

Appendix 6

Fittleworth Neighbourhood Development Plan

Introduction

The public consultation was held in the village hall on 30 and 31 October, and villagers have returned 93 questionnaires. From personal observation, the great majority were from households rather than from couples acting singly. This roughly equates to approaching one quarter of households. Responses, both in person and in writing, were considered, courteous and constructive although this in no way precluded the expression of some strong opinions, and they may reasonably be considered as a fair mirror of village opinion.

Five sites identified in the South Downs National Park Authority’s Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) were presented as options for discussion and the advantages and disadvantages of each presented as objectively as possible. The Neighbourhood Plan working group was deliberately neutral and avoided making any specific recommendations. The sites in question were:

- The Tripp Hill Farmhouse Paddocks (ref CH135)
- Greatpin Croft (ref CH031)
- Land north of the A283 between Sorrels Farm and the junction with School Lane (ref CH034)
- Land at ‘Dunrovin’ at the corner of the Fleet and Limbourne Lane (ref CH033)
- Land at Fleet Cottage (ref CH032)

Findings

79 of the questionnaires returned ranked the sites in the manner requested, although many did not go beyond a second or third option. A further one rejected all the options, and a second felt the need to hear more of the arguments before deciding. In another 12 cases, respondents did not fully indicate the ranking of their chosen sites and where necessary these have had to be treated as fractional votes, for example: 2 half votes for two first choices or 3 one-third votes for three second choices, etc.

Tripp Hill / Lower Horncroft (ref CH135)

The option presented

To develop the site with six or more properties. Development is favoured by the owner, but past positions of the SDNPA appeared to have been contradictory. The site was significantly outside the Fittleworth settlement area and without a bus route or continuous pavement to any of the village amenities, not least the school. Traffic calming measures would be a prerequisite at Tripp Hill, which was already an accident blackspot.

The questionnaire result

13 fully completed questionnaires gave this option as their first choice, none of them from Tripp Hill/Lower Horncroft. 4 gave it as their second choice, 4 as their third choice, 5 as their fourth choice

and 3 as their fifth choice.

Comment

The main reason given by respondents for choosing this option was the assumed absence of the drainage problems which were a major concern for most of the options in the village itself, particularly CH033. The option was also thought to be less likely to generate additional traffic on The Fleet/Upper Street. One respondent, however, made the provocative suggestion that Tripp Hill could benefit from sufficient development to create the focus of what would effectively be a new village. 3 others, however, firmly opposed the option on the grounds that it would spoil the landscape and be unsustainable, being too far from the village centre. Another foresaw the need for traffic control. The current approach of the SDNPA cannot be known in the absence of a planning application. Tripp Hill residents might well oppose development, however, seeing it as a precedent for ‘creeping development’ of the western side of the B2138.

Greatpin Croft (ref CH031)

The option presented

To redevelop the garages on site, which were too small for modern needs, with affordable housing for assisted purchase or rent. Up to 6 small units might be possible but redevelopment would be dependent on the priorities of Hyde Housing Association’s capital programme.

The questionnaire result

30 fully completed questionnaires gave this option as their first choice, 5 of them from Greatpin Croft itself. 17 gave it as their second choice, 6 as their third choice, none as their fourth choice and 3 as their fifth choice.

Comment

This option provoked little controversy, but one response urged: “no more flats, but a mix of small houses and bungalows for young families and the elderly”, partly to release larger properties. Another, from a Greatpin Croft resident, agreed no more flats, but proposed the demolition of some of the present bungalows and their replacement with 10–12 two/three-bedroom family houses. A third speculated on the potential of the allotment site.

More generally, the option appeared to receive support because it was within the settlement area, was away from the problems of the A283, and held out no risk of creeping development.

Land north of the A283 between Sorrels Farm and the junction with School Lane (ref CH034)

The option presented

To develop the southern strip of the field, which the owner was keen to sell, with up to 20 houses, as many as possible of them affordable. The site was close to village amenities, the development would be extensively screened with new tree planting, and a roundabout provided at the top of School Lane for access, with traffic calming benefits. It was, however, recognised that the risk of ‘creeping development’ would be high and the initial informal response of the SDNPA landscape officer had been unfavourable on both historic and landscape grounds.

