



Buckhorn Weston and Kington Magna Parish Council

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NOTES FROM COMMUNITY MEETING REGARDING THE PROPOSAL FOR A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN Buckhorn Weston Village Hall Wednesday 27th October 2021 7.30pm

Councillors Present: Cllr Kevin Aldred (KA), Cllr Mrs Munster (LM), Cllr Matthew Hoskin (MH), Cllr Tim Wilton (TW), Cllr Roger Gosney (RG), Councillor Fred Shotter (FS), Cllr Mrs Grant (AG)

Dorset Council (DC) representatives: Cllr David Walsh (DW), Mr Philip Reese (PR)

Members of Public: 30 (24 BW & 6 KM)

Welcome:

KA welcomed all in attendance including Cllr David Walsh (Portfolio Holder for Planning) and Mr Philip Reese (Senior Planning Policy Officer Economic Growth and Infrastructure) and advised that PR would be doing a short presentation about a neighbourhood plan after which a request for volunteers would be made.

Presentation:

What is Planning and the Dorset Council Local Plan?

Planning is required in order to say what should be built where and when. The DC decision making process is a balancing exercise as there are many competing needs and interests so it is necessary for a slow and deliberate process to ensure the planning department reach the best outcome.

Applications are determined by criteria set out in law and must be in accordance with the development plan (local and neighbourhood plans) unless material considerations indicate otherwise. DC are currently working on a new Dorset Local Plan for the county as a whole which is scheduled for adoption in Spring 2023 and will replace the current district local plans.

The 2003 North Dorset Local Plan was replaced in 2016 with a core spatial strategy of four main towns being the main focus for growth, followed by Stalbridge and eighteen villages and then the countryside. Some policies have been retained from the old plan, including settlement boundaries, but the boundaries for our villages were deleted. Now both of our villages are classed as countryside and protected by the countryside policies, as well as environmental constraints such as the conservation area around Kington Magna, listed buildings and the parish boundary.

The new DC Local Plan will set out its own hierarchy/spatial strategy with four functional areas:

1. BCP, Dorchester & Weymouth
2. Towns – Gillingham, Shaftesbury, etc.

3. Larger villages - Bourton, Motcombe, etc.
4. Smaller villages – Those similar to Buckhorn Weston and Kington Magna

Policy DEV4 will provide for greater growth in Gillingham and Sherborne, modest growth in Shaftesbury, Sturminster Newton and Stalbridge and infilling in settlements with a defined development boundary.

Policy DEV7 applies to development outside of any defined development boundary with development strictly controlled, having particular regard to environmental restraints, e.g. AONB, and the need to protect the countryside.

The National Planning Policy is a planning framework produced by the Government which covers England only. It must be taken into account when preparing local and neighbourhood plans. Apart from material considerations in planning decisions, one of the central parts of the framework is the policy of presumption to promote a sustainable pattern of development. This encompasses three dimensions in the planning system, economic, social and environmental, and provides guidance for local authorities setting up plans and is a material consideration in determining applications.

What is a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) and how to produce one?

A NP is a document written by the local community that sets out planning policies for the neighbourhood area, policies which are used to decide whether to approve planning decisions. It gives communities direct power for a shared vision of their neighbourhood; how new buildings should look, the infrastructure required and a financial gain in that the Parish Council will receive 25% of CIL revenue (community infrastructure levy). For full details, visit www.neighbourhoodplanning.org to view the Neighbourhood Plans Roadmap.

54 areas are currently designated in Dorset, designation being the first step to producing a NP. The Parish Council have already applied for designation however, there is no commitment to continue with a NP at this stage.

28 areas have produced Neighbourhood Plans. An example is Motcombe whose NP's vision and objectives include keeping the village separate and not part of Gillingham and Shaftesbury's growth, the protection of five community facilities and identifying green spaces, views, an employment site and housing allocations. Other policies, which are generic, cover the entire parish e.g. building size, style and detailing.

It is possible to have simpler plans for areas without settlement boundaries and include a development boundary. A settlement boundary means that infill is more acceptable within the boundary and does not encroach into the countryside whereas development is more controlled by the countryside. (A village envelope is similar to a settlement boundary).

The original settlement plan for the parish was removed in the North Dorset 2016 Local Plan with their aim being to focus more development towards towns and larger villages and reduce the amount of development in smaller villages thereby protecting villages classed as countryside. If development is wanted in countryside villages, a NP will assist in this as it will form part of the legal process used by DC case officers to determine planning applications.

