

Planning Update

with Margaret Howell
Battle Town Councillor

Battle Neighbourhood Plan
Your monthly update

Battle Neighbourhood Plan

Last month the Steering group submitted the Screening Option Form to Rother District Council. They then consulted for a period of five weeks with Natural England, English Heritage and the Environment Agency. We have now had their response, as a result of which we have to submit a Strategic Environmental Assessment. This was not entirely unexpected, as the civil parish is within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Sustainability Appraisal (SA) are vital tools to improve both Local and Neighbourhood Plans, making them more sustainable and responsive to their environmental effects.

But they can be a daunting process (which is why we have retained the services of a professional consultant), given their complexity and need for robustness when challenged at enquiry (and in the courts).

We aim to increase the quality of analysis in these assessments by finding a sharper focus in the various tasks with better ways of analysing and presenting information.



It is important that developers, lawyers and the wider public have faith in SEA's and SA's, and takes them seriously, not seeing them as a tick-box exercise. When done properly, SEA's and SA's are integral to delivering a good plan and a good development. It is therefore worth investing in an expert submission to get them right.

Our consultant, as I said earlier, is preparing this document, and it will then be submitted to Rother District Council for further consideration.

For the future, we are also looking at the Building Appearance and Architectural Quality, as the visual component in people's enjoyment of their habitat and environment. Battle is a rural area, and

what might pass in a town or more built up area could well be at conflict with the expectations of the populace in this outstanding rural environment.

High architectural quality, beauty and inspiration, and the clear following through of an architectural vision in material and detailing will be expected regardless of building style. However, there may be some instances where, due to particular sensitivities of a site and the nature of the development, the design approach may need to respect more closely the local vernacular in terms of construction and materials. Having said that, we hope new developments will meld in with present buildings, without presenting too much of a visual challenge!

You will find further information on our website: battleneighbourhoodplan.co.uk. Our email address for information etc is: enquiries@battleneighbourhoodplan.co.uk. May I put in a plea that residents use this email address, and not the addresses of individual councillors please. PS. We are aiming to have the public site options consultation event on Saturday 27th April.