

Rye - Planning for the Future & Affordable Homes

Separate Meetings with Rother officers on 15 June 2021 and Alliance Homes on 11 August 2021.

Background

Government policy revision: *Planning for the Future*. Concern about impact of White Paper on ability of local communities to influence development as it is expected that *Planning for the Future* will impact on local policy - including the Rye Neighbourhood Plan (RNP). NPs will be supported but there are likely to be changes. An example is “affordable homes” become “First Homes” under transitional arrangements. Conclusion is that Rye should press on using the weight of the RNP until we hear otherwise!

Rother Planning Change of staff at Rother. Rother is revising and updating its Local Plan (Reg 18 consultation in early 2022). Process started with “call for development sites”. Rye submitted comprehensive re-assessment in November 2020. Rother is now looking at 900 across the District - 8 are in Rye but not yet in the public domain. We do not know which ones are outside the allocations in the RNP. Rother has said that all will be assessed in the context of planning policy including NPs. Work will lead to the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA). Rother has reassured that Rye will be consulted.

Housing Numbers Rye has suggested that within the RNP allocation there is potential for higher numbers as the RNP was based on conservative estimates because of achievability and other constraints - such as flood risk and land constraints (protected areas). This will be discussed with Rother later.

Affordable Homes are a priority for Rye. Rye has resubmitted its agreed site assessment of November 2020 as a basis for future discussion.

The Meetings

At each meeting Rye explained its position. The RNP is in force and identifies a series of sites for development. However, nothing in the way of affordable homes is coming forward. The pressure on the local market caused by incomers fuelling demand, second homes, AirBnB and other buy to let means that homes for local people on low incomes are unobtainable.

Alliance Homes (AH) Rye was keen to hear how AH might help. AH is an arm of Rother District formed to stimulate housebuilding in Rother District. It is focused on Rother land but also is building contacts with local developers (incl registered social landlords/providers) to encourage home building, including affordable homes on identified sites across Rother.

AH said that it would work to Rother policy for the delivery of affordable homes in its schemes, including Neighbourhood Plan policy where they exist. AH explained that it was not in a position to land bank because funding had to be borrowed through

Rother District. The intention is to identify sites, plan schemes, propose and then work with builders such as "Registered Providers" and others to deliver.

AH has identified one Rother-owned site in Rye for early development – Cyprus Place, Rye Hire. It intends to work up a planning application for up to 10 units – 4 affordable and, possibly, 6 shared equity (which would prevent them from becoming second homes). The view of RTC (opposition to enforced relocation of Rye Hire) was noted. A suitable alternative location for the business is still being sought – relocation to which might be supported financially by Rother. A briefing for Rye Ward Members on a design proposal (pre planning application) was imminent. AH offered to brief RTC about AH's purpose, objectives etc - and include a discussion about Cyprus Place.

Both meetings included a 'review' of the land around Rye allocated for development in the RNP – including:

Former Tilling Green School (TG) Rye considers this an opportunity for delivering around 20 affordable homes in a convenient location. Issues had been worked through during an earlier (Amicus Horizon – now Optivo) proposal, which had foundered. Rye Partnership has an interest and has not been forthcoming. AH is aware of the situation (and local frustration) and is monitoring developments. It did not rule out working with a partner to deliver an affordable scheme on this site.

Lower School Site Rye explained the background: history of former ESCC school site for homes, supermarket and now housing, in private hands. Outline planning permission obtained - but no sign of development. AH said that it would look at prospects – including attracting the interest of a registered social landlord/provider.

Former School at Freda Gardham Martello has an arrangement with ESCC covering the site. RNP allocates for housing and petrol station with convenience store, but all subject to flood risk mitigation by Eastern Rother Tidal Walls Scheme. Currently a creative centre. Longer term plans unclear.

West and East Winchelsea Road: identified for some development in RNP. Subject to flood risk mitigation. There is one site with planning permission but otherwise no movement.

Other land considered included: Both meetings touched on some unallocated Rye sites and whether they could deliver.

AH asked about *Gibbet Marsh* which Rother owns and provides vital car parking for Rye. Rye explained the background and discussions during the work on the RNP. Any loss of existing parking in Rye would raise demand on GM. It remains unallocated for development.

EA Land by riverside Rye explained the form with EA land, whereby if sold funds go to the Treasury. Therefore, EA very reluctant to dispose. One site is East Rock Channel which is let to Rye Partnership and has been subject to a feasibility study which identified scope for some affordable housing on site – redeveloping accommodation to the north side. Like Tilling Green there has been no

movement. Rye noted the talk of sub-letting of moorings and boat standing for 3rd party management.

Land at top of Udimore Road Placed on to the market by Aroncorps. Has been subject to development proposals by Aroncorps and BP. These failed after appeal and planning inspection. Not allocated in the RNP. Should remain green (gateway) site adjacent to AONB.

On a separate planning issue, Rother has plans to introduce Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points in Rother's own car parks, "sooner rather than later". There has been an internal report with a recommendation, but it was considered that it inadequately addressed some of the issues - especially the costs. Rother has not been able to get any positive proposals from ESCC for on street EV charging. There will be a new Director of Climate Change and Planning at Rother District who will "progress the issues quickly". Rye will be kept informed. Rother will be looking also to add a policy in the new Local Plan (working with ESCC Highways).

Conclusion

These were valuable meetings providing opportunities to reassess development in Rye in the context of the RNP. No matter was caveated and detail would be briefed to RTC.

Rye Town Clerk undertook to host a Zoom meeting for Rye Councillors to talk further with AH about development intentions and specific prospects.

Rother offered pre application advice (officer to officer) in the event of significant development applications in Rye.

We all pledged to keep up the dialogue.

Anthony Kimber PhD
RNP