There are six steps to produce a NP, including a pre-submission consultation of six weeks. A tremendous amount of work is required from those willing to volunteer as part of a steering group and it will probably take twelve months to produce a draft plan as all decisions taken must be carefully collated and clearly evidenced. Based on a draft document submitted, an examiner, who needs to ensure the NP has regard to basic conditions such as national policy, sustainable development and general conformity with the local plan, will write a report for DC after which a referendum will take place with people on the electoral register entitled to vote. If more than 51% of those voting in the referendum vote 'yes', then the NP becomes part of the statutory development plan for the area. The process is estimated to take two years.

If the villages choose to proceed, the starting point will be to apply for local grant funding followed by the formation of a steering group, a decision on the scope of the plan, an assessment of existing evidence, drafting of the plan, a pre-submission consultation and then consideration for external assistance.

An alternative is a Neighbourhood Development Order. Queries were raised if this could be done prior to a NP and whether it is an 'and/or' situation. It was noted that a NPO must still fit with local policy so if a previous application has been refused, the same may happen again. Other conditions include conservation areas and listed buildings. The basic issues are the same but PR will look at this more.

Summary by Cllr David Walsh:

DW advised a NP can be as big or small as wanted. It can look at materials used, green spaces, can be for one village or both. One motivation might be if you want to say yes to a particular development which is perhaps not being allowed at the moment however, there is no requirement to add a site for development. Whatever the decision, it will take a huge amount of work which cannot be accomplished by the Parish Council alone. The community will need a good reason to produce a plan and it must be agreed by the residents (51% in the referendum). NP's are to promote development but they must be the community's choice. DW advised the residents question why a plan is wanted. If it is purely about a specific development there may be other ways DC can help.

Parish Councillor Comments:

LM confirmed the Parish Council have identified the area which is the parish boundary. The proposed NP does not mean large scale development. The main aim is to look at infill and downsizing and to have more control over what properties look like and if they are appropriate to the village.

RG noted a concern that development may not be wanted however, a NP can identify where infill is acceptable. He considered a possible danger is that in doing nothing, the villages could be put at risk however, with a plan the villages can identify the way forward.

DW nor PR are aware of any pressure from large scale development and confirmed DC are not looking to allocate any houses in our parish.

KA thanked PR and DW for the presentation and invited questions.

Questions:

1. DC recently approved some NP's brought into effect with NDDC. With the new DC local plan coming in, what happens to the NP? *It has to be with the adopted local plan.*

2. If the villages combine for a NP, does that then make the parish a large village or will it remain as two small villages and is there a cost implication? *Currently a NP will be for both villages.*
3. Are there any changes in policy with concerns about extensive development and the Government's white paper? *Not sure as DC are waiting on responses to the white paper.*
4. Being part of the countryside there is no imperative to build anything and a NP does not seem to be anything broader than for building. What is the benefit when we can continue with case by case planning applications? What more do we get with a NP than today?
NP is there to help a decision maker with planning applications and the area is under the countryside policy.
5. If a committee can put something together in 3 weeks, why would the process still take so long?
The policies have to be supported by evidence on decisions taken and an accumulation of evidence takes time. Responses to the consultation also need to be considered. If the plan is unnecessarily restrictive then nothing will happen.
6. What is the longevity of the NP? *The NP is at its most powerful in the first year. The longer the plan goes on it gets less powerful but is not worthless.*
7. What is CIL? *CIL is a community infrastructure levy which, under a NP, the Parish Council will get a 25% portion which could be used to deliver a wide range of local projects.*
8. Due to the extensive time in DC making planning decisions, will the NP allow the Parish Council to decide on local planning applications? *No. The decision is still with DC.*
9. Who is on the steering group? *Four parish councillors plus volunteers from the community. Without community help the NP will not go far.*
10. Can you have a NP but not set a boundary and who chooses the plots of land? *Plots of land can be identified for development by the steering group and community.*
11. If there are designated plots, can they be altered later? *A 'call for site to be considered' is issued and the steering group will assess which is the best.*
12. Will the NP be cast in stone? *A formal review process should take place perhaps after 2½ years but this will depend on the intended changes and the time that they will take.*
13. What about density? *Policies can include this.*

Conclusion:

A vote was taken from residents: In favour of a NP = 3, Against a NP = 2, the remainder were undecided.

The validity of the vote was queried as it was considered that the small number of attendees did not represent the whole community. A further vote was held to gauge an 'expression of interest' in possibly going forward with a NP: 12 attendees showed an expression of interest

Volunteers were sought. Two Buckhorn residents were happy to help, one specifically for the start-up process. It was suggested that more young people ought to be on the group as it concerns their future.

KA thanked Mr Philip Reese and Cllr David Walsh for taking the time to attend the meeting.

Close: 21.16