

**BOURTON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING GROUP (NPG)
PUBLIC MEETING AND PRESENTATION, HELD ON 10TH FEBRUARY
2014 IN BOURTON VILLAGE HALL AT 7.00 pm.**

Attended by 83 members of the public.

Presenters and Panel:

S Firbank (PC Chair), M Withers (MW - PC & NPG Chair), P Williams (PBW - PC & VHMC), D Scott (DS - NPG), N Laszlo (NL - NDDC), S Jennings (SJ - NDDC), C Loveday (CL - Planning Aid), N Hall (NH - VHMC/NPG), P Overington (NPG), G Overington (NPG), A Scott (NPG), P Withers (NPG).

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON PRESENTATIONS

1. NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN (NP) PROGRESS - Presenter MW

TREVOR BAILEY:

Q. What force does the Neighbourhood Plan have ?

A. MW said that, if adopted, it will become part of North Dorset District Council (NDDC) planning policy.

ANTHONY PALMER:

Q. Who will be the examiner and what will he/she do ?

A. MW said that he believes that the NPG will be involved in selection from a given list of approved examiners. The examiner may simply call for all the information gathered and presented and make his/her decision or call for a Public Hearing. We don't know how they will respond to our plan. It may depend on how well we document our evidence and what it contains.

SJ (NDDC) added that the examiner carries out his/her duties to ensure that the NP is in line with basic requirements, involving National Policy and the Local Plan. They also check to ensure that the Plan conforms to Human Rights and European Law.

ANTHONY PALMER:

Q. Is the examiner chosen by the NPG ?

A. SJ said not entirely. It was something that was to be agreed between the NPG and NDDC.

PETER LEWIS:

Q. Is the referendum restricted to the village ?

A. MW said that those who qualified to vote in the referendum would be those on the electoral roll in the neighbourhood plan area which, for our Plan, is the Bourton Parish Boundary. However, it is possible that, if near neighbours were affected by the Plan, they could be given the right to vote. For the NP to be adopted by NDDC, 51% of those who vote at the referendum must vote in favour of the Plan.

SJ added that the a normal range of voting at any local election in the area may be as low as 25-30%. On such an important issue for the future of the community it was hoped that there would be a higher turn out and in some NP referenda it has been as high as 80%.

2. HOUSING AND SETTLEMENT BOUNDARY – MW, NL, SJ

ANTHONY PALMER:

Q. What is the process for the examination of the district-wide Local Plan ?

A. NL said that the independent examiner is looking at the whole Local Plan to check for legal conformity and soundness, which includes justification. The examiner then goes through the process and makes recommendations for amendment, where necessary, before it is adopted.

The examination is public. Those who have made comments during the public consultation stages can indicate if they wish to speak at the examination. This is a formal hearing but the examiner will have seen all the responses and will decide who can speak. He will listen to any relevant concerns in deciding whether or not to accept the Local Plan.

ANGELA AMBROSE:

Q. When did the Local Plan go out for comment and who can comment ? How was it advertised ?

A. SJ said that details were placed in all libraries, notices sent to Parish Councils and libraries, it was advertised in the Blackmore Vale Magazine and posted on line on the dorsetforyou website.

ANTHONY PALMER:

Q. What are the criteria for the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) ?

A. NL explained that an SEA had to be undertaken where any Plan included proposals for development which could have an impact on the environment. For example, if the NP proposed to allocate a site for development, the SEA process was triggered. There was a need for NDDC to consult with statutory bodies (Environment Agency, English Heritage, Natural England) and, when their comments were received NDDC would come to a view as to whether or not a SEA was necessary. NL confirmed that this process had already commenced for Bourton's NP.

CL (Planning Aid) said that an SEA involved the formal process of scoping and this is not just for Bourton's NP but it is required for all plans.

PETER LEWIS:

Q. Could you clarify the difference between the Local Plan and the NP ?

A. NL explained that the Local Plan sets the strategic framework which provides a lead for the NP. There is a relationship between them but the NP is a separate document. The NP will sit alongside the Local Plan in the decision making process.

When adopted, the NP forms part of the Development Plan, which the Local Plan is also a part of. The NP can decide which planning tool to use. Bourton will decide what it wants, for example, on the settlement boundary issue. Both the Local Plan and the NP will have statutory weight.

CL said that it was a golden opportunity for us to choose how to move forward, to influence our Local Plan, because NDDC's Plan and Bourton's NP were emerging together and there could be cross-influence.

