

EAST MEON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – PROGRESS UPDATE

By Brian Biggs

Much has been happening in early 2014 to progress the East Meon Neighbourhood Plan (EMNP).

On 25th January we held a very successful ‘Pop-in-Session’ in the Village Hall. The purpose of this was capture parishioners views on where we might a build new housing, what sort of housing is required, what should be the overall design and scale of any new building and what should be protected re the landscape and green spaces affected by any developments. There was a very good turnout with 107 visitors representing 80 households. The village hall buzzed with many conversations as the visitors discussed the issues with the EMNP team members and amongst themselves.

The ‘Pop-in-Session’ was also used to publicise and launch the first EMNP Questionnaire, which was delivered to every household in the parish utilising the Meon Matters distribution network. Spare questionnaires were also available from the village shop. As I write, in early March, we have received approximately 110 replies, which is around 20% of the households in the parish. This is giving us a very detailed view of what you think. A very big thank you to all the parishioners who completed a questionnaire. As we stated in our flyer publicising the ‘Pop-in-Session’ **Your Village – Your Plan**, we need your input to make this relevant to you.

The closing date for questionnaires has now passed, as we need to capture and analyse their contents. However, if you have a specific point(s) you wish to tell us about, there is still time for us to capture and consider it. Please send it to me directly, leave it in an envelope for my attention in the village shop, or send it to me by email at my address below.

The teams working on the EMNP plans are busy capturing and collating the results from the questionnaires. The quantitative results, stuff you can count, are being input into spreadsheets and the outcomes graphed to make analysis of the results easier. The qualitative results, i.e. all your written remarks, are being tabulated and assessed into themes so we can understand which issues are most important to you. We will give you feedback on these results and an update on progress in the next edition of Meon Matters.

Having received your input we are now starting to plan all the tasks and activities to produce a first draft on the EMNP. This will take us a number of months, as there is much to do. When we have completed the ‘first draft’ EMNP we will organise another ‘Pop-in-Session’ and questionnaire drop to capture your thoughts and test the plan against your expectations. We will also arrange meetings to explain our thought processes in developing the plan and explain the issues, legal and otherwise, that constrain the development of the plan.

As well as the existing EMNP team members, a number of you have already volunteered to help. As we move forward we could well be calling on you to supplement the team, as there are many tasks to carry out. If you have not yet volunteered and believe you have a particular skill set that may help us, please get in touch with me.

Though the team producing the EMNP consists of a wide spectrum of volunteers from across the parish, the Parish Council is ultimately responsible for the production and implementation of the EMNP. The scope and creation of the EMNP is directed by the EMNP Steering Committee which consists of the Parish Council Chair, Vice-Chair, myself as chair of the steering committee, the communications officer and the leads from the three teams producing the EMNP (Built Development, Village Design Statement and Landscape Assessment). Any changes to the scope of the EMNP must be sanctioned by this committee.

Currently we have defined quite a narrow scope for the EMNP, primarily focused on any new building the parish must take to meet Government directed requirements. Being in the South Downs National Park we are protected, particularly outside of the main settlement areas, by the very strict requirements of the EFDC/SDNP Joint Core Strategy and the soon to be produced SDNP Local Plan.

If you have any comments or require any clarifications on any of the above please get contact me at brian@brianralphbiggs.plus.com or call me on 823051.