

HOLME-NEXT-THE-SEA PARISH COUNCIL

Notes of the Public Information Meeting arranged by the Parish Council relating to Neighbourhood Development Plans and held in the Village Hall, Kirkgate, on Tuesday 2nd February 2016 at 7 pm

Present: Kevin Felgate (Vice Chairman) Margaret Easton
Gillian Morley Lynn Devereux
Robert Burton
In Attendance: Christina Jones (Clerk)

Ms Jemma March together with Mr. Brian Meredith from the Borough Council of King's Lynn and West Norfolk (BCKLWN) Planning Department and Mr. Richard Seppings from Brancaster had been invited to speak about Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP).

There were 26 members of the public present including Borough Councillor Carol Bower and Hunstanton Mayor Andrew Murray.

Councillor Felgate welcomed everyone and thanked them for their attendance. He explained that the meeting had been arranged to explore the possibility of the village producing a NDP and obtain more information. Ms Jemma March had kindly agreed to come to provide information and answer questions and Mr. Richard Seppings had agreed to talk about his experience of the NDP in Brancaster which had just been adopted by a referendum.

Firstly, Jemma March gave general information about NDPs:

- A relatively new concept introduced by the Localism Act.
- The problem with the lack of proof of a five year land supply by BCKLWN had led to a surge of interest as communities had started to feel vulnerable.
- Can relate to whole or part of an area for development.
- Not the same as a Parish Plan and can include aspirations.
- Carries weight for planning but not highways.
- The BCKLWN Local Plan will be under pressure in the future for more strategic planning with less emphasis on specific local areas resulting in NDPs gaining in importance.
- The BCKLWN is moving away from Section 106 agreements with developments towards the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) which will probably be adopted by the end of the year. A parish with an NDP will receive a bigger proportion of the CIL than one without.
- It can be as simple or as complex as required.
- It is not a system for preventing any development but for directing development to suit village requirements.

She then gave the basic conditions required of an NDP which must:

- Support sustainable development and would not go forward to a referendum if it did not.
- Conform to EU regulations.
- Be consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- Be in general conformity with BCKLWN Plan ie a small village cannot be a town.
- Work out issues and talk to BCKLWN which will assist but not interfere.
- Gain more than 50% in favour in the referendum although it does not require a high turnout.

Next, she gave information on the process:

- Firstly the designated area has to be decided which is usually the whole Parish - BCKLWN will help with the plan, publish for consultation (six week period) and then a decision is made.
- Decide if a Steering Group is required - considerable input will be required for a large area.
- Funding up to £8,000. is available in support.
- Planning Aid will assist if the Parish wants to limit the input from BCKLWN.
- Decide on the issues which may, or may not, be similar to those in Brancaster - these will be informed by questionnaire.
- Issues need to be small and focused - the more complicated the issues the longer the process will take. The Parish needs to be talking to BCKLWN and / or Planning Aid at this point.
- Everything needs to be recorded - issues raised and how they were addressed.
- Some Parish Councils may have a Sustainability Assessment - impact on environment (no growth, no impact).
- Once the Plan is complete it goes to BCKLWN for a six week consultation - BCKLWN help to choose the Examiner by providing three suggestions each with personal and professional information. The Examiner / independent Inspector is paid for by BCKLWN.
- The Examiner should only make suggestions to basic requirements - BCKLWN does not have to make all the changes recommended.
- The Plan then goes to a referendum which is organised and paid for by BCKLWN.

Finally, she gave recommendations and advice:

- Most importantly, always keep in mind the reason the NDP is being completed - to safeguard what the village thinks is important.
- The government is very actively promoting more housing.
- Good areas will always be under pressure from developers.

Mr. Richard Seppings then addressed the meeting, first giving some personal information. He had had a holiday home in the area for 25 years and had lived locally for 20 years. He retired about five years ago and had been on the Parish Council in Brancaster in the past. He had become interested in the concept of NDPs at a workshop for Councillors and Clerks but did not have a background in Planning.

