

Dore Neighbourhood Forum

Note of the meeting held on 19th June 2019 (at the Church Hall)

Preamble.

1. The Forum meeting was widely advertised, in Dore to Door delivered to every home in Dore, on the DVS noticeboards and website, on a banner prominently displayed in the village centre and on social media. Before the meeting the draft Plan was displayed on the DVS website, and copies of the Policies were available to pick up at the village greengrocers.
2. There were 24 DVS members present, including some who were representing partners who were also DVS members.
3. Each person present was given an agenda and a copy of the slides to be used during the evening. Copies of a Schedule showing all of the Policies contained within the Plan were circulated.
4. A large version of the Map showing the designated Area of the Dore Neighbourhood Forum was displayed, which Map highlighted in colours the key areas within that designated Area.
5. The presentations during the evening were to be highlighted by the PowerPoint slides. The narrative on those slides outlined the approach adopted and explained any changes made. They would be attached to and form part of the formal minutes of the meeting, and accordingly the narrative on those slides would not be repeated in these Minutes.

Introduction

6. Keith Shaw (KS), as the chairman of the DVS, welcomed those present, noting that the membership of the Forum consisted of DVS members, who were those entitled to be at the meeting.
7. He began by noting that the last meeting of the Forum on 21st March 2018 had approved the Steering Group's proposed Draft Neighbourhood Plan for Dore and the associated proposal to start the formal consultation on it [the Pre-Submission Consultation (P-SC)].
8. He noted that the Steering Group had expected progress thereafter to be reasonably speedy. However, there had been a number of events that had frustrated this belief; and these would be explained this evening.
9. It was as a consequence of these events that the Steering Group had needed to make a number of changes to the approved Draft Plan; and although those changes did not materially affect the underlying approach adopted, nevertheless changes in wording to several of the Policies led the Steering Group to believe that it was right to put this back to the Forum for its confirmation.
10. Delays to our work had been primarily due to the publication of a new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Sheffield City Council's (SCC) delays in publishing its own updated Local Plan.
11. Following the P-SC Consultation exercise, the Steering Group has worked to revise the text of the Plan to take account both of the comments/criticisms received and of some major changes incorporated as a result of changes to the NPPF which were published by Government.
12. The delays arising from these events had been beyond the control of the Steering Group and had been very frustrating; but a revised Plan was now prepared.
13. The purpose of this evening's meeting was to understand the changes made to the revised draft Plan, to approve this revised version and authorise the Steering Group to take the process forward, including with the authority to make non-critical changes to the Plan during this process.
14. KS noted that as the presentations proceeded during the evening, illustrated by the PowerPoint slides, questions would be sought at suitable points.
15. Any initial questions were invited now but there were none.

The Challenges we have faced.

16. Cristopher Pennell (CP), as chairman of the Steering Group, addressed the meeting, noting that there were four drivers that had necessitated changes to the text of the Draft Plan.

