

Lingfield Neighbourhood Plan

Statement from the Chair of the Steering Group – Cath Hearnden

Issued 5 September 2018

This is an update for Lingfield residents and businesses about the current position of the Neighbourhood Plan and how it relates to the Draft Tandridge Local Plan which is in its final consultation stage.

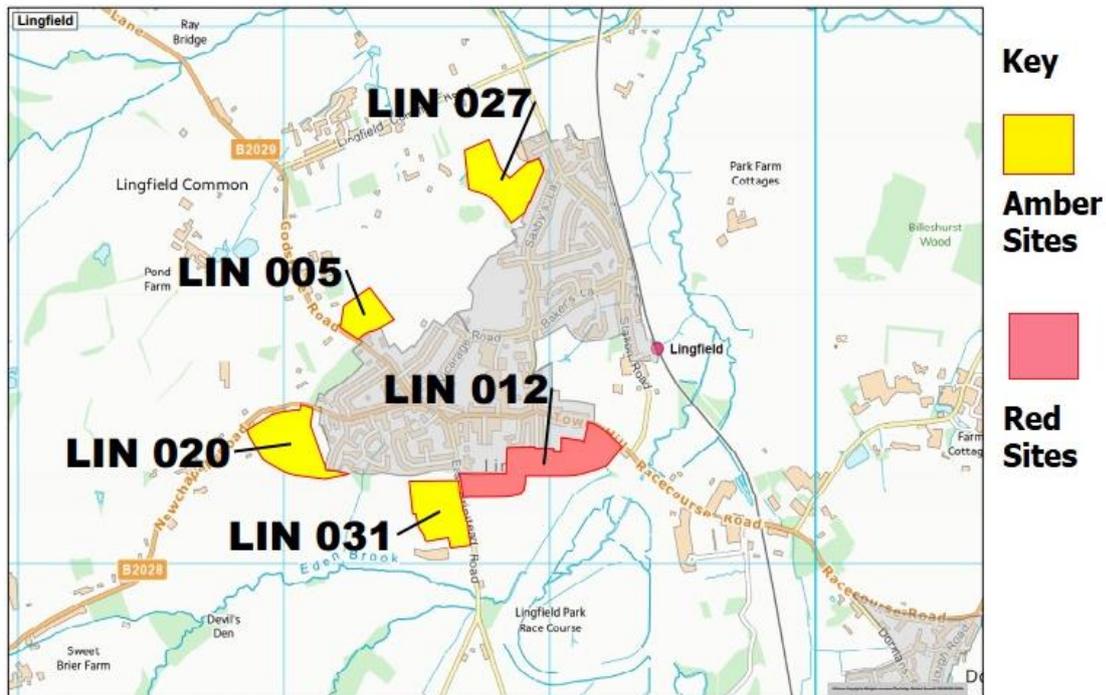
Just to remind you, a Neighbourhood Plan can have planning policies which are very specific to its area and ours is the Lingfield Parish area. Once the Plan is ready for its own public consultation, it will be presented to you by the Parish Council. A huge majority of the work has been done by residents from the locality in their spare time. Through a range of household surveys and open days, the key issues for the parish have been identified and planning policies have been sketched out to try to address some of these issues. This has taken a while as we have had to fit it into our busy lives and many of the original volunteers have dropped by the way-side, making a bigger workload for the few of us who are left. Please get in touch via our website if you would like to come forward to help with the final push.

A Neighbourhood Plan must be positive about development and if things go our way, we should be able to direct where any new housing should go and specify what type of housing and the infrastructure that must go with it. Any proposals would be based on the results of the questionnaire surveys and public meetings where you have told us what you would like to see, mainly ensuring people with a local connection find the right houses and the infrastructure are the key priorities. The Council can allocate a housing target for the village and a Neighbourhood Plan can't prevent all development but it should be able to specify housing types and sites. Unfortunately, despite the Steering Group keeping the council up to date with where they are in the process, the Star Fields was a very unexpected and unwelcome choice by the council.

We have brought in specialist Neighbourhood Planning consultants to help direct the work we are doing and have tried to keep this to the minimum as it can be expensive but the company we have used is very successful with this type of work¹. Key advice from them has been to ensure the Neighbourhood Plan is in conformity with the emerging Tandridge Local Plan and the new National Planning Policy Framework (2018) and not rush to finish before the Local Plan is published, so we can ensure it dovetails into the new Local Plan. Therefore, the delay in finalizing the plan, on the consultant's advice, is so we won't need to rewrite the policies, but have time to ensure they are fully compliant.