He gave the following information from his experiences of the NDP in Brancaster:

- It took from March 2013 to November 2015 to achieve with bursts of activity and periods of waiting but Brancaster's is a fairly simple NDP.
- It can be simple as long as it deals with issues that arise.
- Once CIL is introduced then a Parish Council gets 25% if there is an NDP but only 15% if there is not. (CIL will possibly amount to £8,500. for the average house.)
- Once the NDP is complete it cannot be altered or added to but another one can be done later - perhaps relating to business premises.
- Management consultants can be used, or the Parish Council or other group can lead process.
- There must be consistency with Planning regulations.
- BCKLWN paid for a trial examination, helped with production and was generally very helpful.
- Can look at existing NDPs for suggestions as to wording.
- Important that it is what the village wants - there can be a danger in focusing on other NDPs too much.
- The original plan can be provided by BCKLWN.
- The questionnaire only related to domestic properties, was approved by the Parish Council, some parts were tick boxes and some qualitative.
- People must be consulted and views considered - as Brancaster is a boating community, the view from the sea was an issue and no-one wanted any more big houses.
- Public meetings need to be held, and information circulated in every way possible.
- Natural England had some input to policies.
- The Examiner's alterations were fairly minor.
- At the referendum there must be in excess of 50% of the turnout in favour - in Brancaster it was 82% of a 33% turnout. The referendum is organised as for any vote by the electorate.

There was then a question and answer session:

Question: Was it worth it for Brancaster?

Richard Seppings thought so and there was a general feeling that it was worth it although there were those in the village who thought BCKLWN will not take notice of it.

Question: When will CIL be effective?

There is no CIL at the moment but BCKLWN have agreed in principle it has to go ahead, possibly by the end of the year. The impact of CIL is not yet known.

Question: Does an NDP have any impact?

An adopted NDP has the same weight as the Local Plan - a Parish Plan does not have the same weight.

Question: If an NDP is not done, can one be imposed?

No.

Question: Can BCKLWN prevent an NDP being completed?

Not as long as it meets the basic conditions - BCKLWN is consulted and can object but it is the Examiner who comments.

Question: What if Holme does not have a 'village envelope' for development?

This can be linked to an old boundary and re-instated if BCKLWN can find evidence.

Question: Can areas be 'zoned'?

Issues such as this need to be ironed out early on and a development boundary can be used if there has been one in the past - it has to agree with BCKLWN conditions.

Question: Must any suggestions by the Examiner be accepted?

Suggestions can be overruled especially if seen to be changing the basics of the NDP. If the Examiner agrees BCKLWN cannot disagree. Any recommendations made by the Examiner are taken back to the Parish.

Question: Will CIL have any impact on a 'small village or hamlet'?

Possibly not and major development would not be expected but every little helps and there is very little information available on CIL yet.

Question: If the NDP fails does it all have to be done again?

BCKLWN provides assistance and this should not happen - problems would be raised before submission. The condition statement centres on 'does it do anything illegal' and the NDP has to conform to strategic policies but it can influence events at a local level. It can be argued big houses are not sustainable.

Question: Who are the Examiners?

People can apply to be an Examiner and although there are no stringent conditions, there are criteria to be met, and Examiners usually have a background in Planning. They may not have local knowledge but each Examiner provides a CV giving work experience and background.

Question: How long does an NDP last?

Ten years although it would be expected to be updated before the ten years expires. Another part can be done at a later date. It is helpful to try to anticipate the next problems.

Question: Does an NDP carry any weight while it is evolving?

The further down the road the process is, the more impact it will have but it can be challenged until it is adopted.

Question: Can two parishes work together?

Yes, but this works best if both parishes have the same aims.

Question: What happens when the Government changes?

This Government is trying to focus housing on local areas and trying to do things quicker. It would be quite controversial if the process was reversed. There are more than 100 in existence now and others working through the process with big ones in areas of London and in Cumbria.

Question: Can Management Consultants be employed?

Yes, and funding is available but BCKLWN have a duty to advise and support and the NDP still needs to be informed by the village.

Question: Will the Core Strategy incorporate NDPs?

NDPs cannot be changed as they are locally led and democratically produced.

There was then some general discussion when the following points arose:

- Voters on the referendum are those on the Electoral Register.
- Issues come from the questionnaire but can be through public meetings.
- BCKLWN is increasingly under pressure for development but more at a strategic level, not the local level and is already working on the next Strategic Plan. It has also objectively assessed housing needs and the five year land supply which is currently an issue.
- CIL may be the conduit for funding in the future.
- As a village there should be concern about development but an NDP is not about stopping development, it is about shaping it.
- Employment needs can be more complex.
- There needs to be strong ownership of the NDP with a good project manager and the process needs to be driven in a way that the villagers have ownership.
- Villagers need to think about the future and then focus.
- Ownership by the village is really important.
- Management Consultants would be expensive and may not concentrate sufficiently on the village's needs.

Councillor Felgate then asked for a show of hands in support of the proposal for an NDP which was an overwhelming majority in favour.

He thanked everyone for attending and Jemma March and Richard Seppings for all their input which had been really helpful.

The meeting closed at 9.15 pm.