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For and on behalf of  
**West Dean Parish Council**

## **Forest Edge South Neighbourhood Plan Public Consultation Statement**

**Prepared by  
Strategic Planning Research Unit  
DLP Planning Ltd  
Sheffield**

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Prepared by:	<b>Philipp Tschavoll-Selenko</b> Ing.-Maître MRTPI Associate Planner
Checked by:	<b>Kirsten Ward</b> BSc (Hons) MA PhD MRTPI Associate Director
Approved by:	<b>Roland Bolton</b> BSc (Hons) MRTPI Senior Director
Date: September 2023	Office: Sheffield

#### Strategic Planning Research Unit

**V1 Velocity Building**  
Ground Floor  
Tenter Street  
Sheffield  
S1 4BY

**Tel: 01142 289190**

**Broad Quay House (6<sup>th</sup> Floor)**  
Prince Street  
Bristol  
BS1 4DJ

**Tel: 01179 058850**

**4 Abbey Court**  
Fraser Road  
Priory Business Park  
Bedford  
MK44 3WH

**Tel: 01234 832740**

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Community engagement and consultation is necessary at all stages of the plan-making process for the Forest Edge South Neighbourhood Plan (FESNP). It enables communities to articulate their own concerns and identify the appropriate responses and solutions to problems that affect them. If done well, community consultation can empower community members by strengthening their personal capacities and the capacity of their communities as a whole.
- 1.2 This Consultation Statement has been prepared to fulfil the legal obligations of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. Section 15(2), part 5 of the Regulations states that a Consultation Statement should:
- a) Contain details of the persons and bodies who were consulted about the proposed neighbourhood development plan;
  - b) Explain how they were consulted;
  - c) Summarise the main issues and concerns raised by the persons consulted; and
  - d) Describe how these issues and concerns have been considered and, where relevant, addressed in the proposed neighbourhood development plan.
- 1.3 In developing the Forest Edge South Neighbourhood Plan, several rounds of consultation were undertaken at various stages of the neighbourhood plan process as follows:
1. **Initial public consultation** was undertaken in 2019 and 2020 to raise awareness of what a neighbourhood plan is and how it could benefit Forest Edge South. Residents were asked to identify key issues within the area including what is important to the people of Forest Edge South and what they like and dislike about the area and how it could be improved. The responses from this consultation were then used to inform the draft vision and objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan. A summary of the findings from this consultation exercise are outlined in Section 2 of this report with further detail provided in the drop-in sessions and survey reports which are attached at **Appendices 1 to 3**.  
  
Drop-in sessions were held in 2019 to launch the Neighbourhood Plan process. This was followed by both a Community and Voluntary Organisations survey and a Business and Employment survey which were conducted between February and March 2020.
  2. **Regulation 14 consultation on the Draft Neighbourhood Plan** was undertaken between 26<sup>th</sup> March and 7<sup>th</sup> May 2023 in order to provide opportunity for members of the public and other stakeholders to comment on the proposed policies prior to its submission to the local planning authority for examination. The responses and comments received during this consultation are detailed in **Appendix 10** of this report.
- 1.4 The timings of the consultations were carefully considered to maximise potential interest and responses.

## 2.0 CONSULTATION PROCESS

### a) Initial Public Consultation

- 2.1 The initial public consultation exercise was coordinated and undertaken by the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, commencing in May 2019, with the aim being to acquire the views of the residents of Forest Edge South on their attitudes to the Neighbourhood Plan area and its facilities.
- 2.2 Residents were asked to identify key priorities within the area including what is important to the people of Forest Edge South and what is special about the area and how it could be improved.
- 2.3 In order to inform the preparation of the draft vision and objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan, the Steering Group undertook an initial public consultation exercise which included the following:
- Three 'drop-in' launch events in Parkend (11th May 2019), Yorkley (18<sup>th</sup> May 2019) and Whitecroft (1st June 2019). During these events attendees were asked to complete a questionnaire identifying local issues and priorities for the neighbourhood area. A total of 222 questionnaires were completed. The results of this survey were analysed by Gloucestershire Rural Community Council. A summary of the questionnaire results is attached at **Appendix 1**.
  - A Community and Voluntary Organisations survey was conducted in February-March 2020. 76 paper copies were distributed to groups, venues and organisations operating within the Forest Edge South NP area and including Parkend, Yorkley, Pillowell, Whitecroft, Viney Hill and Oldcroft. 15 completed surveys were received. A summary of the survey results is attached at **Appendix 2**.
  - A Business and Employment Survey was undertaken in February-March 2020. 168 paper copies of the survey were distributed, by hand or post, to businesses operating within the Forest Edge South NP area and including Parkend, Yorkley, Pillowell, Whitecroft, Viney Hill and Oldcroft. 32 completed surveys were received. A summary of the survey results is attached at **Appendix 3**.
- 2.4 The questionnaire for the 'drop-in' launch events included questions asking local residents what they liked about the Neighbourhood Plan area, what could be improved, and if they had any further comments or ideas of things that could be addressed through the Neighbourhood Plan. The responses were reviewed and the following priority themes identified:
- Public safety
  - Character
  - Design
  - Heritage
  - Sports
  - Transport
  - Environment
  - Arts
  - Health
  - Employment
  - Education
  - Affordable housing
  - Older people
  - Younger people
  - Amenities/local shops

- Church
- Pubs
- Footpaths
- Renewable energy

- 2.5 As set out in the summary reports, attached at **Appendices 1 to 3**, it was found that local people appreciate the environment they live in and the access to woods and green spaces. However, concerns were raised about transport issues including the speed of traffic, poor road conditions and a lack of parking. People were keen to see improved public transport with better links to local amenities, towns, other public transport and cycle paths. Housing concerns were raised around sustainability, energy efficiency and access to high quality affordable homes.
- 2.6 The findings demonstrated the intangible character of the Neighbourhood Plan area as they were spread across themes of environment, sustainability, transport and amenities with strong interlinkages between them.
- 2.7 Based on the findings of the initial public consultation activities, the Steering Group prepared a draft vision and objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 2.8 The purpose of the vision statement and objectives was to provide clear and justified high-level parameters for the Neighbourhood Plan, and from which the Neighbourhood Plan policies were derived.
- 2.9 The draft vision and objectives were reviewed and refined by DLP Planning Ltd, as presented in the Initial Policy and Evidence Review Report (April 2021) that has been submitted alongside the Neighbourhood Plan.

**b) Regulation 14 Consultation**

- 2.10 The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 require the proposed plan to be the subject of a 6-week (minimum) consultation before it is submitted to the local authority for independent examination.
- 2.11 The requirement, as set out at regulation 14, includes the following:
- Publicise the plan in a manner which brings it to the attention of people who live, work or run businesses in the neighbourhood area. This should include details of the proposed Neighbourhood Plan, details of where and when it may be viewed, details on how to make comments on the plan and the date by which comments must be received (at least 6 weeks from the date on which it is first publicised).
  - Consult statutory consultation bodies whose interests may be affected by the plan.
  - Send a copy of the proposed plan to the local authority.
- 2.12 The Forest Edge South Neighbourhood Plan consultation ran for a period of six weeks from Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> March 2023 to Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> May 2023.
- 2.13 The consultation was advertised on the Parish Council Neighbourhood Plan website and social media including the Forest Edge South Neighbourhood Plan's Facebook page. Facebook posts were also shared with the village community Facebook pages, West Dean Parish Council, sixvillagenews and other shares.
- 2.14 A dedicated Neighbourhood Plan website was set up at <https://fesndp.uk/> where information was provided on the consultation, draft documents, and evidence base. Although the name of the project changed to 'FESNP' (from 'FESNDP'), the domain was kept both to avoid confusion and avoid further expense of purchasing a new domain at this late stage in the project. Information was added to the site to explain the name change.
- 2.15 Notification of the consultation was also published on the Forest of Dean District Council's

website.