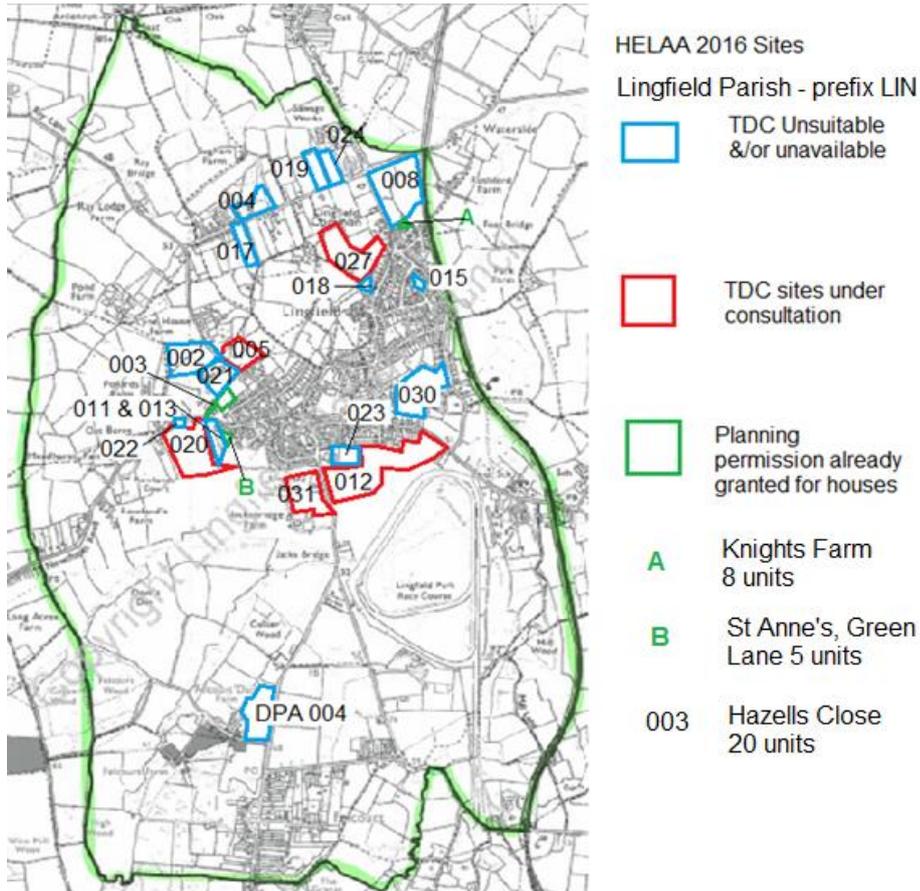
¹ O'NeillHomer <http://www.oneillhomer.co.uk/>. The cost so far is £13,378, of which £6,300 was from government grant funding, the remainder in the amount of £7,078 was Parish Council funds. Any future spending is proposed to be covered largely from central government funding.

One of the pieces of work we have undertaken (November 2016) was to look at the Sites in the Tandridge Sites Consultation and try to work out if any would be suitable for Lingfield, bearing in mind the evidence we had collected regarding housing needs through household surveys and at previous public meetings.

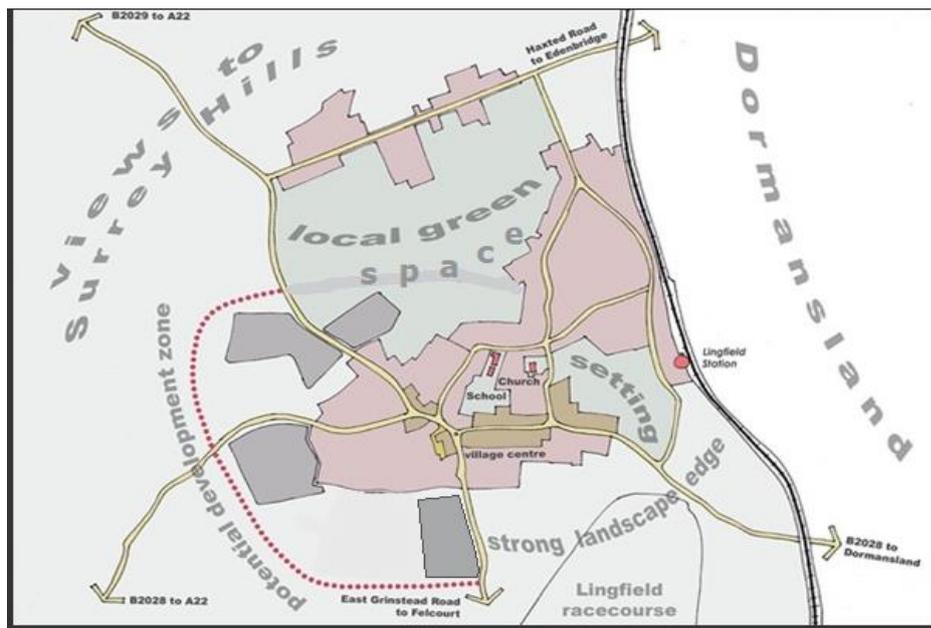


Lingfield Sites Consultation Nov - Dec 2016

Using the sites put forward for the Tandridge Sites Consultation (November – December 2016) and comparing these to all the other sites which were not being considered (see HELAA 2016 map below) the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group sifted the sites, ruling out those which would impact the key views out and into the village, which would impact the Conservation Area and the public open spaces, including the ecologically important Nature Reserve and were in the flood risk zone. These were all presented at the public open day on the 26th November 2016.



