

**Minutes of a Meeting of the Town Council held at the Town Hall, Rye, on
Monday 20 April 2015**

PRESENT Councillors Granville Bantick, John Breeds, Jonathan Breeds
(**Deputy Mayor**), Mike Eve, Bernardine Fiddimore (**Mayor**), Mike Boyd,
Mike Eve, Heidi Foster, Ian Potter, Shaun Rogers

IN ATTENDANCE Richard Farhall - Town Clerk; Rother District Cllr Lord Ampthill;
Colonel Anthony Kimber – Rye Neighbourhood Plan Vice-
Chairman; Charlie Harkness – Rye News; 5 members of the
public

*The meeting commenced at 6.40pm. (The start time was delayed to allow a late written submission from Pat Hughes, Rye & District Community to be copied and read – see **Appendix A**)*

102 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence – and the reasons (as notified to the Clerk) - were accepted from Cllrs Nigel Jennings, Jo Kirkham, Adam Smith, Mary Smith and Sam Souster.

103 CODE OF CONDUCT

There were no disclosures of interest.

104 RYE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Members were invited to consider a draft of the Rye Neighbourhood Plan with a view to approving version 5 'in principle'.

On behalf of the RNPSG, the Vice Chairman, Colonel Anthony Kimber introduced the document (see **Appendix B**).

He concluded his introduction by emphasising that approval was being sought for the direction of the Plan and its emerging findings – the document would be amended as the process continued.

Comments included: at the start of the process the SG had endeavoured to engage with neighbouring parishes but the response had been disappointing (possibly because of a lack of understanding) – it might be desirable to make another approach after the elections; Colonel Kimber should be applauded for the considerable time he has devoted to the process; if v5 is made available for public comment it should be made clear that it is a draft document (for example, by applying a watermark and inserting a header and footer).

Speaking from the Gallery, Cllr Ampthill reported that two more Rother parishes were about to start the neighbourhood planning process; once adopted, would the Plan be reviewed annually and clear actions agreed?; it is unlikely that an adopted NP would have prevented the Planning Inspectorate from approving the Valley Park development; the Rye LAP was a useful document - with many of the actions having been pursued; it was important that the RNP was not too detailed.

Colonel Kimber added: an action plan could be appended to the RNP – it would need to be pragmatic and address funding sources; if v5 is made available for public inspection it will need to be made clear that it is 'work in progress'; he is currently working on v6 – however, there is likely to be a 'lull' in the work of the SG until the elections and Committee Formation have taken place.

RESOLVED 1 (unanimous) To approve the Rye Neighbourhood Plan (v5) in principle – and to thank the Steering Group for its work.

RESOLVED 2 (unanimous) To upload the Plan to the RNP web site and Facebook page; deposit 2 copies at both Rye Library and the Town Hall – and invite comments by 15 June 2015.
Clerk

The meeting ended at 7.10.

Date Chairman

I was a member of the Transport group advising the Rye Neighbourhood Plan Steering Committee and I have serious concerns regarding some of the recommendations for transport which have gone into the draft Plan.

Last summer when the Neighbourhood Plan survey was being put together John Howlett, the chair of the transport group e-mailed the members with the questions which, we understood, were proposed to go into the transport section of the survey. He did however, inform us that he had been told that it was actually too late for any amendments to be made.

This was, to say the least, an unfortunate occurrence as some of the points included in the transport section were ones which the group had already considered and discussed carefully before deciding that they were not ~~feasible to put in place or operate in this town.~~ feasible to put in place or operate in this town.

When the results of the survey were released the transport group, at its last meeting in October, seems to have decided to effectively 'roll over' and accept the points included in the survey as what should be put forward for the draft Plan. I was on holiday in Greece at the time of this meeting but e-mailed a comprehensive report on the proposed draft to John which I believe was simply put to one side - when I returned John told me that the Transport section for the draft had gone forward as per the version I had commented on and advised me to put forward a minority report to the NP Steering Committee which I did.

