the Southern Part of the Parish and Blackstone on Blackstone Lane there may be an opportunity to improve the area to provide a focus within the parish. There has been a relatively slow rate of growth and change within the parish with little pressure for additional housing given the scale of the settlement, the low level of supporting facilities and the sensitivity of the setting. However, like many rural communities, the parish does have limitations in its mix and types of housing, in particular there are few smaller properties suitable for the needs of an ageing population.

Although there are limited facilities in the parish, it does include a number of employment sites and working premises that are important to its character and vitality.

Key Objectives

In addition to providing a general development plan for the parish, this vision translates into a framework of key objectives for the WNP:

1. Protect the character, qualities and identity of the landscape setting to manage the impacts of any future growth and maintain the spatial and qualitative relationships between the areas.
2. Provide additional community amenities locally to support a wider range of parish needs and reinforce a shared identity and purpose.
3. Plan for some housing to meet local needs, in particular for elderly downsizers, that are sympathetic to the scale, topography and character of the parish and that will not have a detrimental impact on the setting.
4. Sustain the significance of the Conservation Area, Listed Buildings and other heritage assets and their settings.
5. Secure the future of the existing rural and other employment uses within the parish and plan for their growth to serve parish needs
6. Plan for increased public access to, and enjoyment of the SDNP as a recreation and leisure amenity.
7. Protect the wetlands and wildlife throughout the Parish.

Outline Policy Scope

The WNP should consider policies with the following intent:

- Define bespoke settlement boundaries of Woodmancote and Blackstone to incorporate proposed site allocations of the WNP (Note: such boundaries will not serve the same purpose as those of the HDPF as it is not intended to reposition these settlements in the hierarchy)
- Make site allocations for housing, community uses, recreation/leisure and employment
- Establish a green infrastructure network of existing and new assets within which to contain site allocations
- Convert existing design assessments and relevant conservation area appraisal content into design policies

Engagement Activities

The Task Groups should inform the Draft WNP by testing the vision and objectives. The output should be 1 to 2 sides of A4 bullet points summarising insights, opinions, data etc. The following topics arose from the workshop and should be investigated by the different task groups:

1. Housing in the Parish – local need, location, scale/design, type mix, ‘prizes’?

2. Community facilities, sport and recreation - existing facilities, retention and expansion
3. Green infrastructure – green spaces, footpaths, bridleways, SDNP connections
4. Employment – existing facilities, retention and expansion, local opportunities

There should also be consultations with the following:

- Horsham DC Planning – keep updating as NP progresses through meetings set in project plan (Action: NPSG/AirS)
- Horsham DC Housing – data on local housing need and supply/affordability (Action: NPSG/AirS)
- SDNP – notify of NP direction and programme and request positive input to help achieve key objectives (Action: NPSG/ AirS)
- Mid Sussex DC Neighbourhood Planning Officer - notify of NP (Action: NPSG/ AirS)
- The following adjoining parishes to identify common interests and manage boundaries/interfaces (Action: NPSG)
 - Shermanbury Parish (NP), Horsham
 - Twineham Parish (NP), Mid Sussex
 - Hurstpierpoint & Sayers Common Parish (NP), Mid Sussex
 - Albourne Parish (NP,) Mid Sussex
 - Poynings Parish, Mid Sussex/SDNP
 - Fulking Parish, Mid Sussex/SDNP
 - Upper Beeding Parish (NP), Horsham/SDNP
 - Henfield Parish (NP), Horsham
- Local employees and businesses to notify of NP direction and programme and request positive input to help achieve key objectives (Action: NPSG)
- Landowners of preferred sites, once agreed (Action: NPSG/AirS)
- Local organisations and other stakeholders – exhibition and/or open meeting to comment on Draft Plan (Action: NPSG/AirS) (see below)
- The Statutory Consultees for the SA/SEA scoping report, the Reg. 14 Consultation period of the Pre Submission Neighbourhood Plan and the Reg. 16 the publicity period on the Submission Neighbourhood Plan.
 - Highway Agency
 - Natural England
 - English Heritage
 - West Sussex County Council
 - Along with the Horsham DC, the SDNP and the neighbouring Mid Sussex DC.

Project Plan: Key Milestones

This is an indicative project plan with the key milestones outlined. A more detailed project plan will be agreed with the Steering Group.

Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

- Request by WPC for a formal SEA screening opinion to be sent to Horsham District asap (likely to determine that SEA is required as WNP will come forward prior to the Local Plan and will allocate land for development)

- Prepare and complete consultation on an SEA Scoping Report by end of December
- Prepare and consult on Draft SEA Report (as below)
- Prepare Final SEA Report for submission (as below)

(Note: WPC need to agree who will undertake this work).

Call for Sites

- Alongside the Call for Sites the SG should contact owners of sites of interest to the WPNP
- Invite developers and landowners to pitch their ideas at an open event and give the community a chance to give feedback. This will help raise the awareness of the Neighbourhood Plan and show the communities views on housing sites.
- The preferred sites to be agreed by end February 2015

Draft Plan

- All engagement activities to be completed by mid of February 2015
- RCOH to prepare draft plan for Steering Group consideration by end January 2015
- Informal consultations on Draft Plan during February 2015
- Steering Group meeting in early March 2015 to agree any changes for Pre Submission Plan

Pre Submission Plan

- RCOH prepares draft Pre Submission Plan and Draft SEA Report (subject to agreement)for Steering Group consideration then Parish Council approval for public consultation (Reg. 14) by early/mid March 2015
- Statutory six week public consultation period (Reg. 14) finishes late April 2015
- Analysis of representations and Steering Group approval to modifications in early May 2015

Submission Plan

- RCOH prepares final Plan and SEA reports and Basic Conditions Statement for submission plan to Horsham District end of May 2015 (depending on the changes required)
- WPC/AirS prepares Consultation Statement for submission at the same time

RCOH November 2014