

## **WITHDRAWAL OF DRAFT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN – Background Paper.**

1. Waverley have made it clear that they need an answer by 26<sup>th</sup> May as to our intentions re the draft Neighbourhood Plan (see attached email).  
Otherwise they will proceed to incur time and costs taking it to the next stage. The draft Plan still has to undergo an independent examination and pass a village referendum. If it fails, the whole process has to go back to the beginning.
2. A parish council is not obliged to have a neighbourhood plan. Some villages have decided not to have one; and some have omitted site allocations for new development. The parish council, with the support of the village, determined that we should have a Plan. However, it is important that the Plan includes site allocations which are sustainable and deliverable, and have the support of local people. The choice is NOT between a flawed Plan and no Plan.
3. Once adopted, a Plan is a “material consideration” in considering planning applications. It is not conclusive however. And if we stipulate a certain number of houses for a site this does not bind the developer or the planning authority (as the recent example of North Gratton Chase amply demonstrates).
4. Although the whole process has taken several years, the previous parish council rushed it through in its “final” version just before the recent elections. The national guidance is very clear that a council should not make “controversial” decisions during a pre-election period. And there are serious substantive and procedural questions about the process by which they arrived at the latest draft.
5. It is clear that the new parish council CAN withdraw the draft Plan, revisit it and (if appropriate) make changes. This is certainly the position taken by Waverley. The review process can be as comprehensive as we wish to make it. But it would be unsustainable for the Council to allow the Plan in its present form to progress when a majority (at least) of the Council do not believe in it.
6. A review is especially important in light of two recent developments – the announcement that almost the whole village should be included in the new boundary of the Surrey Hills AONB, and the clear Decision of the Inspector refusing permission for development on North Gratton Chase. Surprisingly, neither of these was properly addressed in the Plan submitted to Waverley.
7. At both recent planning appeals (which I attended and addressed) – Chennels Field and North Gratton Chase – the developers’ lawyers sought to rely on the draft Plan to justify development on those sites.
8. The Sigma application for 53 houses at Coombebury Cottage will come up for consideration by Waverley shortly. It is true that this site does not feature in the draft Plan. But these developers will no doubt seek to rely on the draft Plan, envisaging as it does new development on the site just next door. And I understand that the would-be developer of North Gratton Chase will shortly submit a new application for 14 houses.
9. In short, far from protecting the village, the current draft Plan opens the

door to developers. It seems that neither the parish council nor the steering group considered the consequences of the site selection.

10. Comparisons have been made with Alfold. They are in a wholly different situation. Alfold has suffered from Waverley not being able to demonstrate it can meet its 5 year “target”. These top/down targets are currently being reviewed by Government. And the Inspector on North Gratton Chase stated that “good progress” had been made on achieving the Waverley 5 year target. In addition, it is not proposed to include Alfold in the AONB – an additional protection which will be available to Dunsfold.
11. Finally, it was clearly the intention of the previous council in its final days to place the draft Plan out of the reach of the new council. This is unacceptable on a number of levels. Three colleagues and I campaigned in clear terms on four principles – one of which was to revisit the draft Neighbourhood Plan. The clearcut result of the election shows that this commanded much support from villagers. It would get the new council off to a very bad start if we were to renege on that promise.

NCW  
19/5/2023