17. Firstly, the P-SC comments we received were generally supportive but, importantly, SCC Planners and another planning consultant had made extensive comments and some criticism of aspects of our approach – and we have a legal obligation to respond constructively to what each respondent said.
18. Secondly, the NPPF, which sets out the rule-book for planning, was substantially revised in July 2018 and then again in February 2019, requiring us to re-think our stance on parts of the Dore Neighbourhood Plan (DNP).
19. Also, there has been huge confusion over what housing target the SCC was obliged to aim for: the Government's targets had changed several times.
20. Fourthly, these changes to the targets had contributed to the SCC's delay in publishing its own draft new Sheffield Plan and, in so doing, this has de-stabilised our own planning horizon.
21. The SCC's awaited new Local Plan had first been promised over two years ago. Over the last two years we have been told on several occasions that it was imminent, which led us to delay finalising our DNP so as to be able to reflect the strategic elements of this Plan – something that we are required to do. Interestingly, at a recent SCC Council meeting, it had been stated that it would now be several months before the Local Plan would be published for consultation, meaning that it could not possibly be adopted and come into force for about another two years.
22. All this produces an interesting timing issue for us. The key point is that although producing a Neighbourhood Plan gives a local community some influence over planning matters, nevertheless such a Plan has to be in accord with the Basic Conditions requirement: "to generally conform with the strategic policies of the Local Planning Authority. As a consequence, if we wait until the SCC produces its proposed Local Plan, we will be faced with further significant delay on top of all the delay we have already experienced and we will be obliged to ensure that the DNP provides for as many new homes as the SCC allocates to our Area. That will almost certainly require us to accept heavy infilling to achieve higher density of housing in Dore and the likelihood of Green Belt sites being released for house-building within sight of the National Park
23. However, if we are able to lodge our draft Plan with SCC/PDNPA first, we will have to plan in the absence of specific housing targets (which the SCC have said they are not currently in a position to give us). We will still have to comply with the NPPF in planning for sustainable development, but we will be able to develop sensible constraints on inappropriate housing development in Dore to protect its character and its relationship with the nearby National Park.
24. In particular, we must avoid being obliged to plan for significant house building programmes in the Green Belt and in intensive in-filling within existing Dore housing areas, because of the damage that will do. So our latest version of the Plan seeks to pre-empt the SCC new Plan by laying out a logical and defensible plan for preserving the character of Dore and the landscape value of the Green Belt land between developed Dore and the National Park, while at the same time providing opportunities for acceptable and sustainable house-building.
25. If later, the draft Sheffield Plan is launched in a Reg18 consultation and it proposes inappropriate levels of house-building within developed Dore and on released Green Belt sites, the Dore community will have the democratic right within the consultation process to oppose the proposals if it so wishes.
26. We have nevertheless to be careful that we comply scrupulously with the new NPPF which has swung strongly behind a massive drive to boost the nation's housing stock, while at the same time not losing touch with the clear messages in the Forum's 2015 Vision and Aims.
27. CP then addressed the crucial changes that the Steering Group are recommending, first noting that much of the text is unaltered. These are:
 - To begin with, the document is considerably shorter, principally because we see no need to include a dull recitation of all the relevant NPPF, SCC and PDNPA planning policies at the beginning of each chapter. We have another way of showing that we have taken them into account – in a separate document called the Basic Conditions statement where we demonstrate we have taken account of higher policies with which we must conform.
 - Secondly, we have had to justify our intention to protect the land between Dore Village and the National Park boundary on the basis that it is the natural setting of a National Park and any development would have to be in general compliance with the landscape character assessment produced by the National Park rather than on the blunt grounds that it is Green Belt (because we have no power as a Neighbourhood Forum to guarantee the continuation of the Green Belt status of that land, which is a matter for SCC, although we can make our views known in consultation on the Sheffield draft Plan).

- We have marginally ‘relaxed’ our housing policies to admit of the possibility for some carefully controlled garden development on road frontages and in limited circumstances in rear gardens. It had become clear that our previous wording was simply too harsh!
 - We have had to reduce our target number of Open Space designations to a more realistic figure given the criteria for such designations.
28. CP then invited David Crosby (DC) to enlarge on the changes made to the Policies, but first asked if there were any questions. There were none.

The Planning Policies in the DNP.

