

NOTES FROM THE FOCUS GROUP MEETING 21st MARCH 2022

I represented the Parish Council at the Focus Group Meeting on 21st March 2022.

The aim of the meeting was to discuss current and ongoing issues and to prepare questions for the next meeting with the Wealden Planning Team.

Reports from Parishes

- Chiddingly
 - Only minor applications with one small development of 6 houses approved at Golden Cross
- East Hoathly & Halland
 - A further application for 205 houses at Hestons Farm was still being discussed. Still waiting for a resolution of a previous S106 stipulation that Hestons Farm should remain as a single entity which is now being ignored. Wealden have advised that parishes should not comment on technical issues but confine comments to village/parish issues!
- Heathfield & Waldron
 - Currently experiencing 10-15 applications per Planning Meeting including at least one major application.
 - 8/9 house application in Sandy Lane being strongly objected to on road safety grounds which Wealden seems to be content with.
- Hellingly
 - Busy with small applications.
 - 55 houses on land west of North Street likely to be agreed by Wealden.
- Horam
 - Very busy
 - Various sites within the Horam parish are being assessed and substantial growth is on the horizon
- Laughton
 - A quiet period
 - Increase in Solar Farm interest.
- Warbleton
 - I expressed sympathy for those parishes facing extreme planning pressure but said that we were keeping an eye on surrounding developments
 - I also expressed concern at the knock on effects of the large developments in surrounding parishes.
 - I amplified on our question for Wealden on the poor performance of the utility companies during the recent storm (below)

Letter to Michael Gove MP

The Vice Chairman of Chiddingly Parish Council updated the meeting on the poor responses to our letter on over development in rural areas to Michael Gove. To keep the pressure on, there will be a meeting of supporting parishes (now 30+) in Horam Village Hall on 8th April at which I will represent the parish.

Questions for Wealden.

The next meeting with Wealden is on 1st April.

The tabled questions will be:

- **Question from East Hoathly with Halland**

- Buttfield Lane. The new application does not comply with new conditions put on a year ago. How can the Parish Council object?

- **Questions from Heathfield and Waldron PC:**

- What target do Wealden intend to set for Net Zero carbon omissions, what process will be used to achieve this, including via the Local Plan, and by when is this to be achieved?
- To what extent do Wealden carry out air quality monitoring in planning applications, how much should they do, and will standards and requirements be included in the Draft Wealden Local Plan?
- Are Wealden considering major housing applications again? (There was an application for 200 houses recommended at Station Road, Hailsham at the last WDC PCS)!
- When will Wealden be publishing their SHELAA Report? Can they say?
- Is there any progress with persuading HM Govt to re-evaluate their method of calculating housing numbers in Wealden?
- When will Wealden be publishing their Draft Local Plan?
- Now that CB has been appointed as Corporate Director who will be following through the Local Plan process?

- **Question from Horam Parish Council**

- What measures do WDC have in place to address Climate Change.?

- **Question from Warbleton Parish Council:**

The recent severe weather has highlighted the utility companies' unwillingness or inability to respond in an adequate or timely fashion to the needs of their rural customers in an emergency situation.

- Electricity and water supplies were severely curtailed in Rushlake Green and other areas in the parish for an unacceptable period of time.
- The lack of electricity has a knock-on effect on communications, especially the internet, as the utility companies are increasingly demanding that they be contacted by email in the event of an emergency.
- Many households are also being asked to move to digital landline telephone via the internet which will, of course, mean that they are out of communications during an electricity "outage".
- South East Water's failure to maintain supplies to many households for an unacceptable length of time was due, apparently, to a shortage of generators to power their pumps. They also failed to supply bottled water which had to be provided by the parish council.

- Can we be assured that the next iteration of the Wealden Plan will include robust provision for ensuring that the utility companies are prepared for emergency situations and for holding them to account if they fail to provide adequate services?

Date of Next Meetings

- 1st April – Focus Group with Wealden
- 8th April – Chiddingly Action Group Horam Village Hall
- 25th April – Focus Group

Councillor Michael Smythe OBE

28th March 2022