

Planning turned upside down!

On 17th July the Parish Council and Loxwood Society held a village public meeting at the school to discuss the possibility of building 8 to 10 Affordable Houses in Loxwood. Since then the planning regime has been turned upside down. In the opinion of the Loxwood Society, this has completely changed the position of the goal posts. In fact, we don't know where they are any more! So what has happened? The answer is two new policies have been published, one at the national level and one at the local level.

You will have heard about the government's Draft National Planning Policy Framework, published on the 25 July 2011 with a 12-week consultation period. It replaces the 1000 or so pages of planning policy and guidance and is intended to simplify planning policy. It is 58 pages long. The government claims that you will no longer need a planning lawyer to untangle the web of planning policy. A laudable aim but we were not expecting a complete change of emphasis to a "presumption in favour of development".

We quote from the policy framework:

"At the heart of the planning system is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan making and decision taking. Local planning authorities should plan positively for new development, and approve all individual proposals wherever possible" So what is "sustainable"? The policy framework defines it in 3 ways. We again quote.

1. "Planning for prosperity (an economic role) – use the planning system to build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type, and in the right places, is available to allow growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure
2. Planning for people (a social role) – use the planning system to promote strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing an increased supply of housing to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a good quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and supports its health and well-being; and
3. Planning for places (an environmental role) – use the planning system to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment, to use natural resources prudently and to mitigate and adapt to climate change, including moving to a low-carbon economy."

Clear as mud! Any competent planning consultant or lawyer would be able to claim that a particular development was sustainable and the planning Authority would be hard pressed to refute the claim in a way that a Planning Inspector would uphold at appeal.

The National Trust and the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England are taking issue with the thrust of the policy framework and it will be interesting to see if they are successful in changing its emphasis.

Now lets look at the local level.

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Join our Focus group

The Loxwood Society likes to keep people informed of important events in the village and particularly those that impact on the development, quality of life and environment. We do this by the use of our AGM and the Newsletter which is circulated to most residents in the village.

However on several occasions we need to get information to the village quickly but also to get feed back as to people's opinions on matters of interest. A recent example was the intention of the Canal Trust to build a visitor centre close to the Onslow Arms. There were many conflicting views expressed and it would have been valuable to have sampled the views of a large number in the population in making representations to the Canal Trust.

The Society would like to form a focus group of people who could be contacted quickly by email when opinions are required or hot news needs to be disseminated.

As you will see from the article in the Newsletter on development we are likely to need many opinions in the future.

If you would like to join such a group please send an email to the Co-Chairman of the Loxwood Society, Len Milsom, at milsomle@waitrose.com This will not involve you in any meetings; we just want to give you news and seek your views.

On the 20 July 2011, Chichester District Council (CDC) issued a new Policy Statement on Housing. The policy statement was driven by the fact that CDC were not meeting the required 5 year housing supply figures. In the absence of an up to date Local Plan, they felt vulnerable to demands to grant planning permission for sites that would otherwise be inappropriate.

The CDC solution to this was to "facilitate appropriate development" by changing where houses could be built. Currently, within a village or town Settlement Policy Area (SPA), there is a presumption to permit development. Outside the SPA, there is a strong presumption against development. The Policy statement changes these "presumptions" such that development will also be permitted on sites which are **adjacent** to a village or town SPA.

In order to qualify for development, a site adjacent to the SPA must be "sustainable" and meet defined criteria, but in essence, these criteria are very similar to existing Local Plan policies. In addition, the development must be deliverable promptly and for the villages in the North East part of the District, limited to about 15 houses per site.

There are a number of sites in the village, which can now be potentially built upon, whereas before CDC issued the Policy Statement, these sites could not be developed.

So where does this all leave Loxwood? The public meeting at the school gave the Loxwood Society and the Parish Council a mandate to further investigate the suitability of sites within the village for development of 8 to 10 affordable houses.

