



Outcome of the Visions Meetings – November 2022

Background

Coldean Neighbourhood Planning Forum received approval from Brighton & Hove City Council and the South Downs National Park Authority in December 2021. It is currently developing a statutory land-use plan (the Coldean Neighbourhood Plan), for the area, in close consultation with residents and local businesses, societies and other communities of interest.

The Coldean Neighbourhood Plan will set out the community's aims and ambitions for planning in Coldean, whether that be for new buildings, the number of houses in multiple occupation (HMOs), green spaces or the use of retail properties. Once the Plan is approved and has passed a public referendum, it will have legal status in all planning applications.

Consultation Strategy

The Forum has produced a [Consultation Strategy](https://cnpf.co.uk/consultation-strategy) to guide its work in creating effective, meaningful communications between the Forum and the people who live, work, study, go to school or run businesses in Coldean.¹

The Forum is committed to conducting a wide-ranging and inclusive consultation, so that the Plan, as far as possible, reflects the ambitions and wishes of the majority of the people in Coldean.

To this end, the Forum is running a series of consultation events. This report covers the responses received at two consultation events, on 10 November 2022 at 7.30pm, and on 11 November 2022 at 10.30am. Both events were held in the Church Hall of St Mary Magdalene Church, Coldean.

Methodology

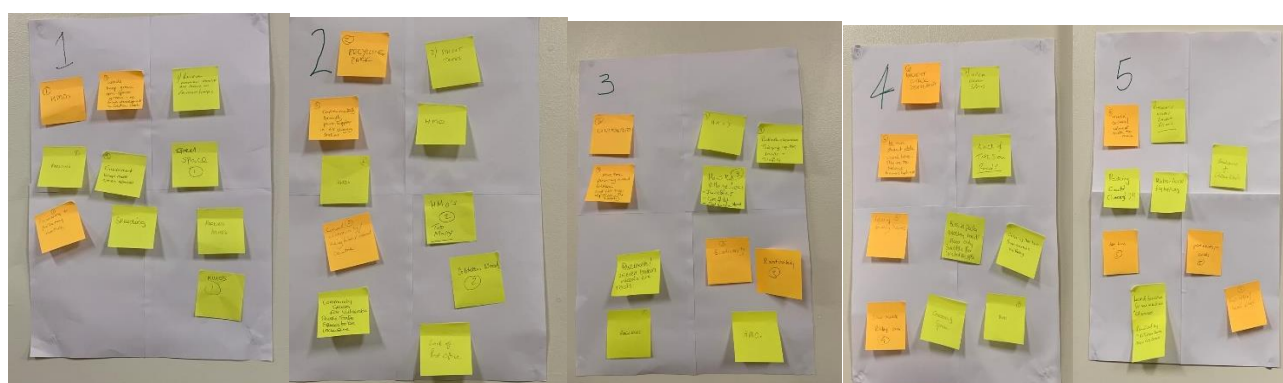
¹ The Consultation Strategy is available on the Forum website at <https://cnpf.co.uk/consultation-strategy>

The two events were advertised through the Forum’s website and its Facebook page, and by distributing a hand-delivered printed invitation to all 1,416 homes in Coldean.

At each event, following an introduction by the Forum’s Chair, Patrick Lowe, the remaining Forum Committee members present and the attendees briefly introduced themselves.

All participants (including Committee Members) were then each given five sticky notes and a pen, and asked to write down their five priorities for the area, graded on a scale of 1–5, where 1 is the most important. Participants were then asked to place each of their sticky notes into the relevant category (1–5) on large posters attached to the wall (see *Image 1*).

Image 1: Sticky notes bearing participants’ priorities, grouped according to importance (1–5), 10 November 2022



A Committee Member then read out the priorities for each of the five categories and invited general discussion on each.

Attendance

Despite efforts to advertise the consultation events widely, attendance was low for both (see *Table 1*).

Table 1: Attendance at consultation events, November 2022²

Event	Committee members	Participants	TOTAL
10 November 2022 (evening event)	5	6	11
11 November 2022 (daytime event)	3	8	11

Note: In some cases, two or more participants provided a shared response, and some participants did not provide responses for all 5 ranks.

