

Annual Parish Meeting: Report on the Neighbourhood Plan

1. Our Neighbourhood Plan is now three and a half years old. Many of us here can remember the blood, sweat and tears and sheer time it took to write it. Thank goodness we did, because so far, it has saved us from the huge developments that are currently going up in villages that don't have Neighbourhood Plans. Billingshurst, Southwater, Broadbridge Heath and Henfield are all being developed with hundreds and hundreds of new homes. Cowfold may be the next because it too has no Neighbourhood Plan.
2. I want to emphasise that Nuthurst's Neighbourhood Plan is not anti-development. It aims to give us about fifty new houses, all in small developments spread across the Parish, which is the number we felt we could absorb into our community, without spoiling our largely rural Parish.
3. So far, our Neighbourhood Plan has saved us from the large developments we did not want. It saw off 60 houses at Saddlers Farm in Mannings Heath and 14 on the A281 at Monks Gate. It has also helped us resist small, but inappropriate, developments at Keatings and Hollyhocks in Nuthurst, Church Road at Mannings Heath and The Mead also at Nuthurst.
4. Although there have been big benefits to having a Neighbourhood Plan, the last two years have also seen developers mount challenges to it. Perhaps the best known is Micklepage at Nuthurst where the developer built 3 big houses which breached both planning permission and our Neighbourhood Plan. They remain in breach, despite being advertised for sale in the Link. There has also been a challenge to our Neighbourhood Plan at Coolhurst Close at Monks Gate, where the owner was successful in pushing the number of houses up from 12 to 15. Little Homefield at Mannings Heath used the access road to the Neighbourhood Plan site to gain entry to a backland and otherwise isolated site that the developer bought from a neighbouring resident. Here though, the developer made and exploited an opportunity, rather than directly challenging the Neighbourhood Plan.

5. Given that our Neighbourhood Plan was the result of a huge community effort, we need residents to value and support it by being very proactive. This means residents from right across the Parish commenting on any planning applications that seek to challenge the Neighbourhood Plan and not leaving it solely to nearby residents. Together we are stronger! We need to pull together to protect our Neighbourhood Plan for everyone's sake.
6. You may ask, how do we know what planning applications challenge the Neighbourhood Plan? The answer is to keep an eye on the Parish Council's website and look under Planning Updates. If you are unsure about anything, please ask the clerk for answers. It is best to get the facts straight.
7. You may be of the view that Planning Officers at HDC are very inclined to approve any planning applications put before it? Unfortunately, it is true. First HDC get a new homes bonus from the government for every new house that is built. Second HDC cannot afford to defend legal challenges made by developers.

So, in the face of HDC's attitude, what can the Parish Council do in order to support its own Neighbourhood Plan? Well, in the first place, we spend many long hours researching applications and relevant planning policies, we write long, detailed comments on applications, we meet with officers to put forward our views and we write very many letters to HDC. No stone is left unturned.

8. We are very fortunate to have a District Councillor who sits on the Planning Committee North, who liaises with the Parish Council and is prepared to argue against the planning officer's recommendation, which doesn't always go down well at Committee! Sometimes, this leads to refusal of Planning Permission, but not always. The Parish Council always attends these District Council meetings and puts up a councillor to speak before the Committee.
9. Developers usually appeal to the Planning Inspectorate against refusals of Planning Permission since it costs them nothing to do so. Appeals make a lot of work! The Parish Council always submits very long, detailed reasons for

dismissal of these appeals because they are usually challenging the Neighbourhood Plan. In the past, the Parish Council has been successful in getting the appeals dismissed at land on the A281 at Monks Gate and at Church Road, Mannings Heath. Currently, there are as many as five appeals in our Parish awaiting decisions.

10. Finally, it's topical to mention the field behind Millers Mead, even though it's not in the Neighbourhood Plan. Here, five gypsy pitches were refused by HDC and the owner's appeal was dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate. Following the owner's legal challenge in court to that dismissal, a second appeal must now be conducted by the Planning Inspectorate. The Parish Council very much hopes that the appeal will again be dismissed because the same reasons for dismissal still hold true. It will work hard to try and ensure that that happens.
11. I hope that you have heard things tonight that are new to you and also that you have been surprised by the amount of work that the Parish Council does behind the scenes? It works hard to try and ensure that residents' wishes for the Parish to remain a largely rural and pleasant place are respected, by everyone! Thank you very much for listening.