


Partnership Works...

Involving Partners with the development of the Local Development Framework (LDF)

Wealden Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) decided to make sure the Local Development Framework (LDF) took account of local priorities and reflected the Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS) for Wealden. The LSP felt that this was best addressed by engagement with town and parish councils. As a result the LDF has a strong evidence base, links with towns and parishes have been improved, and further work has been planned taking advantage of these improved links.





The Challenge

In the past, consultation on long term planning issues has tended to look at the views of institutions and organisations rather than individuals and town and parish councils. The Wealden LSP wanted to help move towards wider discussion - a move reflected in the new LDF approach to planning and shared by the Council's planning department.

The Action

In 2005, the LSP began to review its Sustainable Community Strategy. Planning officers from the Council were invited to LSP meetings to share aims and ideas for future strategic planning. The process of spatial planning was explained and discussed in detail and the LDF has remained a regular item on the LSP agenda ever since. In October 2005, the process was reviewed in light of changes to the planning framework and timetable imposed by central government. During 2005 and 2006 the LSP received regular updates and meetings were held to help establish what would be considered in the new framework.

In 2007, the Council ran a consultation exercise, the first stage of public participation in the preparation of the LDF Core Strategy. The issues put in the consultation document were helped by an event the LSP arranged for all LSP members and parish and town councils to discuss the planning process. This was to help identify the challenges in trying to match a long-term planning framework with the vision set out in the Sustainable Community Strategy. One of the immediate problems identified was that small parishes find it very hard to respond to complex planning consultation documents, especially within the usual six-week deadline.

To help address such concerns the LSP developed a LDF Engagement Toolkit, which was published on the LSP's webpages. The toolkit provided numerous sources of information such as national guidance on planning, LDFs and

community engagement, links to East Sussex County Council data observatory's Parish Profiles and documents relating specifically to Wealden's LDF.

Between 2003 and 2006, the Wealden LSP helped to fund a project involving the Council and Action in Rural Sussex to provide support to Town and Parish Councils to prepare Local Action Plans. From 2006 to 2008 the project was extended further with funding from the Carnegie Trust. Some Parishes already had an Action Plan, but the project helped many more to be written. This trend has continued using guides produced by the team involved.

The project looked at how community plans could feed into the LDF and other strategies to influence planning and development. It was agreed early on that Parish Plans would be a good basis for linking local requirements to the national planning agenda.

To bridge the gap between local plans and the LDF, a template was designed to enable the easy transfer of information from the Parish Profiles. Parishes were asked to describe up to three priorities under each theme of the SCS that were most relevant to their area. The priorities were set out in a standard form to help analysis by the planners. Templates were received from 32 out of 38 parishes. The Town Councils and one Parish Council are involved directly with the Council's Planning section to prepare more detailed Master Plans.

The Impact

The templates helped to reduce the burden on many smaller Parish Councils. Because some areas did not hold regular Parish meetings or even have broadband access, they found it difficult to respond to large scale consultations. The LSP-hosted events where people from an area could get together and discuss the issues were very helpful.

The analysis of the templates, and the points made at the events that were held, will be part of the issues covered in the consultation document on the Core Strategy, due out in summer 2009. This will describe options for the overall pattern of development across the District and will mention the priorities and aims that have been raised by the LSP and Parishes.

The LDF Core Strategy will set out the broad locations where new homes will be built, as well as other essentials including jobs and services, schools, open space and transport improvements. Later plans will contain more detail about individual sites and proposals, but will be guided by the Core Strategy. By engaging people and partners in the LDF process, the LSP has guided a project that will have a significant impact on Wealden's future.

The results of talking to Parishes were discussed at the 2009 annual Parish Planning Conference, and a report will be published this summer. The LSP will remain involved with

the LDF and will continue to help develop the LDF Core Strategy. There are plans for further work with Parishes to make sure that local people have the opportunity to identify local needs and feed these directly into policy development plans.



Lessons Learnt

- The LDF evidence base is now more robust and the process is focussed on real local issues
- Parishes have a better understanding of planning constraints.
- Relationships lead to and facilitate further shared work.
- The membership of the LSP has changed, increasing the representation of Parishes and Towns on the Board from one to three.

Organisations Involved

Wealden District Council
All Town & Parish Councils in the Wealden District
Eastbourne Association of Voluntary Services (EAVS)
South Downs Council for Voluntary Services (SDCVS)
East Sussex County Council
Sussex Police
East Sussex Fire & Rescue Service
NHS East Sussex Downs and Weald
Wealden District Association of Local Councils (WDALC)
Environment Agency
Churches Together in Sussex
Freedom Leisure
Downland Housing Association
Federation of Small Businesses (FSB)
Highways Agency
National Farmers Union (NFU)
South Downs Joint Committee

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Further Information

The Local Development Framework will eventually supersede the Wealden Local Plan which was adopted in 1998 and the Non-statutory Wealden Local Plan approved in 2005. Together with the regional spatial strategy the LDF will provide the framework for planning in Wealden. For more information on the Wealden Local Development Framework, please visit www.wealdencommunitystrategy.co.uk



Wealden Strategic Partnership

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