



SEDLSCOMBE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN UPDATE 1 December 2017

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EXAMINER'S REPORT

The Examiner has issued his report on our Neighbourhood Plan (see [Parish Council website](#) for full report and PC's response). The good news is that he **recommends the Plan goes forward to referendum**.

The tone of his report is very positive about the Parish Council's approach and the thoroughness of the consultation process.

BACKGROUND

Sedlescombe must deliver a minimum of 35 houses in groups of 6 or more before 2028. While the Plan provides for this, it has been undermined by **Rother District Council's failure to supply enough houses** (944 behind

target) who have only achieved an average of 154 dwellings over the last three years.

This has led to a **technical loophole** that allows developers to apply for and be given planning permission to build houses outside the development boundary in the supposedly protected Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

It was on these grounds, aided by the lack of support from Rother District Council who were not prepared to respect the views of the community and the Plan, that development at **Street Farm** was given planning permission. That was despite being

unwanted by the majority of residents, against the advice of the Planning Officer and following refusal by RDC and at appeal of a similar scheme on the same site. This is why the site was not included in the Plan.

The Parish Council then asked the Examiner, in view of the Street Farm permission, if he could remove a site in the Plan to reduce the housing numbers. He was unable to do this and did not recommend the Plan be withdrawn in an attempt to reduce the housing numbers.

The effect has been to force Sedlescombe to take **an additional 16 houses on top of the 35 already in the Plan**.

REFERENDUM

After considering the Examiner's report, the **Parish Council** has followed the Examiner's guidance and decided to proceed to referendum, with due regard to the following:

1. Withdrawal of the Plan would have no practical impact on how many houses are built because of Rother District Council's lack of a 5-year housing supply loophole. All the allocated sites in the Plan could get planning permission regardless of whether we have a Plan in place or not.
2. It would take a further 18 months with 2 more rounds of consultations to revise and re-submit the Plan. If houses are built without a Plan in place our community will receive less money

from the infrastructure levy that developers pay, money that could be used and enable the village to fund other projects which would not have been affordable such as traffic calming etc. With a Plan in place we will receive an estimated £200,000 to invest in infrastructure projects in the village.

3. Central Government has recently indicated they want Rother District Council to increase their housing numbers. With our Plan in place including the extra 16 houses on Street Farm, Sedlescombe should be protected against further demands.

4. There is always the possibility that one of the sites in our Plan may not materialize. This would require our Plan to be re-worked, and once again give developers leeway to seek permission for speculative development.

In their response to the Examiner's report, **Rother District Council** has indicated to the Parish Council that it 'will count for a lot' that Sedlescombe has the first Plan in place 'as we move towards a more uncertain future on housing requirements' and 'it locks in the long-term future of the more sensitive majority of Street Farm through the 'Local Green Space' designation.'

The date of the referendum when the community will decide whether to accept the Plan, will be notified by Rother District Council in the coming months.