

**BENTWORTH PARISH NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN - PUBLIC MEETING 28th NOVEMBER 2017**  
**REMARKS BY BOYD McCLEARY, CO-ORDINATOR OF STEERING COMMITTEE**

**PROGRESS REPORT**

Welcome! As parishioners are aware, the Parish Council has embarked on the process of developing a Neighbourhood Plan for the parish.

A Steering Committee was established. A Charter was approved. A grant was obtained from the Department of Communities and Local Government. Consultants have been appointed to assist and advise – Planet (Liz Bourne) is here this evening. And we have been in regular touch with East Hampshire District Council (EHDC), who are also here this evening.

So far, two public meetings have been held, to brief parishioners on what is involved. There have been regular updates in “The Villager”. Minutes of the Steering Committee’s meetings and a good deal of background material are also on the Parish Council website <http://bentworthparishcouncil.org/>. I hope you have all had a chance to look at this.

What is a Neighbourhood Plan?

To remind you, a Neighbourhood Plan is a relatively new way for local people to influence the planning and development of the area in which they live and work. It lasts for 15 years (in our case up to 2028) and should:

- develop a shared vision for a village or town
- advise where new homes, shops, offices and other development should be built
- influence how much housing should be built, and of what type
- identify and protect important local green spaces or other treasured assets.

Once approved, our plan will have some force in setting out what development is acceptable in our parish and for what reasons. Developers and local authority planners will have to take notice of it. Without a Neighbourhood Plan, we will have little control over any development that takes place.

Our Neighbourhood Plan must comply with EHDC Local Plan and the government’s wider policy of sustainable development. This means that it is inevitable that some new housing will have to be built in Bentworth in the future. We can influence development, not stop it altogether. The Local Plan currently envisages that “about 12 dwellings” be constructed on a site at the corner of Church Street and Ashley Road (1.2 hectares). Since the Local Plan was published, five additional sites have been approved by EHDC. But this does not mean that all six sites will be developed. Our target for Bentworth remains “about 12 dwellings”.

What Progress Has Been Made?

In October 2016, the Steering Committee sent out a Questionnaire, the aim of which was to capture the initial views of parishioners. The response was excellent and we used the results and the views expressed at the well-attended second Public Meeting to prepare a draft Vision and Objectives for the Neighbourhood Plan. This draft was refined after further feedback from parishioners. And Debbie, one of the Steering Committee members will go over with you in a minute what this looks like and how we have used the Vision and Objectives to develop a set of detailed policies, which will be at the core of the Neighbourhood Plan. Debbie is also going to explain to you the issue of “affordable housing”, which is an important factor in deciding what form of development we would like to see in the parish.

Selection of Sites

Over the last few months the Steering Committee have drawn on the draft Vision and Objectives to review the **six sites**, which are potentially available for development. EHDC have assessed the sites for their suitability and we have obtained a Sustainability Assessment from our planning consultants.

Dave Hutley, another of the Steering Committee members, will shortly be explaining to you the positive and negative factors associated with each of the sites.

### **SUMMARY OF ISSUES (before Q & A Session)**

#### What Now?

We would like everyone to use the question and answer session after the opening presentations to ask whatever questions are on your minds. We will then give you an hour or so to look at the maps and ask questions of members of the Steering Committee and the Parish Council. I'll then ask you to come back together for any further questions.

But, before inviting questions, I'd like to set out some of the main issues over site selection:

- EHDC are content for us to look at all six sites, but have advised that any deviations from the Local Plan Part 2 allocation would need to be justified by robust evidence. The Neighbourhood Plan can try to allocate other sites, but this would be at the risk of it not being accepted when the plan goes to the Examiner. If it is not accepted at Examination, then the changes would be deleted from the Neighbourhood Plan and the original **Local** Plan allocation would remain. The other components of the Neighbourhood Plan would still remain (subject to acceptance by the Examiner).
- EHDC policy is for any new residential development to include 40% "affordable housing". 40% affordable housing can only be enforced by EHDC in respect of sites of 11 dwellings or more. EHDC have stressed that there is an exceptionally high affordable housing need across East Hampshire, and the Council would also need to be satisfied with any changes to the current adopted Local Plan. The Council and Examiner would have to see evidence justifying these changes before they could support the emerging Neighbourhood Plan.
- **So the current situation is that, unless site BTW001 is withdrawn or the number of dwellings to be built on it is reduced, there would need to be robust evidence for the Neighbourhood Plan to deviate from the EHDC Local Plan allocation.**
- EHDC have advised that their standard for housing density for new dwellings is 15-30 per hectare, though they have said that in a village of Bentworth's character we are looking at the lower end of this spectrum. The highest density of development in the parish currently is Glebe Fields/Glebe Close, with a density of 20 dwellings per hectare.
- None of the 6 sites has any serious physical constraints that would make it totally unsustainable for development, but it would not be possible to put all "about 12 dwellings" on BTW005 without going above 20 dwellings per hectare.

The idea is that, by the end of the evening you will feel you have a clearer idea of the issues and will be able to indicate your preferences to us as to which site or sites you think are most suitable for development. There is a sheet, which will allow you to do this. You can either fill this out this evening, or take it away and fill it out at your leisure and return it to me at Sycamore House. **BUT PLEASE ENSURE IT IS RETURNED BY 8th DECEMBER.**

**We would also very much welcome your feedback on policies. There is a space at the bottom of the sheet to let us have any comments.**

### **CLOSING REMARKS**

#### What Happens Next?

We would like to see a really strong response to what we have told you this evening. You can do this by completing the Expression of Preferences paper and ensuring it is returned by 8<sup>th</sup> December. Please do include any thoughts you have on the policies we have been working on.

When we have your feedback, the Steering Committee will prepare a draft Neighbourhood Plan, which will also be subject to consultation. Once this is complete, the "submission version" of the Neighbourhood Plan will be handed over to EHDC.

EHDC will appoint an independent Examiner to examine the Plan and supporting documents as well as the consultation responses to check that the Plan fulfils the legal conditions for a Neighbourhood Plan and that "due process" had been followed.

If the Examiner is satisfied that we have followed the correct process, that our plan meets the five "Basic Conditions", and that our evidence is sufficient to support our policies, he/she will allow the Plan to proceed to a referendum.

The District Council will then arrange for a local referendum in the parish. Everyone in the parish who is registered on the electoral roll will be entitled to vote **YES** or **NO** to the whole Plan. For the Plan to come into force, a majority (ie over 50%) of **people who vote** need to vote "Yes".