

## Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan: Monitoring Report, April 2021

The Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan (RNP), developed over the period 2011-2014, but formally adopted only by Lewes DC in 2016, covers the period from 2010 to 2030. The adopted Lewes Local Plan covers the same time period.

The RNP links to the Lewes Local Plan part 1, which requires the delivery in Ringmer of a total of 385 new homes (policy SP2). A strategic site (110 homes) and a site carried forward from the 2003 Local Plan (Caburn Field, 40 homes) are included in the total. The remaining Ringmer sites were allocated via the Ringmer Neighbourhood Plan.

The 385 new homes were considered by the inspector examining the Lewes Local Plan part 1 as the maximum deliverable in Ringmer **provided that** improvements were carried out at Earwig Corner. These improvements are due to be completed in Summer 2021. The Inspector dismissed developer proposals for additional housing in Ringmer on the grounds that the local road infrastructure (specifically Earwig Corner and the route thence to Lewes and the A27 at Southerham) could not accommodate the additional traffic that would be generated.

The 385 new homes would add just under 20% to the pre-existing number of homes in Ringmer parish (just under 2,000 in 2011).

**Review period:** The end of 2020-1 marks the half way point in the period covered by the Local and Neighbourhood Plans.

**Delivery:** Delivery of new housing was, however, always expected to be lumpy. Very little new development was approved, in Ringmer or in the District, in the period up to 2016. However, after the adoption of the Plans there was, undesirably but not unexpectedly, a large rush of new development. Attempts in the RNP to phase development in Ringmer were largely emasculated at the examination stage.

Thus actual housing delivery in Ringmer has been [details attached in Excel file]:

New homes 2010-2016	28 new homes (including 4 affordable)	Average 4 per year
New homes 2017-2020	63 new homes (including 10 affordable)	Average 16 per year
Now building in 2021	231 new homes, all planned for delivery in 2021/2	

This will pose an interesting marketing challenge in the immediate future.

**Affordable housing:** RNP policy 6.2 envisaged a minimum of 80 new affordable homes in Ringmer over the RNP period. Although only 14 such homes have been delivered to date, this target is very likely to be met, and will probably be exceeded by 50%.

**Overall RNP Strategy:** The RNP was employment led, seeking to create additional local employment to reduce the need to commute. This aspect of the RNP has been very successful to date, with several new employment developments approved and completed or in progress.

A review of the individual RNP policies is attached below.

## RNP Policy Review

### Key policies:

**3.1: Maintain Village Feel.** This was by far the most important policy aim for residents. To date it has, in my personal view, largely been maintained. It is clearly under substantial threat from the current Local Plan review process. The RNP was designed to maintain it.

**3.2: Regain Sustainability.** Mixed success. Additional employment opportunities have been created. However, much of the new housing planned is commuter housing, so the exact opposite of what was sought.

**3.3: Balanced, Healthy Community.** Too early to say.

**3.4: Respect for the SDNP.** Undesirable new development within or seriously impacting the SDNP has, to date, been avoided.

### Countryside & Heritage Policies

**4.1: Countryside Protection.** Largely replicates Local Plan policy DM1, but given additional weight by an appeal inspector and the Secretary of State when dismissing an appeal for development contrary to the RNP.

**4.2: Protects SDNP.** Anodyne, probably redundant, replicating NPPF national & SDNP Authority policies.

**4.3: Protects Plashett Wood SSSI, Plashett Park Farm & Clay Hill Farm** as of high environmental and biodiversity value. Primarily designed to prevent the threat that 'desk top' exercises identify this area of very attractive and biodiverse countryside as suitable for waste disposal by landraising, waste transfer sites, new reservoirs, etc, etc. Has been given weight. Important policy.

**4.4: Protects an area along the Ouse bank in Wellingham for potential future recreational use.** Copied into the Lewes Local Plan part 2, but recreational use not to date implemented. Has been taken into account when considering applications. No progress towards delivery, but useful protection for the future.

**4.5: Public Footpaths.** Might be considered anodyne, but could prove useful if new footpaths are to be established prior to the 2025 deadline.

**4.6: Accessible Countryside.** Critical shortage in Ringmer of accessible countryside. Looks likely to deliver a Community Woodland in 2021. May well prove valuable if there is significant further development as a result of the Local Plan revision.

**4.7: Heritage Buildings:** Effectively a 'local list' of buildings missed or ignored on the formal Historic England list, as encouraged by the NPPF. Has proved useful.

