

East Meon Neighbourhood Plan - FAQs

YOUR VILLAGE, YOUR PLAN

Thank you to everyone who attended the Neighbourhood Plan feedback session in February. Assessment of your input is underway, and a summary will be made available on the EMNP website once complete. We are at a very early stage in the process and all community input continues to be vitally important.

The team has developed a set of FAQs to help answer your questions about the planning process. Please visit the website for the full set of FAQs and for the latest news and information about the plan – www.eastmeonnp.net.

WHY DO WE NEED A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN?

It will help us to protect the character of East Meon and the surrounding countryside from unwelcome development, and give residents a very real say in how they would like to see the places in which they live and work develop over time.

Although East Meon is within the South Downs National Park (SDNP) and is defined by a landscape that also constrains much development, as we know that is not an absolute protection.

For the plan to be approved it has to be robustly evidence based, credible and consistent with the strategic objectives of the 'Local Plan'.

WHY ARE WE ONLY INCLUDING THE VILLAGE?

The existing policy in the East Hants District Council (EHDC) Joint Core Strategy with the SDNP severely restricts the possibility of development outside existing settlement boundaries. CP 19 states "The approach to sustainable development in the countryside, defined as the area outside settlement policy boundaries, is to operate a policy of general restraint in order to protect the countryside for its own sake". The Parish Council therefore proposed that the Neighbourhood Plan should cover only the village itself and the immediate environs. However it does not preclude independent planning applications from the wider parish. Although outside the scope of the Neighbourhood Plan, if sustainable these would be seen as windfall sites for the plan.

WHAT IS THE LOCAL PLAN?

It is the strategy for local development and sits below the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and above any Neighbourhood Plans. Due to the overlap of the EHDC and the SDNP, they created a Joint Core Strategy as an interim measure before each produce their own local plans. The EHDC Local Plan will cover the EHDC area outside of the SDNP. East Meon will be covered by the SDNP Local Plan, which will cover the whole of the SDNP up to the year 2032.

The Joint Core Strategy set out the required housing numbers for towns and villages in the EHDC area up to 2028. 10,060+ new homes have to be built between 2011 and 2028 (an average of 592 homes per year).

It further specifies that a minimum of 100 dwellings should be spread between all of the villages in the EHDC area of the SDNP. There is not yet a specific target for East Meon. If there is evidence of not many suitable sites then our share could be very small, and spread over a number of years. It is anticipated the SDNP Local Plan will retain the 100+ dwellings requirement for the villages in the EHDC area of the SDNP.

HOW WILL THE NEEDS OF EAST MEON HOUSING BE ESTABLISHED?

In order to supplement the district assessment we have decided to carry out our own housing needs assessment. This will gather the required demographic and housing analysis, (using an independent consultant), and every household in the Parish should receive a questionnaire in the Spring to assist

this process. Initial work would suggest that East Meon has already taken a significant share of development over the past 15 years compared to other villages. In fact we have grown by some 25%, and proportionally social housing development has exceeded that of market housing within the village.

IF WE DON'T HAVE A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN ARE WE VULNERABLE TO SPECULATIVE PLANNING PROPOSALS?

In the absence of an approved plan, the NPPF says that applications must be considered with the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Developers and landowners may see this as an opportunity to submit speculative planning applications. This happening in other parts of the country already.

WHAT ARE SHLAA SITES?

All Local Planning Authorities must undertake an assessment of how much land is deliverable for future housing development and these must be suitable, achievable and available. This is the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). SHLAA sites are put forward by landowners and developers, and some have been up for consideration for years, well before the Neighbourhood Plan process was started. The SHLAA process is independent of the Neighbourhood Plan. Being 'included' as a SHLAA site only means that such sites will be considered in the pool of all sites in the Local Plan. However, being in the pool of SHLAA sites has no relevance to the consideration of a site for planning permission. It should also be noted that only sites that have capacity for 5 or more homes are being considered under the SHLAA process; since a number of the proposed sites in East Meon fall under this target, they will not be assessed as SHLAA sites.

Being a SHLAA site is a small first step in the planning process. Detailed assessments of SHLAA sites are undertaken by the Council to select which are the most sustainable choices to be proposed in the Local Plan. Public consultation can bring out new issues and the list of best sites may often change. Only after a rigorous process are sites submitted to the Government Inspector for Examination.

HOW WERE OTHER SITES PROPOSED?

The required process asks residents, as well as landowners and developers, to suggest potential sites – these can be proposed by any resident, whether they own the land or not, and does not require the permission of the landowner. It does have to be determined during the initial criteria scrutiny whether the land might be available. On the first pop-in day (Jan 2014) we had many suggestions for, and against, potential sites – they all have had to be investigated against consistent criteria.

In addition Radian Group, a Housing Association that owns homes in the village, has pre-existing plans for the potential development of two sites in their ownership. These are shown as A1 and A3 on the map, although no planning application has yet been made for either of them.

HOW ARE THE POTENTIAL SITES BEING ASSESSED?

All of the sites brought forward for consideration are assessed against a set of criteria developed with the advice of our planning and landscape Consultants. The views expressed at, and by feedback forms, after the February pop in session will be taken into account, and more detailed work done on those that attract the least opposition and most support.

CAN OUR DRAINAGE AND SEWERAGE SYSTEMS COPE?

Independent of the Neighbourhood Plan, the Parish Council has previously engaged with Southern Water about the ongoing problems and although some remedial work has been carried out it is by

no means clear that this will be adequate. The Parish Council and volunteers will be undertaking further work on this important issue.

Again, for more information, please visit www.eastmeonnp.net.