² For the event on 11 November, some attendees responded remotely via SMS messaging.

The daytime and evening meetings had the same number of participants, but the daytime meeting attracted more people who are not Forum Committee members than the evening event did. The Forum may therefore want to consider running further events in daylight hours. It may also wish to consider using different venues for future events, to see whether this makes the consultation more accessible for some potential respondents.

Analysis

Participants used different words to describe their concerns, so for the analysis, the concerns raised have been grouped under five overarching headings as follows:

- **Natural environment**, covering green spaces and nature, for example chalk grassland, biodiversity, Coldean Woods
- **Housing**, covering HMOs, design and construction of new buildings, access to family homes and affordable homes, council tenancies
- **Vehicles**, covering road safety and parking
- **Community facilities**, covering access to community spaces and public services (e.g., post office, play areas, electric vehicle (EV) charging points)
- **General appearance**, covering pavements, fly-tipping, street furniture etc.

These overarching categories are used throughout the report (see Table 2).

Table 2: Total of all responses for each overarching category

Event	Natural environment	Housing	Vehicles	Community facilities	General appearance
10 November 2022	12	9	7	10	10
11 November 2022	10	9	9	8	5
TOTAL	22	18	16	18	15

Key findings

The findings generally reflect the order of priorities that had been raised at previous consultation events (i.e., natural environment and housing both scored highly), but also uncovered new concerns, specifically problems with vehicles (parking, road safety), lack of community assets and the general appearance of the area. All these new factors appeared as priorities for some participants at both events, although

the latter two categories were not scored as a top priority by any participants at the 10 November event (see Table 3).

Table 3: Top five concerns graded 1: responses

Event	Natural environment	Housing	Vehicles	Community facilities	Appearance
10 November 2022	4	2	4	0	0
11 November 2022	10	15	10	5	0
Total for both events	14	17	14	5	0

Natural environment

The **natural environment** emerged as a high priority. It was referenced in 23 responses (26%), and placed in rank 1 or rank 2 by 25% of all participants across both events.

Comments in this category include ‘Biodiversity’, ‘No more trees cut down’, ‘Green spaces’, and ‘Keep 39 Acre’. In discussion, the erection of Bluebell Heights on the site of Coldean Woods continues to cause local anger and distress: comments included ‘No more development on Coldean Woods’, ‘Protect green spaces from development’ and ‘Replace the trees removed by development’.

At the event on 10 November, at the invitation of the Chair, Deborah Yuill, participant and ex-Committee member, gave a brief account of the historical and ecological significance of chalk grassland, particularly in relation to Site 21a and Site 21c behind Varley Park. This habitat is recognised as being among the most rare, diverse and species-rich form of landscape globally, and Sites 21a and 21c are currently supporting several endangered and at-risk species of flora and fauna.³ The aquifer below the layer of surface rock supplies all of Brighton and Hove’s water, and development will further damage this already threatened essential supply.

This message was reiterated by Polly Eason from Coldean Community Organisation (CCOrg) at the event on 11 November. CCOrg has submitted a Nature Recovery Plan to Brighton & Hove Council. This essentially comprises an application for a Meanwhile Use Tenancy to restore the chalk grassland behind Varley Park in Coldean Woods.⁴ The proposed project, which is awaiting approval, includes the

³ See Biological Report at <https://cnpf.co.uk/reports> (scroll down the page)

⁴ See www.coldeancommunity.org or visit the CCOrg Facebook page.

removal of unsuitable species, a grazing plan for maintenance and the erection of a temporary learning space for ecological education and activities. The Nature Recovery Plan is obliged to demonstrate some level of commitment to sustainable, low-impact housing on the site.

In discussion, two participants expressed concern about the security and degradation of Coldean Woods, reporting that the gate for vehicle access is often left unlocked, leaving the woods accessible to vehicles, including those of Travellers and other peripatetic households, and also making the area vulnerable to fly-tippers. One participant also mentioned the importance of protecting and preserving the species-rich chalk grassland on 39 Acre.