**4.9: Green corridors, ponds & stream.** Powerful policy, extends national policy and proved very useful in restraining Bovis from completely sacking their site. The recent proposal by Ben Ellis, and doubtless many other current developer aspirations, would be contrary to this policy.

**4.10: Biodiversity.** Anodyne policy, largely redundant following the substantial improvement in this aspect of the revised NPPF in 2018/2019.

**4.11: Light pollution.** Anodyne policy, largely redundant following strengthening of national policy in the revised NPPF.

### Employment Policies

**Policies 5.1-5.5.** These policies have proved very successful in two different respects. Firstly they have actually delivered additional employment, and they have assisted applications that might otherwise have struggled. Secondly Neighbourhood Plans are widely suspected of negative NIMBYism, and the fact that the RNP strongly encourages this type of development makes it very difficult for developers' QCs to level that charge at us.

### Housing Policies

**6.1: Total Housing Number.** This policy is required, but effectively set by the Local Plan. Very likely to be delivered.

**6.2: Affordable Housing target & type.** Will be met overall. Preference for small houses rather than flats is important, and has been followed in some developments (Lower Lodge, Riverdale), largely ignored, with the connivance of Lewes DC, in others (Bovis).

**6.3: Scale of Development.** Emascuated by the examiner, but nevertheless still of some use – a factor given weight by the inspector and the Secretary of State when one appeal contrary to the RNP was dismissed.

**6.4: Phasing of Development.** Sites allocated are listed in this policy, so to that extent a required policy. The original RNP aim of phasing development over the plan period, to avoid the glut of new housing that we will face in 2021-2, was completely emasculated by the examiner.

### **Social and Leisure Facilities**

**7.1: Community Meeting Facilities.** Fairly anodyne, but no downside; worth including.

**7.2: Managed open spaces.** With the benefit of hindsight, this should have been written using the powerful 'Local Green Space' terminology.

**7.4: Sports Facilities.** Identifies shortage and allocates a key location. Has not yet delivered, but a powerful policy in preventing undesirable alternative uses.

**7.5: Children's Play Facilities.** Fairly anodyne policy, given that in practice we have been fighting off LDC policies to give us more and more hard-to-manage micro-play areas.

**7.6: Outdoor facilities for young people and adults.** Defines the need, but actual policy weak. Need well illustrated by the skatepark location problem.

**7.7: Allotments:** Pretty anodyne policy, though potentially important should demand rise.

### **Infrastructure**

**8.1: Access to local road system.** Potentially important policy. Bovis struggled with this, and Thakeham will struggle a lot more if they push ahead. As we selected RNP-allocated sites to avoid this problem, not otherwise of much importance to date, but could prove vital in preventing some of the more outrageous of the current new proposals proposing access from, for example, Norlington Lane or Potato Lane.

**8.2: Protects specific vulnerable small roads.** Stopped Bovis widening Bishops Lane to Springett Avenue standards. Mainly aimed at Bovis site, to be honest, but potentially relevant to other more recent issues.

**8.3: Provision of Adequate Off-Road Parking.** A key policy, much quoted by us, though Development Control do their best to ignore it.

**8.4: Cycleways.** Key initial target delivered. Others still needed. An important policy, now pretty firmly in line with national thinking.

**8.5: Road Safety.** Delivered one important new pedestrian crossing, not without some issues. Potentially of further value.

**8.7: Primary & Nursery School.** Has been a very useful policy that has delivered substantial school improvements. Could become very important should there be an attempt to impose substantial additional development on Ringmer.

**8.9: Health Service provision.** Pretty anodyne policy. Ringmer has good physical provision for NHS care – plenty of space available, not currently used to capacity.

**8.10: Water Supply.** Required policy, as the main provision for water supplies serving a wide area of East & West Sussex is the WTW at Barcombe Mills in Ringmer parish.

**8.11: Drainage & Sewerage.** Key policy, and a big issue in Ringmer, though largely in practice covered by conditions.

**8.12: Recycling.** Largely delivered by Lewes DC across the area. RNP policy could be seen as redundant (right up to the moment they try to locate an unsuitable recycling plant in the wrong part of the village).

**8.13: Cemeteries.** Important, but not delivered. We will need one, and soon. We have an idea. We need to deliver.

### **Village Design Statement**

Has been important and influential. Developers, even Bovis, have read and mostly tried to comply with it. Even the worst current development is better than it would have been without this suite of policies.