

# Tenterden Green Space Steering Group

## Notes on meeting at Ashford B C Civic Centre: Sept. 17<sup>th</sup> 2018

### **Present:**

Simon Cole: ABC, Head of Planning Policy  
Richard Masefield  
Siggi Nepp  
Graham Smith  
Cllr. John Crawford

### **Background**

Following ABC's Open Space Strategy document of 2017 (in which the Borough undertook to work in partnership with parish and town councils to maintain and improve the existing provision of open space), Richard characterised the Tenterden Green Space Steering Group as being formed in May 2018, with the encouragement of Tenterden Town Council, as a representative group of residents and local organisations concerned for the potential loss of remaining green space in or around the town.

Following a five-month study, the Steering Group has concluded that the provision within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) of statutory Local Green Space designation represents the only realistic means by which a local community can hope to protect green spaces judged as vital to its wellbeing. After evaluating eight such sites in Tenterden against criteria specified in the NPPF, the Group has further concluded that while all eight potentially qualify for Local Green Space designation, all are also at immediate or eventual risk of development.

In order to work in partnership with the Borough Council to produce evidence which supports the proposed Ashford Local Plan (currently in draft form and anticipated being adopted in February 2019) and also offers statutory protection to Local Green Space, the Steering Group has further understood that a Neighbourhood Plan for Tenterden, specifically focused on green space, is the only means by which such evidence can be assembled, inspected and adopted. (Quote from the NPPF: *'Local communities through local and neighbourhood plans should be able to identify, for special protection, green areas of particular importance to them.'*)

Richard stated that, following the presentation of the above to town residents on Sept. 29<sup>th</sup>, and consultation with them, the Steering Group envisaged a further presentation to Tenterden Town Council to recommend the formation of a new Council-led neighbourhood planning group employing one or more professional consultants.

### **Ashford Borough Council involvement, support and the Plan Process**

Simon Cole confirmed that long-term statutory protection for designated local green spaces could only effectively be achieved through a selective Neighbourhood Plan. Without a need to revisit the housing and infrastructure strategies outlined in the Ashford Local Plan, such a Plan would have to be evidence-based, robustly argued and tested through consultation. Simon believed it could qualify for a Locality funding grant (of up to £9,000) and, considering the work already undertaken, might be completed within 18 months of an initial application for Neighbourhood Area status. For the sake of simplicity he advised that the neighbourhood area should include the entire parish, although work on potential designation would be likely to involve an area closer to the town centre.

Casting himself as a 'critical friend' of the enterprise, Simon agreed to review an outline of the Plan for its scope and content prior to its presentation to Tenterden Town Council. He also recommended contact with ABC Open Space Planning Development Officer, Emma Powell, for additional guidance.

The formal stages of Neighbourhood Plan progression were recorded by Simon Cole as:

- 1) Application to ABC for Neighbourhood Area Status. To be submitted by the Tenterden Town Clerk following a resolution by the Town Council. An ABC consultation period of 6-weeks would follow this application.
- 2) First draft of the Plan (as specified in Regulation 14) including factual evidence and informal consultation – submitted to ABC and again followed by a 6-week ABC consultation period.
- 3) Final version of the Plan with all supporting evidence (Regulation 16) submitted to ABC for a further 6-week consultation.
- 4) Following consultation, the appointment by ABC of an independent examiner to scrutinise the plan. (In the event of objections, the examiner can call for a public hearing to debate the issues.)
- 5) Following a positive report by the examiner, a public referendum to be organised by ABC to formally accept or decline the Plan.
- 6) Assuming a further positive result, adoption of the Plan and automatic statutory protection for designated sites.

Although most information can be submitted digitally, some hard copies of the Plan might be required along the way.

## **Discussion**

Discussion involved the question of whether local green space designated in the Plan should be protected from development in its entirety or could or should allow for some development whilst protecting the remainder of the site. Siggie Nepp suggested that at present the TDRA would be bound to object to any development of greenfield sites which weren't already designated for development in the current Ashford Local Plan.

The potential to discuss matters affecting green sites with land owners or their agents was also raised. John Crawford stated that there is an existing resolution of the Town Council not to deal directly with developers. Simon Cole outlined the risks of either an inflexible approach to larger sites on the one hand, or too flexible an attitude on the other. Richard supposed that ongoing references to neighbourhood planning on the Town Council's website might clarify the parameters of the study as it developed. The appointment of a specialist planning consultant to advise the working group might be an advantage.