The questionnaire result

12 fully completed questionnaires gave this option as their first choice, 2 of them from The Fleet/Upper Street. 14 gave it as their second choice, 3 as their third choice, 5 as their fourth choice and 4 as their fifth choice.

Comment

This was the only option to generate serious opposition, with the 12 first choices being balanced by 11 who rejected it as opening the way to “creeping development”. One described the option as a “disaster”, and even many of its supporters made their support conditional on an enforceable guarantee against subsequent development. The site nevertheless remains the only one of the options large enough to provide the mixed development sought by a number of respondents and to provide a significant number of affordable homes.

Land at ‘Dunrovin’ at the corner of the Fleet and Limbourne Lane (ref CH033)

The option presented

To develop the site, which the owner was willing to sell, with 6 or more properties. The impact on landscape would be limited and traffic calming measures might be possible. The site was, however, extremely wet, requiring extensive drainage improvements not only on site but on the receiving watercourse down to the river.

The questionnaire result

16 fully completed questionnaires gave this option as their first choice, 5 of them from The Fleet/Limbourn Lane area. 10 gave it as their second choice, 8 as their third choice, 4 as their fourth choice and 4 as their fifth choice.

Comment

This option provoked no opposition and enjoyed quite wide support in principle, as being of an appropriate size and close to village amenities. Development might also lead to welcome traffic calming measures on The Fleet. On the other hand, local residents in particular were extremely conscious of the site’s high water table and the essential nature of flood relief works prior to any development, which could prove to be prohibitively expensive.

Fleet Cottage (ref CH032)

The option presented

To develop the site with six, or slightly more, properties. Although the impact on the environment would be limited, the site was outside, although adjacent to, the current settlement boundary. It was also recognised that highway works would be required to avoid creating a potentially dangerous junction.

Nevertheless, the site remained in private ownership and might not become available during the 15-year life of the Plan.

The questionnaire result

8 fully completed questionnaires gave this option as their first choice, 3 of them from The Fleet. 22 gave it as their second choice, 10 as their third choice, 4 as their fourth choice and 2 as their fifth choice.

Comment

This option also provoked no opposition, although there were some drainage implications. The high proportion of second and third, rather than first, choice votes probably reflected awareness that the site might not become available within the 15-year Plan period. One respondent pointed out in its favour that development here would have no impact on the skyline, but stressed the importance of good design in view of the backdrop of the common, suggesting that chalet style housing would be particularly appropriate.

An alternative proposal

8 of the fully completed questionnaires also proposed moving the recreation ground and facilities to the site north of the A283, either in whole or in part, and developing the recreation ground for housing. Some suggested that the present sports association building could then be converted into a shop. Several mothers at the consultation, however, opposed the idea as their young children would have to cross the A283 to reach it.

Comment

The attitude of the village as a whole is not known. Although any new housing would be at the core of the village, it could give that core an urban (or suburban) feel, and the village would lose its nearest approach to a village green with an attractive view of Fittleworth common as its backdrop. One respondent believed that the parish council was not permitted to alienate the present recreation ground under the terms of the deeds.

The SDNPA has not, as yet, been consulted.

Summary of option preferences including fractional votes

Site	1st choice	2nd choice	3rd choice	4th choice	5th choice
Tripp Hill / Lower Horncroft	$13\frac{5}{6}$	$14\frac{1}{2}$	$4\frac{1}{2}$	5	3
Greatpin Croft	$36\frac{1}{6}$	17	6	—	3
Land N of A283	13	$13\frac{1}{2}$	3	5	4
Land at the corner of the Fleet and Limbourne Lane	$16\frac{2}{3}$	$10\frac{1}{2}$	$8\frac{1}{2}$	4	4
Fleet Cottage	$9\frac{1}{2}$	$23\frac{1}{2}$	11	5	2