NL added that, without the NP, NDDC would lead on all planning matters, in consultation with the community, if Bourton decided to "opt-in" to the Local Plan Part 2. It is better for the village to decide its future through its own NP.

DAVID WATKINS:

Q. What measures are being considered to safeguard rural views and open spaces, the need for which had been discussed at previous meetings, including for the Village Design Statement (VDS) ?

A. NL said that the VDS will provide evidence that could be used as justification for the NP. The NPG can incorporate this evidence into NP policies. When allocating sites the village should be aware of these, and therefore should not compromise these specific views and open spaces.

DS pointed out that significant aspects of this topic would be covered later, in the Natural Environment part of the presentation.

ANDREW CATTAWAY (Dorset County Councillor):

Q. What is the time frame for the production of the NDDC Local Plan Part 2 - this was mentioned as a way for the village to propose any site allocations and development proposals ?

A. NL said that the process would not begin until the strategic development policies and adoption of the Local Plan Part 1 were complete, hopefully by the end of 2014 or beginning of 2015. They need to be done before Part 2, the allocations and specific sites.

AC suggested it could be 2-3 years and NL said this was probably a fair estimate.

MW:

Q. Asked for clarification on the options shown in NDDC's slides on Countryside Policy/Settlement Boundary. He asked if there could be a combination of Options 1 (Countryside Policy) and 3 (Site Allocations in NP), as shown in their presentation ?

A. NL affirmed that it could be done and was a further valid option.

3. NEW VILLAGE HALL - PBW

MRS SHORT:

Q. What about about car parking provision for the proposed new village hall ?

A. PBW said that the proposals were indicative only at this stage. There could be about 30 spaces around the hall and there is also parking available at the roadside, as is seen currently when there is a big event in the existing VH.

BRIAN MARTIN :

Q. How will the site be accessed ?

A. PBW said that this was a detail that was not yet finally determined. The two possibilities were directly off the main road and having a shared access with the enabling development, or through an existing access way. Lawyers were trying to determine if there were rights to do this.

PETER LEWIS:

Q. What will be the status of the land ownership, if the VHMC achieves its goal.

A. PBW said that the land would be held in Trust in some way, either by the VHMC, or possibly the Parish Council. The other Brian Martin will be advising on this.

PETA NATION:

Q. Stated that she thought that this was a fantastic opportunity for the village and asked if there was any other way forward ? She was concerned that through the NP process it would take too long.

A. NL said that, in the current Local Plan, the whole site is outside the settlement boundary and within the countryside, so currently the position is that an application for a village hall and development for general needs would be contrary to policy. In the emerging Local Plan the policy permits a village hall in the countryside. The hall itself might be acceptable but housing for general needs is not permitted.

The SEA forms part of the process of site selection as part of the NP process. This is the best option and it is recommended that it is done this way. However, the SEA

must be undertaken. This means assessing the options of various sites before coming to the preferred option. The VHMC have done a lot of work but the criteria the NP needs to meet must match the EU directive. NL repeated that, if the landowner went ahead independently, the scheme would currently be contrary to policy.

ANTHONY PALMER:

Q. Pointed out that Miller's Close had been accepted because of (i) proven need and (ii) no other suitable site was available. An exception was made for affordable housing, then why not for a village hall ?

A. NL said that there are certain exceptions in the emerging Local Plan and affordable housing is one. It is not contrary to policy, it is permitted. The village hall would not be contrary to emerging policy but the housing element for general needs would be contrary to current and emerging policy. It would have to be included in the NP or through Part 2 of the NDDC site allocations.

BARBARA BORWELL:

Q. How many houses are proposed on the enabling development ?

A. PBW said that in discussions with the agent for the landowner, 6 had been discussed, however this number was not set in stone. It will be low density. MW said that the landowner will want to provide the optimum number that provides the best land value. For example, it may be more valuable to have 3 large houses or 5/6 smaller ones. The controlling factor at this stage was, he understood, that the VHMC were restricting the developable area for market housing to 0.3 hectares. PBW confirmed that this was the case.

BRIAN MARTIN:

Q. Can a limit be put on the options available and are we committed to anything at this stage ?

A. MW said that the NPG is not committed to development on this, or any other, site. An SEA will be required for any site allocation in the village. The outcome of the SEA will decide where any development could take place. At that time the village will be asked if it accepts the locations proposed. If the village then votes in favour of a specific site, then it can be included in the NP. This would mean that, when NDDC's Countryside Policy is in place, there would be no development for general needs at all in Bourton, except where the village have voted yes to it in the NP. Everyone in the village will have the chance to vote.