29. DC began by demonstrating, from the large Map of the Neighbourhood Area displayed, each of the key areas within the Forum Area. He also noted that approximately 50% of the Area was in the SCC and 50% in the PDNPA.
30. **Policy DN1 (Open Access Land)** was basically addressed at supporting the PDPNA current Policy of not restricting the rights of walkers on footpaths by also doing the same for Open Access land, which formed a large proportion of the PDPNA land within the DNP Area (that part coloured blue on the map). There had been no material change in the wording of this policy.
31. **Policy DN2 (Landscape Sensitivity).** The PDPNA was very concerned that the land immediately adjacent to its boundaries was almost as sensitive as the land within its boundaries. The intention of Policy DN2 was to support this approach. However, we had needed to change the way in which we had presented this, and the wording here was now quite different. Our approach is to stress the need for the protection of that land so as to be in compliance with the landscape character assessment produced by the National Park and the fact that this land is in the setting of a National Park. As CP has mentioned, the creation and the release of Green Belt designations is a matter for a Local Planning Authority, not for us, and they can only do so at the time that they review their Local Plan, ie. now in SCC’s case. So we have not been able to write a policy for the protection of this Green Belt land, but we have made clear in our Plan that the Forum believes that this area of Green Belt admirably fulfils the NPPF purposes for the creation of Green Belt.
32. **Policy DN3 (Green Infrastructure).** This has been retained unchanged, stressing the importance of the valuable green infrastructure which exists in the Green Belt and how it must be cherished.
33. **Policy DN4 (Long Line)** was similarly associated with this principle, where we had defined the “significantly developed frontage”, again to protect views to/from the National Park. The wording is unchanged except for the introduction of the word “only” (“only in the following locations.....”). This will maintain the existing green gaps on Long Line.
34. **Policies DN5 and DN6 (Housing)** now incorporate changes to the previous text. We have had to accept that our previous wording was too restrictive and would not have been judged to be in keeping with the strategic housing requirements for the SCC. We cannot be negative about development without offending the NPPF, so we removed our original “only on an existing footprint” approach, and now state that any development must be adjacent to a highway, either existing or new. So this could allow the creation of a new small cul-de-sac, although not tandem development. In the absence of reliable housing targets specifically for Dore, we have concentrated on:
- describing the current constraints on housing development in Dore.
 - setting out what is distinctive about the character of Dore’s housing area which needs to be protected.
 - stressing the importance of maintaining the mature gardens, which are valued in paragraph 70 of the NPPF, and the tree cover in Dore, which are essential features of a civilised landscape transition from dramatic moorland, across what is Green Belt, over tree-rich Dore, to Ecclesall Woods and beyond.
35. We also wished to encourage the provision of smaller houses, both to meet the needs of down-sizers and other people seeking smaller homes in Dore, rather than the large executive housing so preferred by developers.
36. **DN7 (Open Spaces).** With regard to this Policy, we have had to take note of the reference in the NPPF that “the Local Green Spaces designation will not be appropriate for most green spaces”. We have re-assessed our open spaces against the new criteria and have removed four such spaces. Two (Kings Croft and Whirlow Brook Park) were already protected in other ways; including the Old School Trust Sports Ground could conflict with its charitable status;

and Ash House Lane Playing Fields was not really used by residents but a narrow demographic for football.

37. **DN8, DN9 and DN10 (Village Centre).** These three Policies remain relatively unchanged, with only modest changes on the advice of the SCC. We are trying to strengthen the policies to help preserve retail facilities; although the Government's proposed amendments to permitted rights changes is worrying. DC noted that following the DWELL survey, it would be welcome to have improved pedestrian priority areas in the village, perhaps with wider pavements.
38. In DN 8 we have introduced a new feature which tries to reduce the risk of losing a shop which is "prominent within the centre", by which we mean an 'anchor store' like the Co-op which is vital to maintaining a retail critical mass in Dore.
39. **DN11 (archaeological heritage).** No changes had been made to this policy.
40. **DN12, DN13 and DN14 (Dore Conservation Area).** While the first two policies here are unchanged, DN14 has lost its reference to a local list of buildings of architectural or historic interest because of a technicality over the need to consult on it; but we are seeking to get the need for a list of non-designated heritage assets accepted by the SCC.
41. **DN15 and DN16 (Sustainable Transport).** Nothing has changed fundamentally here, except that we have accepted that the Park and Ride facilities are not a "rail and bus interchange" but just a rail interchange. We would not like to see more traffic coming into Dore to use these facilities unless they are suitably extended without causing new demands which continue the current traffic and parking congestion on nearby roads, which needs to be addressed outside development planning.
42. At this point, there were a number of questions on the Policies:
 - With reference to DN5, it was asked if the Policy would allow a development in a large rear garden if it was serviced by a new cul-de-sac. DC agreed that it would, but only provided that it met all the other criteria in that Policy. But the Policy was specifically designed not to allow tandem development.
 - In response to a further question on this, DC commented that sub-division of a property into apartments would be acceptable but high rise would not, on the basis that any such development needed to reflect the surrounding properties.
 - A question was asked with regard to DN8, and change of use. DC responded that a change of use could not be prohibited; but there would first have to be an extensive marketing exercise to prove that there was not another retail use possibility.
 - The next question was if the SG knew the SCC view with regard to the Green Belt. DC commented that there was pressure on the SCC to release Green Belt but that the last document they released (about Plans until 2034) did not identify releases in our area. We have attempted to strengthen our argument throughout that this Green Belt is simply too sensitive to be developed. CP noted that when the SCC invited sites for development, many were suggested by developers in this area; but the SCC responded that at that time the land was Green Belt and could not be developed, but that the suggestions would be noted as the Green Belt review proceeded. That review has proceeded in confidence and the outcome will only be revealed when the draft Sheffield Plan is published for consultation. We need to be alert for whatever releases might be proposed.
 - The definition of "retail" was requested. DC noted that it included premises such as cafes but not architects or financial advisors.
43. CP then noted that the final section of the Plan included a number of Aspirations. A Neighbourhood Plan can only address planning matters. There are other matters, which nonetheless have some relationships with development planning issues, such as traffic congestion, bus services, environmental improvements, investment in local leisure facilities, etc. We have chosen to cover some of these in a chapter of the Plan called 'Neighbourhood Aspirations' because they have come up in our community consultations. We would hope to pursue these matters separately with the appropriate body on behalf of the community.

