

Rother Draft Corporate Plan - A Consideration in the context of the Rye Neighbourhood Plan

Rother District Council (RDC) has launched a consultation on its **corporate plan** that outlines its priorities to 2027. This plan is the Rother top level strategy for the future

It should be noted that for some weeks, Neighbourhood Planners have been working with Rye Town Council on various planning policy issues. As a result there are now four specific pieces of work under way. The Rye input to:

- (1) Proposals for improved access for pedestrians and cyclists.
- (2) the revision of the Rother Local Plan in the context of the government's "Planning for the Future";
- (3) the revision of the District's planning process
- (4) the Rother District Corporate Plan.

Progress is below.

Improved Access paper for Cyclists and Pedestrians. A paper was agreed by Rye TC and submitted.

Rother Local (Development) Plan. We commented on "Planning for the Future". We have already reviewed all those development site assessments in the supporting documents of the Neighbourhood Plan, had them endorsed by Rye Town Council and reported back to Rother. The next stage is awaited.

Review of Rother's Planning Process. There is a dialogue with RDC about processes. We have already fed back some points based on our Neighbourhood Planning experience.

Rother Draft Corporate Plan. The focus of this note - the Rother District **corporate plan**, there are ten objectives relating to: Climate emergency; Financial stability; Increase the supply of affordable housing; Housing list reduction; Housing supply; Empowered organisation; A fairer society; Development of Rother's economy; An open council; A town council for Bexhill-on-Sea.

The consultation runs until 17 March. The detail is [here](#). Although the RNP focus is on development, many of the aspects in the Corporate Plan were covered as either aspirations or in the text of the RNP. From the RNP point of view the draft corporate plan prompts a series of questions.

- Climate Emergency: given that we are in the year on COP 26, is the plan ambitious enough? Importantly for Rye, why is flood risk assessment not included, given that Rye (and other coastal parts of Rother District) face all types of flood risk and sea level rise? Is Rother District doing enough with partners to mitigate risks? In work on "green spaces" the Neighbourhood

Plan underscores their importance to Rye; will the work on green spaces include greater protection and enhancement to bio diversity and improved access, which the RNP underscored as important for the community?

- Finance: Post Covid, there is a requirement for a fresh and imaginative consideration of both income streams (particularly business rates, which with rents, which tend to be most of crippling costs for business. What about local services for the vulnerable. Rye Mutual Aid stepped up during Covid; what is the plan for the new normal? Will there be outreach into the rural and more remote areas?
- Affordable Homes. The record is appalling, with developers justifying lack of viability within the rules, to avoid provision. Why are there brownfield development sites owned by ESCC still lying empty, many years after ESCC agreed for disposal? Should there be more encouragement for local Council led schemes? What part are the "not for profit" social housing companies playing in securing larger numbers of social or affordable stock? What part will CIL play? Given that there are rising numbers of second homes and buy to let in places like Rye, how is future housing need going to be calculated? What reflection will there be for the need for starter homes by young local people and smaller homes into which the elderly can downsize?
- Housing Supply. We have written and spoken recently to Rother District (strategists and planners) at length on this, mainly to underscore the importance of the Rye Neighbourhood Plan, which was only agreed by local Referendum in 2019, but also to prompt local action to secure the building of new homes. Despite Rother District not meeting its housing target, we have been reassured about Rother's support for the Plan. Development proposals coming forward are tending to conform to the RNP's allocation, but there is widespread unease about the amount of development land in the hands of one developer and the lack of clarity about longer term proposals. Although Rye needs inward investment, land banking and planning delays need to be addressed. Is Rother doing enough proactively with developers to encourage progress? Should Neighbourhood Planners, who are not as constrained as others in the planning process, be doing more? Is Rother talking to ESCC about the latter's brownfield sites?
- Open (Local) Government: There is a strong feeling in Rye that there should be no return to key decisions affecting the community being taken elsewhere and without detailed local consultation. Elected members should work hard to communicate in a timely fashion and with a clear focus on the interest of Rye.

We trusts that these comments are seen as helpful.

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