I would like to make it clear that my views and ideas on transport issues in Rye are not just pulled out of the air but are based on 16 years of being intimately involved in Rye and its transport with Rye & District Community Transport. This followed years of living and working and driving in London and Leeds as well as Hastings, Lewes and Crawley. I also went and researched in other towns, including Hythe and Brighton to see how their schemes really worked. My starting point for any suggestion is to look at what people are doing now and why they are doing it, this informs the plan and keeps it relevant to the people involved.

I would like to comment on 3 of the points in the transport section of the draft:

Firstly, Park and Ride:

This is a very seductive concept, as it appears to alleviate problems of insufficient parking space. However, it is very costly and someone has to pay for it. The space for out of town parking may well come at the expense of another project (eg providing employment possibilities) and to simply pass the work of the transport to/from the facility over to Community Transport is too airy fairy.

RDCT has run Park and Ride facilities for several Rye events and the take-up is abysmal (which is dreadful for a driver - all ready to go and no-one to take). And it is inevitable that new 'parkers' will arrive just as the bus has left and feel irritated at then having to wait. Ditto for returns. It is interesting that many Park and Ride operations in larger towns and cities now operate only for certain peak shopping times, eg run-up to Christmas and that others are directing customers to scheduled bus routes operating in the area.

This is exactly what we are aiming to do in Rye with the Gibbet Marsh car park. Now that the 326 will be running a Sunday service we are intending to put signage in the car park directing people to the bus stop opposite and giving the times of the buses going up to Rye

High Street. We are also liaising with the various tourist websites to include the information there. And we are introducing a zero fare for children under 12 to support families using our services.

I would ask that this point be taken out of the draft completely, and wish to emphasise that RDCT would have no part in such an operation.

Secondly, the offloading of deliveries from larger vehicles into smaller ones for delivery into Rye:

Again, this is a very neat sounding idea, but once again it is not feasible. Who provides the facility for the goods swap and who pays for it? In these days of internet shopping delivery charges are a key issue and I am not alone in choosing to buy on-line where the delivery charge is likely to be the same or only slightly more than the cost of my going to the shop to make the purchase there. And delivery costs affect the costs of all purchases, even when we do not have it shown as a separate item on our till receipt. Therefore anything which increases the cost of delivery is going to be unhelpful to the retailer, whether a local shop or an on-line seller.

And by number, most delivery vehicles are no bigger, and in very many cases, smaller than our 16-seater buses - think Ocado, Asda, Parcelforce, UPS, Tesco, UK Mail, etc. Again this is not something that RDCT would have any part in.

Thirdly, the suggested crossing system for Station Approach: The scheme shown in the drawing is certainly bold and innovative but it does not consider what people actually do and why they do it. More people struggle to cross Station Approach between the bus stops and the Post Office. This is because on one side of the road there are 2 car parks (one includes the coach parking), the public toilets and all the town's main bus stops while on the other there is the Post Office and currently the town's only supermarket. There are dropped kerbs on both sides of the road. Cllr. Boyd and I, with input from others, came up with a simple plan to put in an elongated (cf the Memorial in Hastings) pedestrian light controlled crossing which would run from the dropped kerbs by the station (near the 'John Ryan Garden') along to these dropped kerbs.

This would allow pedestrians and mobility scooter users to cross, either between the bus stops and the Post Office or to/from the station and, with light control, they would have better protection and the whole system would have a traffic calming effect. It would also ease the pressure on those trying to get across by the brick pillars and would help the average 10+ buses an hour getting on and off the bus stops (something which the suggested crossing scheme completely fails to take into account). In addition, the costs of the suggested scheme are likely to be astronomic and it is quite wrong to put people at continuing risk of accident and injury in order to be bold and innovative.

I would like to finish by reminding Councillors that where pedestrianised and shared space schemes are proposed, the Town Bus (326) could not operate - the risk of accidents involving pedestrians are too great (note that in Ashford the bus does not travel along the pedestrianised High Street).

