

Twelve Month Review of Ringmore Neighbourhood Plan to 31st March 2023

This review has been delayed whilst two important current planning applications (post 31-03-23) were resolved, as they may have affected the outcome of this report.

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In the Implementation and Monitoring section of the Ringmore Neighbourhood Plan (herein after called ‘the Plan’) it is stated that the Plan will be reviewed one year after its adoption by South Hams DC.

The purpose of the review will be primarily to assess the extent to which the neighbourhood plan objectives have been implemented in practice and whether the proposals and policies of the neighbourhood plan are having a positive effect in relation to the determination of applications and achievement of the objectives of the plan.

The Plan was adopted on 31st March 2022 and the reconvened Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group has reviewed the Plan by email.

The report below sets out the comments and conclusions reached by the Plan Steering Group in relation to the implementation of the objectives and policies of the Plan.

Vision

The Vision of the Ringmore Neighbourhood Plan is **“That the Parish continues to meet the needs and aspirations of local people by protecting and conserving the culture, heritage, biodiversity and aesthetic qualities that make our environment unique. At the same time the economic prosperity needs to be supported and sustained so that wellbeing of the parish is maintained and it remains a thriving community in which to live, work, visit and play.”**

The objectives and policies of the Plan are based upon this important Vision and in reviewing the Plan the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group have kept this very much in mind when considering whether the objectives and policies are being implemented and are effective.

Housing Objectives are stated as:-

1. Support housing development identified as required to fulfil local housing requirements.
2. Ensure that any new development is of a scale and design which is sympathetic to the existing built and non built elements of the parish and does not devalue the unique character of the parish or overload the existing infrastructure
3. Support appropriate local self-build or community-led projects which deliver affordable housing solutions whilst adhering to the requirements of the Plan’s stated objectives.
4. Resist new development associated with second home ownership.

Summary

At this time there does not appear to be the need to make significant changes to the existing Plan. Any such changes would require another consultation, referendum, inspection and final approval. We therefore believe that the Ringmore Neighbourhood Plan is effective in meeting its vision.

It is felt more prudent to wait to see whether there are any central government changes to planning law or whether the revision of the Joint Local Plan (JLP) would weaken the current protection it offers to the Parish of Ringmore. These authorities are likely to undertake a review of their own, commencing in late 2024.

The current Plan relies heavily on the JLP, to control development in the parish, outside the Settlement Boundary of Ringmore village, via its legislation for the AONB, Undeveloped Coast and Heritage Coast. Any changes to these requirements could affect meeting the vision and objectives of the Plan.

Review process

The SHDC Planning Portal records 28 planning applications for Ringmore and Challaborough since 31st March 2022, when the Plan was ratified or “Made” by SHDC.

10 of these refer to properties in Bigbury-on-Sea, East Challaborough or Houghton and 6 have been lodged more recently after 31st March 2023.

A further 6 applications were for tree pruning/removal in the Conservation Area.

This leaves 6 relevant applications in the parish during the 12 months to 31st March 2023. Viz:-

2371/22/HHO	The Laurels	Extension
2657/22/HHO	Marwell House	Extension and garage
3778/22/CLE	Lower Manor Farm	Certificate of Lawfulness
0493/23/VAR	Noddon Farm	Change of residential condition
2372/22/HHO	Waverley House	Garden room build
3897/22/CLP	Bigbury Bay Site	Roadway – Withdrawn.

These applications and results were reviewed by the RNP Steering Group. All of them fell within the existing policies and objectives of the Plan and therefore did not signal a need for further changes.

After the review date of 31st March 2023 and to date, there have been 6 more planning applications. Two of these 0633/23/HHO and 1542/23/FUL contravened policies within the Plan. Both of these are now resolved and whilst they did not signal the need for any immediate change, they did raise some questions for future consideration and any lessons learnt or any need for changes, will come under a future review.

Whilst there has not been any New Builds applied for during the period, we have identified that most major development has been and will be the reconstruction of existing properties in the Parish.

This is not a bad thing in that there are many properties that would benefit from such an approach, however in order to justify this upgrade, developers may be tempted to build upwards and this may have a profound effect on neighbours.

The NP does contain a clause RNP 2.5 which attempts to limit the roof height to that equivalent to the adjacent properties. However, this is weaker wording than originally drafted and this was knocked back by SHDC during the drafting phase.

In addition, local concern was expressed on several applications about rebuilds overlooking existing gardens and properties to the detriment of current residents. This area should be reviewed post 2024 to ensure there is enough protection in place.

Lastly light pollution has been a prominent concern, with questions being raised in Ringmore Village and Challaborough. The Neighbourhood Plan can only be used to reference a Planning Application (ie. If there is no application the NP cannot act) and subsidiary outside lighting eg. Garden lighting, safety lighting does not in itself require planning permission. Any resident can fit an outside light in their garden etc. Commercially, the law is weak and enables a business to claim that any lighting which may be used to assist marketing is in effect safety or security lighting. This aspect of the Neighbourhood Plan may require review.

Ringmore Parish is designated as a dark skies area and artificial light generated from large windows or outside lighting can have a profound effect on the wildlife of the area. The NP is not specific enough about this.

As part of the Devon Bat Survey 2023, being carried out by Devon Wildlife Trust, at least seven species of Bat have been identified in Ringmore Village. This has been confirmed by a quote from a recent Ecology Report connected to a planning application.

Also it should be noted that 14 of the 18 UK Bats regularly roost in trees, thus day time roosts are not confined to buildings. All bats are protected by law, so as well as controlling building plans, trees are an important consideration.

Light pollution and other policies, within the Plan, are relevant to Bat preservation and may need to be reviewed in future.

All the above will be reconsidered at the next review.

Conclusion

This review reveals that since the Plan was made on 31st March 2022, there have been no serious problems with the Plan during the following 12 months to 31st March 2023, but it is known that more recent applications will need to be reviewed in the future. The vision and objectives of the Plan have been maintained during this 12 month period and no immediate action is required.

However, the political landscape is changing with some uncertain threats to the AONB etc. which may dilute the current protection. This will need to be reviewed, perhaps after the next General Election and such safeguards as are required, inserted into a revised plan to try to maintain the status quo.

The Parish Council should keep this situation on their agenda and commission a formal review, at such time as it may be deemed necessary, if that is before the next scheduled review to 31st March 2027. It should be noted that at the current time there are no funds available to carry out such a review and the Parish Council may wish to commence making a small annual reserve for the future. The original Plan cost over £8,000 to produce but a review should be less.

Richard Baker

On behalf of The Ringmore NP Steering Group

12th October 2023