



Buckhorn Weston and Kington Magna Parish Council

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NOTES FROM COMMUNITY MEETING REGARDING THE PROPOSAL FOR A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

**Kington Magna Village Hall
Monday 10th January 2022 7.00pm**

Councillors Present: Cllr Kevin Aldred (KA), Cllr Ms Pippa Chapman (PC), Cllr Mrs Munster (LM), Cllr Tim Wilton (TW), Cllr Roger Gosney (RG), Cllr Mrs Grant (AG), Cllr Tom Riall (TR), Cllr Simon Stranger (SS)

Dorset Council (DC) representatives: Cllr David Walsh (DW), Cllr Belinda Ridout (BR)

Members of Public: 15

Welcome:

KA welcomed all in attendance including Cllr David Walsh (Portfolio Holder for Planning) and Cllr Ridout.

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 Dorset Council (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.

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. 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.

An example of a NP is Motcombe whose vision and objectives include keeping the village separate and not part of Gillingham and Shaftesbury's growth as well as the protection of community facilities, rights of way networks, woodlands, cycleways and dark skies. It identifies 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.

Summary by Cllr David Walsh:

29 areas have produced Neighbourhood Plans with many more in the pipeline. A NP can give the community far more say in what developments look like so can dictate materials and design, (provided there is evidence that they fit with those around). The aim of a NP is to promote development, not to stop development, so if there are things wanted in the area, a NP is good. The settlement boundaries were removed to stop infill and as this area is allocated as countryside, this could constrain development if it is wanted. The NP must be the community's choice. To produce a NP will take 18 months to 2 years and for every policy in the plan evidence will be required and each stage needs to show community support. The advice is to keep it small and precise with specific things the community want to do. DW's opinion is that it would be better if the steering group are mostly members of the community rather than the PC members.

Questions:

1. If there is no NP can somebody else make decisions on our behalf? *Dorset Council's local plan is not putting any development here. However, as Dorset does not have a 5 year housing supply a developer may try to develop in the area. Dorset Council can turn it down but an appeal may allow the development. A NP carries weight as it has the support of the community. Also, it does not cost the community money as lots of grants are available.*
2. If talking 51% are they 51% of total residents or those who show up? *Where the referendum is concerned, it will be 51% of those who show up and vote.*
3. As a community can a NP be used to preserve what we have? *NP promotes development. It could be protecting the green space or village green. If you want to keep things as is there is no need to do anything but a developer could get through via a back door.*
4. If protected as countryside, aren't we protected? *Due to the lack of a 5 year housing supply, Dorset is in a weak position. Michael Gove MP has said he will be shaking up planning.*
5. Is it unusual for two villages to join together? *The parish is made up from the two villages. The process is only more difficult if they want different things.*

Conclusion:

It was emphasised that as and when a steering group is formed, if people do not vote a minority may get what they want so everybody should turn out to have their say whether they want a NP or not.

The process requires the formation of a steering group and it is important to include representatives from the community. Attendees were asked if they would consider volunteering which would give them the opportunity to influence the NP.

It was noted that there could be a concern for a degree of overbuild however, Kington Magna has a good shield with protected areas, areas noted as scientific value and other areas of landscape value and that any building could be moved away from these areas. It could be felt there was a place for some small in-building.

Currently these meetings are really to alert people of the possibility of developing a NP. There will be more public presentations and information in the coming months. There will be two community visioning events with a professional consultant in attendance. It is anticipated the events will run back to back, one in each village. All villagers are welcome to come along, ask questions and express their views.

Although this is not the determining meeting, a show of hands was asked from those interested in the Parish Council going forward: 6 in favour. Others not voting stated they need more information.

Close: 7.35pm