

Rowlands Castle Parish Council

11 The Green, Rowlands Castle PO9 6BW

Email: clerk@rowlandscastlepc.org.uk Tel: 02392 413044 Website: www.rowlandscastlepc.org.uk

Cllr Chris Stanley's Welcoming Address to NP Exhibition - Saturday 18 February

Ladies and gentlemen, good afternoon and welcome to this meeting on the subject of a possible Neighbourhood Plan for Rowlands Castle Parish. For those who don't know me I am Cllr Chris Stanley and Chairman of your Parish Council. I am supported today by a number of my fellow councillors, who I will introduce at the end of this presentation session so you can engage with us further if you have additional questions, and by 2 guest speakers who I will introduce shortly. It's good to see so many of you here this afternoon and thank you very much for turning out and supporting this consultation. Thank you also to the ladies from the WI for serving the refreshments this afternoon.

The purpose of this meeting is to set before you a proposal from your Parish Council that the community that lives in our Parish produce a Neighbourhood Development Plan, known as a Neighbourhood Plan for short, so as to influence and shape future development within the Parish boundary. The Parish Council needs to assess the public appetite both for this document to be produced and to contribute to its production, so as to decide whether we should proceed to set up the organisation to produce it, hence you will have been given simple forms to fill in before you leave so we can get feedback. I shall now give you some background information before our guest speakers cover the production and benefits of a NP in more detail.

Currently, the Parish has 3 different reference documents, a Village Design Statement produced in 2000, a Parish Plan valid from 2008 until 2018 and a Local Landscape Character Assessment produced in 2012. All of these excellent documents can inform anyone looking to propose developments within the parish. However, none of them have statutory status that requires a developer to follow their guidance. When assessing planning applications, Planning Authorities treat them only as 'material considerations' and so they carry limited weight. One of our display boards shows the current, permitted development in the Parish over which the community had very limited influence in design and location.

Back in 2011 the Coalition Government recognised that local communities had no way of formally influencing and shaping development and so the Localism Act that came into force in 2012 introduced the new concept of Neighbourhood Plans. These can be produced by the community as a whole and, if ratified by more than 50% of those who vote on its adoption, the Neighbourhood Plan becomes a legal document with the same weight as the Local Plan produced by a local planning authority. In our case we have 2 such authorities, EHDC and the SDNPA. A number of Towns and Parishes in East Hampshire and beyond have produced such Plans and more are proposing to do so if their communities agree. Back in 2012, the then

Rowlands Castle Parish Council

11 The Green, Rowlands Castle PO9 6BW

Email: clerk@rowlandscastlepc.org.uk Tel: 02392 413044 Website: www.rowlandscastlepc.org.uk

members of your Parish Council looked at producing such a document but, with the limited information then available, plus other important commitments in dealing with large planning applications already submitted, it was decided not to proceed further though the matter was kept under review. During 2016 as the current Parish Council considered its priorities for work and with more information being available the production of a NP seemed sensible and this thinking has been reinforced by initial scoping work and considerable liaison with EHDC, SDNPA and some other Parish Councils. Your Parish Council is of course involved in assessing all planning applications within the Parish but without a NP our views lack full weight and follow, rather than precede, the planning application.

The NP would set out planning policies and specific requirements that can be used when planning applications are being considered for our parish. Some policies might encourage developments for the benefit of the local community, others may be designed to preserve the special character of the parish or address traffic or parking issues. Whatever the document includes it is down to the community to a) show its support for the preparation of such a document and b) to establish a group of volunteers to produce it. This is **not** a task for the Parish Council to take on and lead because it must be a document that the community as whole has produced and that is subsequently approved at referendum, otherwise it has no validity.

Therefore, your Parish Council seeks to determine whether there is general support within the whole Parish community that a Neighbourhood Plan should be produced and to establish a pool of volunteers who will produce it. A Steering Group will be required of about 9 persons, of which 2-3 will be Parish Councillors, together with subsidiary working groups to address specific aspects such as housing, employment opportunities and the countryside.

As alternative options to the production of a NP, we could just produce a new Parish Plan to replace the current Plan; or we could do nothing and rely on East Hants DC and SDNPA Planning Policies to influence and shape the future development in our Parish. Producing a new Parish Plan is not seen as so beneficial because of its lack of statutory authority, hence it can be ignored by developers; it would also require volunteers although it would be less onerous to produce and needs to be considered if there is not a majority in favour of producing the Neighbourhood Plan. Relying solely on EHDC and the SDNPA would mean that development would follow their needs and requirements, which may not be aligned with that of our Parish, however closely we engage with them on various issues.

If by late March the PC has established that the community appears by majority to be in favour of producing a NP **and** there are sufficient volunteers to contribute to its production, the Parish

Rowlands Castle Parish Council

11 The Green, Rowlands Castle PO9 6BW

Email: clerk@rowlandscastlepc.org.uk Tel: 02392 413044 Website: www.rowlandscastlepc.org.uk

Council will then arrange for another Community meeting to determine the policies that might be incorporated, so that the Steering Group and subsidiary working groups can then proceed. The NP process would also require questionnaires to be issued to all residents and other interested stakeholders (e.g. businesses), plus interviews with some residents. If there is no evidence of majority interest, or insufficient volunteers to produce a NP, the PC will not proceed further in this matter.

At an appropriate point the draft document is subject to scrutiny by a planning expert and refined as necessary before being put to a referendum of all the Parish residents, of whom a simple majority of those who vote must approve it before it can be adopted by EHDC and SDNPA and thus become effective.

To help you come to a view we are supported this afternoon by a double act comprising Simon Jenkins, Head of Planning at EHDC and Chris Paterson, Communities Lead supporting planning within the SDNPA for the Western end of its area, and we are most grateful for their support. They will talk for about 20 minutes on the subject of planning and the value of a NP and then we three will take questions. After questions they, I and my fellow parish councillors will be available around the hall to discuss matters further while you read the posters if you have not already done so. You will have been given a form on entry to use to feed back to us whether you support the production of such a plan and if you can contribute to its production. If you can offer some specialist knowledge that would be very helpful but do not think you need such knowledge to make a contribution, most people who work on these documents have no prior knowledge of planning or local government processes.

So, in summary, Rowlands Castle Parish Council believes the community should consider the production of a NP to shape and influence future development within the Parish and therefore seek your views on this and also whether there are sufficient volunteers to take the work forward should a majority of residents be in favour. This is not a document that is produced by the PC but by the whole community, with a Steering Group and small working groups to develop the document ready for scrutiny and for approval at referendum by the community. The more people who get involved the easier it is to produce such a document.

I shall now hand over to our guest speakers Simon Jenkins and Chris Paterson, after which they and I will take any questions.