ANDREW CATTAWAY:

Q. Asked about other sites and whether there are still national maximum/minimum permitted densities for housing development ? He said that the number of houses is critical.

A. NL replied that development densities are no longer in place and that it is up to the village to decide what is appropriate for the character and needs of the village, and what is appropriate on the site.

EDNA GIBBS:

Q. Wanted to say that she agreed with Peta Nation that this is a most generous offer and the village should take advantage of it as soon as possible. She said that in 25 years time it will be built on anyway and we should stop messing around.

A. No question asked.

SARAH NEWITT:

Q. Asked NDDC if they could advise how the problem can be solved.

A. NL repeated what MW had said, that the SEA should not delay the NP process. It has to be undertaken. The NP needs to conform to the Local Plan and the NP processes. This makes it a much safer route to take it on to examination, after the Local Plan is adopted. The SEA process has already commenced. A separate planning application for the hall and housing now would be contrary to policy. The NP is the surest way to secure a development site.

ANTHONY PALMER:

Q. Expressed concern and asked about the time-line.

A. MW repeated his previous comments in his presentation, ie, that the NP process, including the SEA, would take no longer than it would without an SEA. As NL had stated, it will run alongside. Few important development projects have a quick and easy path. For example, the Bourton Mill development has taken some 10-15 years to get to where it is now. The village hall project itself has been running for over 8 years. Development is like that.

ANTHONY PALMER:

Q. When will the Local Plan and NP be ready ? The village hall project is at a stage where they don't want to lose the proposed deal with the landowner.

A. MW said late this year or early next year, as it had always been planned.

ANTHONY PALMER:

Q. The landowner could withdraw his offer - is there any way to accelerate the process ?

A. CL said that recently some NPs had got into trouble, where their SEAs had not been properly carried out, and sites had not been properly assessed. It is crucial to look at the options, otherwise the Plan could fail. Current policy will not deliver what the VHMC want and the Emerging Plan will not, but the Neighbourhood Plan could

deliver. The village must rely on the NP progressing, with NDDC's Local Plan, if it wishes to have the surest way to deliver what it wants.

ANTHONY PALMER:

Q. If the village wants the new village hall proposal to be adopted, the onus will be on the NP to do this as soon as possible.

A. CL reaffirmed that the NP must assess all the options. MW assured the meeting that the NPG did not want to pile even more work upon itself, in addition to the huge amount of work that there is already. He further said that the NPG had recently met with the VHMC and S Firbank and it had been agreed that the best way forward for everyone was through the Neighbourhood Planning process, while continuing to liaise with NDDC on their emerging Local Plan.

MW pointed out that it had already been said, more than once, that we are hopeful of NP adoption following the approval of NDDC's Local Plan, which is expected to be by the end of the year or the beginning of 2015. It had also been made clear what the NPG is required to do to minimise the risk of the NP being rejected at public examination. He said that it may even be possible to improve on the originally planned adoption date for the NP, as NDDC can hold our referendum at any time, whereas earlier we had been advised that it would need to coincide with council/general elections in May 2015.

The referendum will be similar to a full electoral process. While we are optimistic that we will meet, and possibly improve on our original timescales, it is not possible to accelerate it by leaving out key processes. We all want it done as quickly as possible and the NPG will work hard to do this, hopefully with the full support of the VHMC and the PC.

4. NATURAL ENVIRONMENT - DS

TREVOR BAILEY:

Q. He said he is very keen to protect and enhance our environment. How can we improve the look and use of the main road ?

A. DS responded that some of the traffic issues are within the NPG remit. There is limited scope for improvement. Nick Hall is looking at this in his Infrastructure focus group. NH said that the group are looking at tidying up verges, tree planting, pinch points on the road to reduce traffic speeds and so on. Help was being sought from various people.

ANDREW CATTAWAY:

Q. Told the meeting of an emerging new policy at Dorset CC to allow local residents to set their own speed limits. It would be necessary to get any proposal costed. Then arrange for an increase on the precept to cover half the costs.

A. No question asked.

DS added that roadside verges provided important wildlife corridors. Everyone was invited to look at the Wildlife and Habitats Group information on the Bourton Village Website. Bernard Sullivan was the leading light in this and would be very glad to hear from anyone who is interested in joining the group.

MW expressed his gratitude to NL, SJ, and CL for attending the meeting in their own time and contributing to a very lively evening. He also thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and showing an interest, which he hoped would be continued by everyone completing their forthcoming questionnaires.

The meeting concluded at 9.00pm.