

PORTLAND TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN WORKING GROUP MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 4TH SEPTEMBER 2012

PRESENT: Councillors Mrs J Collinge (Chair), T Munro, Mrs S West and R Wild, together with Mr Michael Kelly and Mr Andrew Matthews (Portland Community Partnership)

IN ATTENDANCE: Samantha King (Assistant Town Clerk), Jan Farnan and Sally Lloyd-Jacob (Weymouth & Portland Borough Council), and two members of the public.

1 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs Ames and Denton-White.

2 – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

These were not requested by the Chair.

3 – PRESENTATION ON NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING

As a starting point Sally Lloyd-Jacob and Jan Farnan gave a PowerPoint presentation, introducing Neighbourhood Planning and outlining its policy, procedures, benefits and limitations:-

Introduction - Neighbourhood Planning is a new approach introduced by the coalition government to support decentralisation and localism. It aims to rebalance the system by giving communities more control in undertaking sustainable development, by reducing red tape and simplifying the process.

What does this mean? - Strategic planning is therefore streamlined, with targets being set locally in the Local Plan providing incentive to bring forward development. Communities are given new powers to act ie neighbourhood plans, neighbourhood development orders and community right to build orders.

Strategic Planning

- National Planning Policy Framework
- Final version published March 2012

Local Plan

- Consultation June/July 2012
- Examination early/mid 2013
- Adoption late 2013

Includes:

- Strategic policy approach and strategic allocations in towns
- No new housing or employment targets for settlements on Portland
- Policy on neighbourhood planning

Incentives

New Homes Bonus from April 2011

- Government match additional council tax raised for 6 years
- Affordable homes have extra bonus (over £200k over the 6 years)
- Meaningful proportion spent locally

Business Rates

- Council to keep a share of the growth in business rates in their area

Community Infrastructure Levy

- Meaningful proportion spent locally

What are neighbourhood plans?

- Planning policy document prepared by local communities (town and parish councils or a neighbourhood forum)
- Become part of the development plan, alongside the local plan
- Voluntary, not compulsory
- Complementary to parish plans
- Legislation coming into place

What can they cover?

- Cannot cover major infrastructure, minerals/waste, etc
- Must conform with national policy and strategic policies of the local plan
- Must contribute to the achievement of sustainable development
- Up to the community, subject to the following factors: location, new housing, employment, design, permitted development rights.

How are they prepared?

- Town Council initiates the process, with consultation and agreement from the Borough
- Local community develops the plan with support from the Borough
- Consultation for minimum of six weeks to summarise and address concerns
- Draft plan submitted to the Borough with relevant evidence
- Independent public examination
- Local referendum (51% clear majority required)

What is a Neighbourhood Development Order?

- Allows community to define what development is permitted eg proposals for new homes or business premises
- grants planning permission for development which meets all aspects included within the Order
- It must be small scale in comparison to size of the settlement.
- It must conform with the National Planning Policy Framework and Local Plan.

What is a Community Right to Build Order?

- Instigated by community organisation who want to bring forward specific development proposals for the benefit of the community
- Needs to meet certain tests and have the agreement of more than half of local people who get the chance to vote
- Communities can say what type of development they want to see, eg affordable housing
- Benefits from the project remain within the community

Lessons Learnt

- Takes time to be truly inclusive
- Recognise there are different communities who all need a fair say
- Keep communicating regularly to avoid rumour and suspicion
- It's up to you – Borough can help and advise but it's the Working Group that undertakes the hard work!

4 – NEED FOR A PLAN

Cllr Munro clarified a point raised in the presentation by emphasising that it is the Working Group and community who decide on spatial allocation. It is not determined by the County or Borough Councils.

Members of the meeting debated the benefits of a Plan and Mr Kelly asked how the “meaningful proportion” of government incentives would be distributed. Cllr Munro responded that it would be collected, and then redistributed.