In respect of these environmental concerns, the Forum is supporting the work of CCOrg to restore the land on Site 21a and Site 21c behind Varley Park, albeit with reservations regarding any housing development. The Forum has established an environmental working group to pursue work on this important area. It has also made available a CCOrg-commissioned [Biological Report](#) on the land behind Varley Park, and has also prepared its own [Environmental Strategy](#).⁵

Housing

Housing was also uppermost in respondents' minds. It was mentioned in 19 responses (21%), and ranked at 1 or 2 by 30% of participants across both events. It had the highest number of responses ranking it at 1.

In discussion, participants raised concerns that an increase in student accommodation would lead to an imbalance of households in the area, resulting in a lack of affordable social housing and family homes in Coldean.⁶ One participant was supported by others in expressing concern that the lack of family homes could ultimately lead to falling pupil numbers at Coldean Primary and closure of the school, which is sited on a substantial area of green space.

Comments on student accommodation included 'HMO [applications] should be rejected as there are already so many student blocks' and 'We don't want Coldean to be known as a "student village"'.

In discussions, a participant pointed out that HMOs are not necessarily occupied by students. This can be established by checking leases for HMOs, since student accommodation has an Assured Shorthold lease of either 39 or 42 weeks, which matches the academic year. There is no evidence to suggest that a significant

⁵ Both documents are available on the Forum's website at <https://cnpf.co.uk/reports> (scroll down to see reports).

⁶ There are currently 98 Use Class C4 HMOs recorded in Coldean, although recently this has fallen to 94 following the reversion of 4 houses to Use Class C3 (private dwellings).

number of Coldean's HMOs are occupied by non-student tenants, although a small proportion of them certainly are.⁷

Other housing-related concerns were in relation to new building developments, particularly Bluebell Heights, and the assignment of Site 21c for housing development in City Plan 2. Comments included 'No more high rises', 'A focus on affordable, sustainable housing that's efficient to run' and 'No building on green spaces next to properties'. This suggests that the Plan can take a position on building design and sustainability, to ensure that any building developments are sympathetic to Coldean's heritage and meet the Forum's ambitions for the environment and climate resilience.

In relation to housing, some participants also raised issues relating to Council tenancies, remarking that the Council was slow to respond to concerns related to repairs, and had also dismissed concerns about new building developments.

Vehicles

For the first time at a consultation event, participants raised issues related to **drivers and their vehicles**. Primarily, these priorities mentioned road safety (speeding, traffic volumes, availability of safe road crossings) and the congestion and inconvenience caused by inconsiderate or illegal parking. Seventeen responses (19%) related to vehicles, and it was ranked at 1 or 2 by 9 respondents. It received the same number of rank 1 ratings as the natural environment category.

In discussion, it was clear that the erection of Bluebell Heights has intensified concerns about the volume, speed and flow of traffic around Coldean, particularly on Coldean Lane. Participants were concerned for residents of Bluebell Heights who will have to cross this busy road, particularly children attending Coldean Primary School. It was reported that the Highways Agency and the Council have turned down a request for a footbridge on the grounds of cost. A pedestrian crossing (either Pelican or Puffin) is under consideration.⁸

Speeding was also noted to be an increasing problem, with drivers using Coldean's residential roads (Hawkhurst Road, Wolseley Road/Saunders Hill, Rushlake Road) as a cut-through to avoid congestion on Coldean Lane. One participant noted that hand-held speed cameras would not be feasible because the roads are too narrow to allow cameras to scan cars effectively. Other traffic-slowing measures could be

⁷ This subject is covered in greater detail in the Forum's HMO Report, available via its website at <https://cnpf.co.uk/reports>

⁸ A Pelican crossing is activated when a pedestrian presses a button at the side of the road. It is safe to cross when a green man appears on the display, sometimes accompanied by a beeping sound. The green man symbol and the amber light start to flash just before the lights turn green again for oncoming traffic. A Puffin crossing is similar, but has sensors that delay the green light if someone is crossing slowly, and hence the green man and amber light do not flash on a Puffin crossing. Of the two, a Puffin would be safer for children and elderly people.