The Next Steps

44. CP outlined the process from here onwards, as summarised on the next slide.
 - The SG will finalise the Plan (which is the Community's Plan) with minor textual amendments; and it may also publish the Plan in a re-designed format (but with no alteration to its content).

- We will also have to finalise a huge amount of supporting documentation: a Policies Map, the Basic Conditions Statement, a Consultation Statement and a Library of Evidence.
 - It will then be submitted to the SCC and the PDPNA. We aim to submit a draft by early July; and the SCC will validate that all the necessary documentation is there. Following that confirmation, we will then make the formal submission.
 - Those bodies will then fairly quickly put it out to a formal public consultation where consultees have the opportunity to question whether or not it meets the Basic Conditions for a Neighbourhood Plan.
 - SCC will submit the Plan, together with the public's consultative comments, to an independent Examiner who will scrutinise the Plan to establish that it does fulfil the Basic Conditions by which such plans are judged.
 - As long as it survives that stage – or amended if that is deemed appropriate – SCC arranges a referendum of all Dore electors.
 - If the Plan secures a simple majority in this vote, SCC and PDNPA will embody the DNP within their Local Plans as part of the suite of planning documents which determine whether a planning application is acceptable.
 - The DNP will remain in force until a higher level plan-making body produces an adopted plan which outranks ours. As mentioned earlier, there will be a new Sheffield Plan, but it may well take as long as two years before it passes its consultative process and an Examination process.
45. In response to a question about the referendum, it was stated that it would be a simple question of all residents on the electoral roll either voting yes or no to the Plan; and the responsibility and cost of this was the responsibility of the SCC.

The Forum Votes.

46. David Bearpark addressed the four votes which the meeting needed formally to take. In turn, they were:
- Does the Forum approve the Neighbourhood Plan as currently drafted? All members voted in favour (no-one against and no abstentions).
 - Does the Forum give its delegated authority to the Steering Group to make any necessary minor further textual and presentational changes to the plan and to complete its accompanying documents for Submission in July? All members voted in favour (no-one against and no abstentions).
 - Does the Forum give its delegated authority to the Steering Group to deal with the Local Planning Authorities as the Plan moves through its further steps towards the Referendum? All members voted in favour (no-one against and no abstentions).
 - Does the Forum authorise the Steering Group to prepare and despatch a Dore response to the eventual SCC Reg.18 consultation on the draft Sheffield Plan. All members voted in favour (no-one against and no abstentions), with the proviso that the Forum was consulted on any formal response to the SCC.

Closing Remarks.

47. KS thanked everyone who had contributed to the process to date, either assisting with the Working Groups or providing comments or ideas. He also emphasised the enormous amount of work undertaken by the Steering Group and the contributions of each of its members.
48. He specifically thanked the spouses of the SG members who had, mostly patiently, put up with the amount of time that had been voluntarily spent on this process.
49. During the future stages, members will be kept informed on progress via the DVS website and noticeboards and in Dore to Door. Further comments could always be made via dnp@dorevillage.co.uk.
50. KS noted that the Minutes of this meeting would be placed on the DVS website and a report would appear on the next edition of Dore to Door.
51. KS declared the meeting closed.

David Bearpark
22/06/19