Cllr Munro reiterated that a Neighbourhood Plan is for growth only, but no further developments are planned for Portland. The Local Plan says “no more development” whereas a Neighbourhood Plan would encourage more building, which would be contradictory. Mr Matthews responded that future developments will be planned for Portland, so if a Neighbourhood Plan is in place it would be beneficial by providing guidance. Ms Lloyd-Jacob added that a Neighbourhood Plan is also protects sites that the community don't want developed. Cllr Munro replied that unless the Town Council wishes to do something outside the Borough Council's existing strategy then there is no point, as Portland is already tied into strategies for transport, recreation, etc. Mr Matthews suggested that the neighbourhood planning process itself draws out what is feasible, but the results will only be known when the community has voted.

Ms Lloyd-Jacob clarified that a Neighbourhood Plan focuses on planning, not strategic planning on transport or recreation, but gives the opportunity to make changes to developments and boundaries. Cllr Munro questioned how a Neighbourhood Plan could change a detail of the Local Plan. Ms Lloyd-Jacob replied that while it cannot alter decisions on major road changes, etc it can affect sustainable development by giving the community a chance to comment on what is appropriate.

5 – DEFINITION OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AREA

The presentation mentioned the term “settlement”. Cllr Munro wondered whether this could potentially mean creating a separate plan for each village on Portland, with each settlement's plan impacting on neighbouring settlement.

6 – SCOPE OF NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN AND RELATIONSHIP WITH LOCAL PLAN

Mr Matthews said the Local Plan was very specific in places and was concerned that might supplant information that properly a Neighbourhood Plan should contain. However in other aspects the Local Plan might be silent, which would enable the community through the Neighbourhood Plan to appraise future developments on the Island. Ms Farnan added that a Neighbourhood Plan works alongside the Local Plan, but does not supersede it. The guidelines eventually finalised by a referendum

would apply to small scale developments, community projects and land use, but could not influence existing ownership on derelict properties, such as those at the Verne.

7 – RELATIONSHIP WITH DORSET MINERALS CORE STRATEGY

Cllr Collinge asked if she was correct in thinking that there was no opportunity to make changes to existing decisions made in the Core Strategy. Cllr Rod Wild replied that this was not necessarily the case and that related recommendations can be made in a Neighbourhood Plan. The Town Council has the opportunity to make input to the final draft of the strategy following on from the recommendations of the 2012, Marine & Environment Partnership. That policy can also be incorporated in the Neighbourhood Plan.

8 – SUPPORT FROM WEYMOUTH & PORTLAND BOROUGH COUNCIL

It was noted that Jan Farnan would be the Working Group's link officer at the Borough. She would provide advice and support, but work on the plan itself would have to be carried out by the Working Group.

9 – POSSIBLE SUPPORT FROM PLANNING AID

Cllr Collinge agreed to request information from Robert Lennis at the Borough.

10 – PROGRAMME OF WORK

Cllr Collinge asked if a letter needed to be sent to the Borough outlining our intention. Ms Lloyd-Jacob replied that it was not required at this stage, but would be if the Working Group decided to go ahead with introducing a Neighbourhood Plan. Jan Farnan would then advise on drawing up a Plan.

Cllr Munro suggested requesting Cllr Rob Hughes to become involved.

Mr Matthews agreed to see which community groups could represent different areas of the Island and different topics, such as housing, employment and tourism. Mr Matthews would also invite a representative from the Free Portland News to the next meeting.

11 – ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED IN NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The following topics were raised for further discussion at the next meeting:-

Mr Matthews said we need to take an updated look at needs on Portland.

Mr Geoff Smith, a member of the public, suggested including tourism considerations, and involving Dorset Wildlife Trust and the Dorset Trust for Nature Conservation.

Mr Kelly thought a Plan could influence how redundant mines are filled. Mr Smith suggested storage. Cllr Collinge added that they could be incorporated into a tourist opportunity.

Regarding defining the boundaries and settlements, Cllr Munro said that the Island should be regarded as one entire settlement.

Mr Smith said that the single road access to the Island and traffic through Fortuneswell needed to be taken into consideration.

Ms Lloyd-Jacob suggesting taking a closer look at what's already here and building on it. (?)

Mr Matthews added that a link was needed from the water sports area at Osprey Quay to the rest of the Island in order to encourage tourism.

12 - DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will take place on Tuesday, 2nd October 2012 at 7.00 pm.

The meeting ended at 8.45 pm.

Signed: (Chair) Date: