



# The Ditchling Society

## NEWSLETTER

March 2025

### Update on Planning matters

As you have no doubt seen from the wide publicity there are currently numerous public consultations that will have an impact on the future control of planned development in our area and, if you have not already done so, you may wish to review the proposals and make representations via the links at the end of this newsletter.

More immediately, we must draw to your attention the Planning Appeal that has been launched in the name of the Ditchling Rugby Club against the refusal to grant consent for its proposals to redevelop the field fronting Clayton Road by the construction of a large 150 space car and coach park, a 2,500 square foot "Groundsman's Store" and other 'improvements' and alterations to the land. This proposal was refused outright by the South Downs Planning Committee in July 2024. The Society, the Parish Council and numerous Ditchling residents opposed the proposals. Further details of the Planning Appeal process are set out below.

Finally, we must apologise for the late appearance of this letter and general lack of communication. Unfortunately we have had technical problems with our website and email, resulting in emails sent to the society not being responded to in a timely way. We are working hard to resolve this.

### Rugby Club Planning Appeal

Full information on the original application and appeal can be found online as follows:

The 2023 application papers are still available on SDNP's planning website under reference SDNP/23/05134/FUL

The appeal papers can be found on the SDNP's website under the appeal section at ref/25/00014/REF. <https://planningpublicaccess.southdowns.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?previousCaseType=Property&keyVal=Q9HMPNTUMTW00&previousCaseNumber=NNIBCCTU0CU01&previousCaseUpn=010033267221&activeTab=summary&previousKeyVal=NNIBCFTU0CU08>

The key document you need to read to understand the basis of the appeal is the undated Planning Appeal Statement submitted by the Chairman of the Rugby Club to support the 2025 appeal. A copy is attached for ease of reference.

In his conclusion the Chairman of the club, who is not a Ditchling resident, states the following:

*It is very disappointing to all who are involved in the Club from Senior Management, team players, our Piglets and supporters that our plans to continue playing rugby in Ditchling are continually frustrated by ill-informed NIMBY local opposition.*

*I genuinely believe that the Park Authority has overstated the impacts of our proposals on the highway network, landscape and landscape character without properly balancing the significant benefits of allowing a long-established community-based rugby club to remain and develop in the village. I hereby submit that our proposals are acceptable in principle and that our appeal should be allowed...”*

It is unfortunate that the Club should choose to characterise opposition to their proposals as “ill informed”. The opposite is true. Opposition to the proposals is based on Planning Policies which the planning authority has formally chosen to accept as the reasons to refuse the application.

You also will recall that the major factor on which the club chose to justify its application was that the parking and pavilion facilities it uses at the St James Cricket Club were no longer available or suited to their needs. Subsequently the St James Cricket club has confirmed in writing that they are more than happy to continue to host the Rugby Club and that the declarations made in the planning application regarding the position of the Cricket Club are “the opposite of the truth”. It is noticeable that Rugby Club has chosen in its appeal statement to omit that reason and simply rely on their assumption that the needs and ambitions of their club must be allowed to override planning policy.

Events that have occurred on the appeal land since the planning committee met in July 2024 – the cutting down of the TPO Tree, the construction of a concrete base with 2 large shipping containers and a generator and the erection of Heras fencing to the side of the public footpath – all without consent – tends to show that those controlling the land are not proving to be good custodians of the land.

Nowhere in the Club’s application is there any evidence that the club and its members can afford to finance the development or that it is a sustainable model for a village rugby club. No evidence has been produced that the club is financing the application and appeal. Nor has the basis of the club’s occupation of the land been explained.

For all these reasons and many others, it remains The Society’s view that the Appeal should be refused and appropriate representations will be submitted to the Planning Inspectorate within the next few days.

If you wish to make your own representations a full explanation of the process is set out in the Planning Inspectorate’s “Guide to taking part in planning Appeals” is available from <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/taking-part-in-a-planning-listed-building-or-enforcement-appeal>

You may feel that you want to elaborate or modify on your previous comments. All representations must quote the SDNPA appeal reference SDNP/25/00014/REF. If you wish to elaborate, or modify/withdraw your previous comments, you can do so on the Inspectorate Website at <https://acp.planninginspectorate.gov.uk>.

If you do not have access to the internet, you can send your comments by post to the Planning Inspectorate at the address below.

All representations must be received by Wednesday 19th March 2025.

**Communicating with the Inspectorate**

Your representations MUST quote the Appeal reference APP/Y9507/W/25/3359693 and should be sent to:  
The Planning Inspectorate. FAO -

Zoe Day  
Temple Quay House  
2 The Square  
Bristol BS1 6PN  
To be received not later than: Wednesday 19th March 2025

**Lewes Local Plan and SDNPA local plan consultation**

The SDNPA is currently under a consultation review. The local plan directly affects planning decisions. The documents are long, but members may feel it is worthwhile to look at the proposals and make any appropriate comment. The easiest way to see how to access all the detail for both consultations is here on the Lewes-Eastbourne website: <https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/article/2996/Lewes-District-Local-Plan-consultation>.

Your attention is in particular drawn to the proposal to release land in East End Lane for development <https://planningpublicaccess.southdowns.gov.uk/online-applications/propertyDetails.do?activeTab=relatedCases&keyVal=NNIBCFTU0CU08> and off Lodge Lane, in Keymer. <https://planningpublicaccess.southdowns.gov.uk/online-applications/propertyDetails.do?activeTab=relatedCases&keyVal=NNIBCFTU0CU08>

**Local government reorganisation**

A consultation on proposals for a Mayoral Combined Authority for Sussex and Brighton is now open and everyone across the county is invited to have their say. The government is running the consultation, which is specific to the Sussex and Brighton region, until the end of the day on Sunday 13 April. All interested parties are welcome to have their say, including organisations as well as individuals who live and work in the region.

The consultation specifically asks about:

- 1. The proposed geography
- 2. Governance arrangements
- 3. Supporting the economy
- 4. Improving social outcomes
- 5. Local government services
- 6. Improving the local natural environment
- 7. Supporting the needs of local communities and reflect local identity

Full details of the consultation can be found on the gov.uk website here: [Sussex and Brighton devolution - GOV.UK](#)

Further information is available in the government press notice here: [Devolution Priority Programme consultations launch - GOV.UK](#)

We thank you for your interest in these subjects and hope you will be able to make your views clear to the relevant authorities.

Richard Stapleton (Chair)  
Mary Flynn (Secretary)