

BROADWOODKELLY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the open meeting held to hear about Neighbourhood Plans on Wednesday November 8th at 7pm in Broadwoodkelly Village Hall.

Present: Councillor Roger Heggadon (Chairman), Councillor Mrs Susan Walters, Councillor Darren Reed, Councillor Robin Gant, Councillor David Mendus-Edwards and Councillor Mrs Beverley Cook.

There were about 21 members of the public present. When the clerk got home she had received an email from West Devon Borough Councillor Mike Casbolt apologising, but he would be unable to attend and an email from the member of the public, who regrettably was no longer able to attend.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and then introduced Graham Swiss, who is a Senior Strategic Planning Officer at West Devon Borough Council. He is going to talk about Neighbourhood Plans.

Graham began by saying that you need to clarify why a Neighbourhood Plan is needed. There does have to be a good reason to prepare a NP. It is a significant thing to take on. It is not like a Parish/Community Plan (non-statutory). The NP has to deal with planning land use. There is a public consultation and a referendum in the parish.

In South Hams 21 NP's have been adopted and in West Devon 5 NP's have been adopted. The quickest took 3 years and 4 months to complete. It is an undertaking and requires a dedicated group to take it on. West Devon Borough Council will provide some support to the community.

The early stages and donkey work is done by the parish, which can claim up to £10000 for printing, publicity and hiring in consultants etc. Once a NP has been adopted it becomes part of the Development Plan for that area and it does carry statutory weight.

You can include policies on design, allocate sites for development and community sites. The Responsible/Qualifying body is the parish council, but a Steering Group is set up and this would include members of the parish council and members of the parish.

The key thing – you need to prove Community engagement. If you don't have this then you become unstuck. You can identify sites for facilities or certain development. Publicise this with workshops etc. You can get professional help, which is expensive so should be used wisely.

The Statement of Community Consultation shows responses and you need to have a good evidence base (a Housing Needs Survey is a good example of a source of evidence). If you put in your NP that you want a new facility you need to show it is wanted by the community.

The first stage rests with the parish council. A draft plan is prepared, which then goes out to the community for a six week consultation (funded by the parish). The amended draft plan along with all the evidence is then sent to West Devon Borough Council, who then publicise it. All the comments are taken in and the draft plan, evidence and comments are then sent to an independent examiner, who is appointed by West Devon Borough Council (with the agreement of the parish). The examiner then makes recommendations as to how it should be changed. It is up to the Qualifying Body (the parish council) to take those comments on board. Then everyone in the parish gets to vote in a referendum whether to adopt the NP (you are looking for a high percentage of support).

Lots of things are happening in the next twelve months (a general election being one of them). West Devon Borough Council has put the review of its own Local Plan on hold. Another change is the possible introduction of National Development Management Policies, which could remove a large chunk of what the NP includes. Graham suggested pressing the pause button and revisit the topic of a Neighbourhood Plan next year.

He also stated that smaller rural parishes could join with other small parishes to produce a NP.

The chairman asked if there were any questions:

1. Is £10000 the maximum you can claim? Graham answered saying that is the maximum and most find that is enough to cover the costs of producing a NP.
2. Someone mentioned Winkleigh, who produced a Neighbourhood Plan and then saw a large amount of development.
Each authority has to show that they have a five year supply of development land. If they can't then a developer has the opportunity to come forward with a proposal. A member of the public stated that this is what happened in Winkleigh. Torridge District Council did not have a five year land supply and developers came forward with options.
3. What percentage of planning that is refused and then goes to appeal gets permission?
Graham stated he was not able to give a figure.
He cannot guarantee that every planning decision will be in line with West Devon's plan and Neighbourhood Plans.
4. What is the provision for Broadwoodkelly in West Devon's Local Plan? Graham stated there is provision in the plan for 10 dwellings, but this does not include infill/windfall. If there was a development of five or more dwellings then this would count.
5. The design of dwellings was queried. Graham stated design is coming to the fore. Once the NP is adopted then all the policies contained within it have to be listened to unless the Government changes policies. Most regulations are in the Building Regulations with regard to the quality of the dwelling (insulation etc). This is outside the scope of planning.

The chairman thanked Graham for his talk.

The Chairman then introduced Katie West, who is from the Housing Needs Team. She presented some information gained from the recent Housing Needs Survey.

There was a 11.7% response, which is good for a small rural area.

100% of respondents had a local connection.

66.7% had lived in the parish for 10 years or more

26.7% would be in favour of small development

53% not in favour (traffic, utilities etc.)

Community Land Trust:

33% supported

60% did not support

80% owned their house outright

20% had a mortgage

There wasn't as such a need for affordable housing, but there is a person requiring accommodation so there is a need for 1 unit.

Options for delivering the unit. Finding a cost effective development and put the two together.

If the person earns under a certain threshold then it is finding something that is affordable for them.

A rental property – depends if the tenancy is long term. Holiday lets are unlikely to be suitable as they will not be long term and they would not be regarded as affordable housing. In some areas there is little difference between the cost of renting and paying off a mortgage.

Neither South Hams or West Devon build their own council houses. A housing association took on the council house stock of the two authorities.

An affordable home should be for someone in the parish, but if no-one in the parish takes it then it cascades out to a wider area and if no-one takes it again then it cascades out to an even wider area. An affordable home should remain as such. The right to buy altered things.

One gentleman queried the 11% response on the Housing Needs Survey. Would such a low response rate be good enough to be regarded as evidence? Graham explained that there is no threshold on the level of response so it would be satisfactory.

One member of the public stated they would support pausing until the election. The majority of those present were in agreement. The chairman stated that people are most welcome to attend the parish council meetings where this will be discussed.

Katie stated the Housing Needs Survey will be sent out to the parishes in the next few months. May be discuss with neighbouring parishes.

Graham stated he would be happy to come back later and provide an update on the topic. The parish could carry out a scoping exercise in the parish and find out what is needed locally.

The Neighbourhood Plans that have come in vary in thickness. Some have 30 policies and others only 15. One NP in the South Hams just had one policy in it a 'Principal Residency Clause' attached to each development as the area has a lot of holiday homes.

He suggested it could be an opportunity for the parish to produce a design guide.

Graham and Katie were thanked for their attendance.

The meeting concluded at 8.15pm