Supported by resident's views, but mostly on planning evidence, the sites that would generate the least harm to Lingfield and that had the greatest potential to deliver infrastructure were in the broad zone from the west of the Godstone Road through to the east of the East Grinstead Road. This is indicated by the red dotted line on the concept map below.



Concept Map for Lingfield (from planning consultants, rCOH, now O'NeillHomer)

Our Housing Needs Survey in 2016 found that there are families who would like to buy or rent privately but can't afford the local house prices; Neighbourhood Plans are best placed to provide this sort of housing at less than the current 80% market value and are available at capped prices for people with a local connection forever. We are working proactively to see if this can be done.

The other aspect we are working on is ensuring that any new development blends into the village and causes minimal impact on the openness and the views. This can be done with carefully controlling building heights and spacings.

Coincidentally the Sites Consultation documents had this to say about the potential for new housing in Lingfield ²:

Constraints to development

Lingfield is encircled by floodplain to the north, east and south. These landscapes are generally open in character and highly constrained by potential flooding such that they are unsuitable for new development.

Land to the west offers the only potential direction for growth, although development to the west would lead to a sprawling settlement pattern unrelated to the existing village centre.

The central area of small pastoral fields which sit between Lingfield and Lingfield Common have a dense and well used public footpath network that afford a high degree of landscape and visual amenity to the area. This would be significantly affected or lost by development in the central area. Loss of amenity and the potential loss of openness of the area are significant constraints to development in this area.

The landscape character of land to the west is more suited to accepting development, given a well-developed landscape structure area. However the landscape is a relatively uniform parcel of agricultural land where there are no obvious or significant features on which to base new and robust settlement boundaries.

However, the one site identified by Tandridge for the new Local Plan is one of the sites that residents wanted to keep untouched, is the Star Fields (or sometimes called the Hop Gardens). More than 60% of the site is inside the Conservation Area and has a well-used public footpath between the station and the village.

What is even more surprising is this site was **ruled out by Tandridge as “unsuitable”** in the 2016 Sites Consultation because of its importance to the setting of the Conservation Area and the many Listed Buildings and structures within it.

The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group immediately acted to try to get this site taken out of the Local Plan by meeting the Head of Strategic Planning in late June. They are now wholeheartedly supporting the Parish Council in opposing this site. Inconsistencies in how this site was ruled back into the plan make this appear to be

² Landscape and Visual Assessment Concept Areas (2016)
<https://www.tandridge.gov.uk/Portals/0/Documents/Planning%20and%20building/Planning%20strategies%20and%20policies/Local%20plan/Evidence%20base%20and%20technical%20studies/Landscape-and-Visual-Assessment-Concept-Areas-2016.pdf>

an irrational choice and in planning terms an “unsound” and not “legally compliant” allocation.

Undoubtedly the other sites are unpopular, especially LIN 005, 012 and 027, because of their value to residents. Two sites which could have been looked at more closely but were rejected arbitrarily and unsoundly are LIN 031 and 020. With thoughtful design and layout, they could provide the Neighbourhood Plan the opportunity to work with the owners and developers to ensure that the village gets what it wants and needs.

Our Housing Needs Survey in 2016 found that there are families who would like to buy or rent privately but can't afford the local house prices; Neighbourhood Plans are best placed to provide this sort of housing at much less than the current 80% market value, in perpetuity for people with a local connection.

We urge you to find time to send in your comments to Tandridge if you agree with our concerns. There is a set of Guidelines on the Lingfield Parish Council and Lingfield Neighbourhood Plan websites which you can download and use as much or a little as you need.

Send your comments to localplan@tandridge.gov.uk or post/deliver to

Local Plan Council Offices Station Road East Oxted RH8 0BT

By 5pm on Monday 10th September

The Parish Council is holding a public meeting to encourage you to comment and there is a Star Fields Action Group (STAG) to help coordinate opposition. They will be there at the public meeting as well.

Public Meeting Wednesday 5 September at 7.30 pm Lingfield Church

The TDC website for the Our Local Plan 2033 documents

<https://www.tandridge.gov.uk/Planning-and-building/Planning-strategies-and-policies/Local-Plan-2033-emerging-planning-policies/Draft-Local-Plan>

Lingfield Parish Council and Lingfield Neighbourhood Plan websites for the guidelines

<http://www.lingfieldparishcouncil.gov.uk> www.lingfield.info

Star Fields Action Group has also been set up as an additional way to support the removal of Star Fields from the Local Plan and will be at the public meeting as well.

Star Fields Action Group (STAG) website www.starfields.info

Please do submit your comments, the number of comments shows you all care enough even if you only send in a short response.

It does make a difference if the Inspector sees that lots of people really do care about their communities.