Speaking Notes – 20 April

You have had a copy of the draft Neighbourhood Plan representing work from 2012 to date. This remains “in progress”; need to stress that **nothing yet is set in concrete**.

With **major change** in composition of the Council expected after May, the Steering Group sees it important to expose the draft to **demonstrate progress and seek agreement** prior to the elections.

I do not intend to go over all the background, but suffice to say the structured process is governed by the Localism Act 2011. The plan should focus on the **spatial** - land, buildings and infrastructure – but can include pretty much anything. We have **strived to take account of lessons** from elsewhere and **Rye studies** going back to the 1990s.

The set process involves further consultation, independent inspection and then a public referendum. If we pass all the hurdles – perhaps by very late 2015 - then the plan will have **statutory status** and provide a **planning framework for Rye to 2028**.

Now I hear some of you saying **why bother?** Rye has a reputation for aversion to policy and the fact that other plans such as the Action Plan are gathering dust in filing cabinets.

Neighbourhood Plans are different. What is very clear to us is that without a plan, Rye will be **financially disadvantaged** (new CIL contribution process) and key planning policy decisions will remain in the hands of higher authorities and developers. Look at Valley Park to see the risks. **I can elaborate in questions if required**.

It is also clear that it is impossible to **deliver a plan on our own**. We have to **cooperate with others**. One of my roles has been to coordinate the effort.

I need to record that Rye enjoys the ongoing support from **Rother DC officers and Planning Aid**; both have helpfully commented specifically on the V5 draft.

I should also record that **ESCC, Rye Partnership and the EA** tend to hold us at arms length. The first specifically declined to allow us to be involved in the Tilling Green school process, despite my being nominated to represent you; the last presses on regardless with a policy of short termism and non-disposal, which results in car lots and tatty portions of a lot of Rye waterside.

The new Council might consider working to convince these organisations that the Neighbourhood Plan is not a threat, but with cooperation and partnership can benefit the community of Rye. This endeavour is after all is government policy and has been embraced by a large portion of the 9000 councils in England.

Back to the draft. This draft is **just one of suite of documents** required: the RNP; a design statement; a sustainability assessment; evidence including site assessments. At the end of the plan we speak of an action plan that will be the responsibility of Rye TC to implement.

The draft has been constructed “**bottom up**”, reflecting a lot of input across the Parish. It started with **key issues**, translated these into proposals and then draft policies. The Plan draws on a literature review; numerous conversations, consultations and discussions, all of which together provides the evidence.

In the introductory sections, there is the usual discussion of background, conformity, regulation, sustainability and assumption. You will see that we are required to **liaise with seven adjacent parishes** as there are matters such as development on Rye Hill and in Rye Harbour which impacts on Rye.

The meat of the plan is **grouped into 8 themes**. Here there are some contentious areas; some affected by uncertainty. The lower school site is an obvious example: education, commercial, housing or other such as parking. Traffic is always going to be contentious; we seek to compromise between “pedestrian priority” and “traffic anarchy”.

It is not expected that NOT all will agree with the detail, but the aim is to strike a workable compromise which will pass inspection and referendum. It is acknowledged that more work needed to massage the text to make it acceptable to most.

On the basis that you have read and considered the document, we **now SEEK “agreement in principle” from the outgoing Council**. In short we seek agreement for our direction and the emerging findings. We can record major objections and perceived omissions, but we **need the green light to build**, after the elections, on what has been achieved so far.

On the basis that all political parties support the concept of Neighbourhood Planning, those of us who decide to continue with the process after May, look forward to solid **support from all sides of the new Council to get the job finished**. It would be good to see pledges in potential councillors’ prospectus. So far I have seen little mention.

One final point. The average Neighbourhood Plan is costly. Ours is cheap by comparison - - mainly because of volunteers and self help.

I commend the draft to the Council and am prepared to take questions as appropriate.