- 2.16 Evidence of how the Draft Neighbourhood Plan consultation was publicised online and on social media is contained in **Appendix 4**.
- 2.17 Throughout the consultation, several consultation events were held all of which included an exhibition of Neighbourhood Plan documentation, maps and proposed Design Guidance. The events provided opportunities for members of the public to feed back their views on the Draft Neighbourhood Plan by completing a consultation questionnaire or writing comments on Post It notes. These events were held at:
- Parkend Memorial Hall on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2023, which included a Q&A session with Steering Group members;
  - Pillowell Village Hall on 27<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> March 2023;
  - Yorkley Community Centre on 31<sup>st</sup> March and 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023, which included a Q&A session with Steering Group members; and
  - West Dean Centre at Bream on 3<sup>rd</sup> April to 7<sup>th</sup> May 2023.
- 2.18 There was a good turnout at all locations with 57 visitors at Yorkley Community Centre alone. There were also 5 registered attendees at the West Dean Centre, 15 attendees at Pillowell Village Hall, and 29 attendees at Parkend Memorial Hall.
- 2.19 Notifications were sent via email/letter to statutory bodies and other local consultee groups. A full list of statutory consultees, including neighbouring authorities and neighbouring parish councils, who were consulted on the Draft Neighbourhood Plan is contained within **Appendix 5**.
- 2.20 Letters were also sent to owners/occupiers of proposed Local Green Spaces and proposed Non-Designated Heritage Assets to inform them of the proposed designations and the ways in which they were able to view the draft plan and submit comments.
- 2.21 A consultation summary leaflet (a copy of which is contained at **Appendix 6**) was also prepared which summarised the overarching themes contained within the Draft Neighbourhood Plan and set out details of how consultees could comment on the draft plan, including where copies of the plan could be viewed. A consultation flyer was also prepared, which again contained details of how consultees could comment and where the draft plan could be viewed, and also contained further details of the local consultation events (see copy at **Appendix 7**).
- 2.22 Copies of the consultation flyer were available at the village halls and local shops and were also hand delivered to homes and businesses in the FESNP area. Copies of the summary leaflet were available at the consultation events.
- 2.23 The Draft Neighbourhood Plan and other supporting documents were available to view throughout the consultation period on the FESNP's webpage. Hard copies of the plan were also available to view at the Parish Office at Bream from Mondays to Fridays.
- 2.24 Local residents were invited to contributing their views on any aspect of the Draft Neighbourhood Plan and its supporting documents by either completing and returning a paper copy of the consultation comments form (**Appendix 8**), completing an online version of the comments form, or emailing comments to West Dean Parish Council.
- 2.25 A consultation webinar was run on the 4<sup>th</sup> April 2023 and was open to all local residents, statutory consultees and other interested parties. The consultation webinar consisted of a presentation by members of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and DLP Planning, which set out details of the context for the Neighbourhood Plan and summarised details of the plan's policies. This was followed by an opportunity for attendees to ask questions.

- 2.26 A recording of the webinar was made available to view on the Neighbourhood Plan website following the event. This enabled anyone who was unable to attend the webinar to view the presentation. A copy of the presentation slides from the webinar are contained at **Appendix 9**.



### 3.0 REGULATION 14 CONSULTATION RESPONSES AND OUTCOMES

- 3.1 A total of 527 individual comments were received during the consultation period from at least 50 individuals or organisations. 14 of the responses were submitted via email, 19 via the online Google comments form, 16 via paper comments forms, and the remainder as Post It note comments collected during the consultation events.
- 3.2 Responses were received from the following statutory consultees:
- Coal Authority
  - Environment Agency
  - Forest of Dean District Council Planning Policy
  - Gloucestershire County Council Minerals and Waste Planning Policy
  - Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust
  - Natural England
  - Severn Trent
  - Canal and River Trust
- 3.3 **Appendix 10** sets out the consultation responses to the draft Forest Edge South Neighbourhood Plan, and the policies and sections of the draft Neighbourhood Plan to which each of the comments relates. The Steering Group's responses to the comments are also set out in this appendix.
- 3.4 The vast majority of comments were positive and supportive of the policies contained within the Neighbourhood Plan. A number of the comments related to matters or issues that could not be dealt with through the Neighbourhood Plan (e.g. bus service provision).
- 3.5 There were 27 comments which the Steering Group felt should result in minor amendments to the Neighbourhood Plan. These are highlighted green in the table at **Appendix 10**.
- 3.6 Following review of all responses received to the Regulation 14 consultation, the Forest Edge South Neighbourhood Plan was subsequently amended in accordance with the responses outlined in **Appendix 10**.
- 3.7 The revised Forest Edge South Neighbourhood Plan is the version that has been submitted to Forest of Dean District Council for examination.

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**BEDFORD**

**Planning / SDD / SPRU**

[bedford@dlpconsultants.co.uk](mailto:bedford@dlpconsultants.co.uk)

**BRISTOL**

**Planning / SDD / SPRU**

[bristol@dlpconsultants.co.uk](mailto:bristol@dlpconsultants.co.uk)

**EAST MIDLANDS**

**Planning/ SDD**

[nottingham@dlpconsultants.co.uk](mailto:nottingham@dlpconsultants.co.uk)

**LEEDS**

**Planning**

[leeds@dlpconsultants.co.uk](mailto:leeds@dlpconsultants.co.uk)

**LONDON**

**Planning**

[london@dlpconsultants.co.uk](mailto:london@dlpconsultants.co.uk)

**MILTON KEYNES**

**Planning**

[miltonkeynes@dlpconsultants.co.uk](mailto:miltonkeynes@dlpconsultants.co.uk)

**RUGBY**

**Planning**

[rugby.enquiries@dlpconsultants.co.uk](mailto:rugby.enquiries@dlpconsultants.co.uk)

**SHEFFIELD**

**Planning/ SDD / SPRU**

[sheffield@dlpconsultants.co.uk](mailto:sheffield@dlpconsultants.co.uk)