considered, such as single-lane chicanes, vehicle-activated signs, speed cushions and DIY streets.⁹

Several participants reported problems in Coldean with parking, including contractors' vehicles or large heavy-plant vehicles being parked inappropriately on residential streets, as well as untaxed vehicles and vehicles under repair being left parked up for months. Some residents, particularly those living near local shops, had experienced drivers blocking their driveways and parking on the grass verges and pavements, causing inconvenience and structural damage to the soil and pavements. HMOs can also contribute to parking problems if the occupants own multiple cars.

Comments in this category included 'Speeding cars', 'Safer roads, safer crossings (there are none at the moment)' and 'Parking problems'.

A case was made by several participants for residential parking permits, which were reported by two participants to have been successful in freeing up parking spaces in some areas, such as in Hove and in Coombe Road area.

Taking action in the Neighbourhood Plan on the problems caused by drivers speeding and parking inconsiderately could also answer to the Forum's environmental agenda of protecting and preserving the natural environment, for example by discouraging car ownership through paid parking schemes, encouraging people to walk, cycle or use public transport through infrastructure improvements, and installing natural parking deterrents such as street trees on verges and pavements.

Community facilities

Although no one marked **community facilities** as a top priority at either event, it was mentioned for the first time at a consultation event by 19 participants across both events. Under this heading fall local concerns such as ready access to a GP, the presence of a local post office, and designated community centre, and the quality of the area's playgrounds and parks.¹⁰

Comments in this category included 'Local community/neighbourhood centre', 'Lack of a post office' and 'Spaces for children and young people – parks, skate parks'.

Some of the concerns expressed (such as a lack of waste bins and unsheltered bus stops) are best directed to Coldean's elected Councillors, although the Forum may wish to pursue those that are relevant to its overall vision for Coldean, for example

⁹ A useful summary of traffic-calming schemes is at www.trafficchoices.co.uk/traffic-schemes/

¹⁰ It was noted that there is currently a city-wide consultation on parks and playgrounds, including the playground on Wolseley Road. <https://consultations.brighton-hove.gov.uk/environment/childrens-play-area-consultation-autumn-2022/>. The consultation closes on 30 November 2022.

in improving access to, and visibility of, public transport, and the provision of EV charging points.

General appearance

The **general appearance** of the village was raised for the first time, by 15 participants across both events. Concerns in this category were mainly ranked as 4 or 5. Specific issues raised included broken paving stones, leading to overgrowth of weeds in the cracks, graffiti, crime and the presence of unsightly recycling bins outside the Ruby Hotel and Pub.¹¹

Comments included 'Unkempt gardens', 'Bins outside the Ruby' and 'State of the pavements'.

The concerns again overlap with issues that would rightfully be raised with Coldean's elected Councillors, but are relevant in some cases to the Neighbourhood Plan. The Forum may wish to relate some of these concerns to its overarching vision, for example preventing damage to pavements by planting street trees to make it difficult for drivers to park on them, and providing more central recycling facilities in place of the bins on Coldean Lane.

Summary

- The two consultation events held in November 2022 reinforce the view that the **natural environment** and **housing** are the top concerns among respondents in Coldean.
- However, the newly raised issue of **traffic and parking** add a dimension to the Forum's work, with new evidence and policies required to address this in the Neighbourhood Plan, in ways that are congruent with its main aims.
- Respondents also had views on **community facilities** and the **general appearance** of the village that need to be explored further, although there is some overlap with the work of elected Councillors, and boundary lines need to be made clear to residents.
- There is more work to do to encourage **engagement with the Forum's work** among local people.
- The Forum should consider **segmenting consultation data**, for example by age group, gender, ethnicity and disability status.

¹¹ A petition has been raised to re-site the recycling bins at the Ruby: evidence shows that they are rarely used by locals and have become a target for fly-tippers and passing vans to dump rubbish.