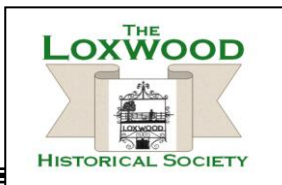
After very considerable deliberation, the Society has come to the conclusion that it would be inappropriate at this time to actively promote any particular site for affordable homes. Under the new planning regime, we simply could not predict which new sites would come forward for development and what the outcome would be. In the next five years, it is possible that we will get more open market development, which will deliver more affordable houses under the requirement that 40% of the houses built must be affordable.

The Society will keep its ear to the ground and be prepared to be as proactive as possible to get the maximum benefit for the village from any development which might take place.

In the meantime, in order that the village has a voice on what is built and where, we will actively start work on a Community Led Plan, which will enable the village to define how it sees itself in the future. The Society believes that this is the only way that we will be able to exert any form of influence over the outcomes for the village in the future. We will be able to incorporate in the Plan the need for affordable houses for people with a proven local connection to the village. This will then lead to a Neighbourhood Plan, which can be adopted as local Supplementary Planning Guidance by Chichester District Council. Once adopted we hope that it will be of huge benefit in ensuring that our vision of the future Loxwood will come to fruition.

We would like help with this undertaking as it involves a lot of work. We work in a relaxed and comfortable atmosphere and it does not have to be a big commitment.

For details, please contact either Tony Colling or Len Milsom. Our telephone numbers are on the top of this newsletter.



On Saturday 17th September the Loxwood Historical Society held an 'Images of Loxwood' exhibition at North Hall.

The Society was formed over two years ago with the objective of collating information on the history of the village and surrounding area for the benefit of present and future generations.

Since the formation of the Society two years ago we have collected over 500 images connected with the village. These include old photographs of people and places, newspaper cuttings, paintings and maps. Many of these were displayed at North Hall in the exhibition.

One of our keys aims is to make all of the information we have available to all through an interactive website where anyone can search through our archives on-line and we are raising funds for this purpose.

We had over 100 visitors on the day and we'd like to thank everyone who attended, bought prints, went on the guided walk or became a member. Through a combination of these, plus bar and refreshment sales we were thrilled to have raised over £300 for the Society.

If you would like any more information about us please feel free to contact me or if you would like to become a member of the Loxwood Historical Society please contact our Membership Secretary, Wendy Andrews (e-mail and phone numbers below).

Antony Loader

Chairman, Loxwood Historical Society

Contact details:

Wendy Andrews (Membership Secretary)

Tel: 01403 752170

E-Mail: wendy.n.andrews@googlemail.com

Antony Loader (Chairman)

Tel: 07740 096837

E-Mail: antony_loader@yahoo.co.uk

Update On the Canal Bridge Parapets

The project to change the parapets on the canal bridge from ghastly motorway standard steel to a more appropriate brick faced design continues with a significant proportion of the funds having been raised.

The contractor which is favoured by the Wey and Arun Canal Trust is being assessed by West Sussex Highways as it has not been used by the county before.

And the necessary documentation is in the final stages of completion at WSCC to allow the construction to proceed.

However more funds are required before construction can actually start and this, dear reader, is where you can assist without it costing you a penny.

The Canal trust have applied for a grant from Natwest Community Force which has started to run an annual event whereby all the applications are displayed on the website and people are asked to vote for their favourite causes. The three causes which get the most votes in their region win a grant. Voting takes place online and will continue until 23 October.

***So this is where we need your help
and the help of all your friends and family***

Please go to

<http://communityforce.natwest.com> and put "Loxwood" in the search slot. A map of the local area will indicate a symbol close to Loxwood which on clicking will give you a summary of the project. Click "read more" and a new page gives you the opportunity to register and then vote. All this will cost you nothing other than a little patience.



The Canal Trust is publicising this through various newsletters and hopefully with their member's support and Loxwood resident's efforts the rebuilding of the parapets will come closer.