



Meeting: Public meeting regarding the Neighbourhood Plan **Date:** 15th February 2016 **Time:** 7.30PM

Venue: NORTH WEALD LIBRARY, 138 HIGH ROAD, NORTH WEALD

MEETING NOTES

Members of the Public: 35
Members of the Press: 2
Councillors Present: C Hawkins (Chairman), A Buckley, T Blanks, B Clegg, B Bartram, G Mulliner, Mrs Grigg, Mrs S Jackman MBE, B Eldridge, Mrs Godwin-Brown, N Bedford, A Tyler

Others: Susan Deluca (Clerk), Adriana Jones (Principal Finance Officer), Jo Tyler (Senior Administrative Officer)

The Clerk to the Council welcomed everybody in attendance, and thanked them for taking the time to attend this public meeting. The Clerk introduced all present, and stated that the possibility of a Neighbourhood Plan has been mooted for well over a year now with articles placed in the press (local newspapers, Village Life, Everytingeppingforest), details erected on all the Parish Notice Boards and on the Parish Council website, and on twitter. In addition, notices have been hand delivered to each and every house in the Parish by Councillors.

There have been a number of public meetings, details of which were also hand delivered to each house in the Parish. The Clerk explained that the Parish Council had used every method and means at their disposal to publicise a Neighbourhood Plan, however if any members of the public felt there were other areas or mediums missed, they should contact the Clerk.

The Clerk explained that the Parish Council are at the start of the Neighbourhood Plan process, with the Neighbourhood Plan Area being designated (a copy of the plan area was included in the subsequent presentation). The purpose of this meeting was to bring together all those parties who had expressed an interest in a Neighbourhood Plan to establish if there is enough support in terms of time and parties willing to take part to progress a plan. The Clerk explained that even though the Parish Council are the 'Relevant Body' responsible for progressing a plan, it is the local community who shape its content, without which the plan would not be possible. A Neighbourhood Plan is community lead, and primarily about the use of land. A Neighbourhood Plan is a pro-development document, meaning it must actively promote development. It is important for residents to understand that it is not a tool to stop development, but a means to have an element of control in terms of where development should go and what type it should be.

The Clerk passed over to Adriana Jones, who gave a short 20 minute presentation on Neighbourhood Planning, a copy of which is attached to these notes. There was then an opportunity for members of the public to ask questions, a brief summary of the salient points is detailed below:

Can you still use the Thornwood Village Design Statement?

The Thornwood Village Design Statement is an extremely useful, well put together document which continues to be valid. However, EFDC has never formally adopted this

document and as such they do not have to take it into consideration when deciding planning applications. The difference between a VDS and a Neighbourhood Plan is that, subject to a successful referendum, a Neighbourhood Plan will become a statutory document adopted by EFDC.

Could it be written into the Neighbourhood Plan what the community want the extra 25% to go to (this question was with reference to 25% of the community infrastructure levy going to Parish Councils who have an adopted Neighbourhood Plan in place)?

The 25% 'neighbourhood funding pot' will be passed to the Parish Council to be spent within a 5 year period (or it could be recovered by the Local Authority), on supporting the development of the area by funding:

- a) the provision, improvement, replacement, operation or maintenance of infrastructure;
- b) anything else that is concerned with addressing the demands that development places on an area.

The Parish Council could liaise with residents to ascertain how best to spend this money.

Do you have to be resident in the parish to be part of the steering group or can you be a developer from outside?

Part of the consultation process is to include all relevant stakeholders in the process. A stakeholder is effectively anybody that has an interest in the area or land. This could include developers and landowners. You don't necessarily need to be resident in the Parish, however it would generally be good practice that members of the Steering Group are people with a strong local connection and people who will objectively consider what's best for the future of the Parish and its people.

Have you come across Neighbourhood Plans that have been rejected and do you know why they were rejected?

There are three responses available to the inspector:

1. Proceed to Referendum
2. Consider certain changes, and then proceed to referendum
3. Do not proceed to referendum

The plans that have been rejected are generally because the policies do not conform with either Local or National policy.

Should we be looking at the Master Plan document as a starting point?

The Masterplan document will be an extremely important piece of evidence that should be considered as part of a Neighbourhood Plan for this area.

It seem silly that a Masterplan has been created, yet planning permission for building directly in one of the suggested access points to potential new development (opposite the shops in the High Road) was given.

The Masterplan is a document that has been formally agreed as part of the Evidence Base for the EFDC Local Plan. This is not a policy document, but evidence which will be considered as part of the Local Plan process. It would therefore be wrong to use this document as a material planning matter to object to such development. At this stage, these are just ideas, options and possibilities, for consideration. They would therefore carry very little, if any, weight. Every planning application is judged on its own merits, this was the case in this particular instance.

How much time is required?

This depends on how much public support there is and how active the Steering Group are. It also depends on what the Neighbourhood Plan will include. The more detailed and involved, the time will need to be spent. If there are members of the community who have a specific skill they are willing to use and put forward to assist the Neighbourhood Plan, this could save money but may be more timely for that individual.

How many months will it take to complete?

Again, this depends on how much support there is and how active and involved the Steering Group are in the process, however generally 2 years would be a good guess.

Are there any grants available?

Yes. The Government has set aside funds to assist communities with completing a Plan, however there is often a time limit attached to any grant spend. As such, the Parish Council needs to think carefully about when to apply for any funding.

What are consequences of not having a Neighbourhood Plan?

There are only two possible consequences. The first is that the community would be failing to take up an opportunity afforded them by the Localism Act to help shape the future of their area. Residents need to think whether or not they feel they have contributed sufficiently to the Local Plan process, and if they are comfortable that the Local Plan will address all their areas of concern in the Parish. If so, then this first consequence may not become an issue. The second is a financial consequence in that the community would not receive 25% of any Community Infrastructure Levy (depending on whether or not EFDC decide to introduce this), and would only receive 15%.

What is the timescale for the EFDC Local Plan?

The 'Draft Plan' or 'Preferred Options' is due out around summer of 2016, however adoption is not expected until 2018. Residents were asked to keep their eyes open this summer for the draft document which will be a public consultation and will detail the District Councils preferred sites for development.

Is that the finalisation of all the plans from the Village Hall meetings from 2 years ago?

This is not necessarily the finalisation, but it is part of the same process from 2 years ago. The start of the Local Plan process was actually in 2011.

How will the Neighbourhood Plan influence the Local Plan?

These plans can dovetail into each other. Ultimately, the Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with the Local Plan and National Planning Policy. In essence, anything that isn't specified in the Local Plan or National Planning Policy can be included in the Neighbourhood Plan.

What is the point of a Neighbourhood Plan without a Local Plan?

That is a question that residents will need to answer. The whole purpose of a Neighbourhood Plan is that residents can have an element of control over what happens in their area, however a Neighbourhood Plan must be in general conformity with both Local and National Policies. If a Neighbourhood Plan is created first, and then the Local Plan is adopted with contradicts the Neighbourhood Plan policies, any policies in the

Neighbourhood Plan that are not in general conformity with the Local Plan will be afforded little weight.

Have you got a plan of the whole of the Epping Forest District? (Need to remember that it is not just about North Weald).

The Local Plan covers the Epping Forest District, and a Neighbourhood Plan would cover only the Designated Area.

How many Parish Council's are doing a Neighbourhood Plan now?

Nationwide there are over 100 plans that have gone through a successful referendum, and over 1,700 communities actively engaged in the process. There are 7 Parish or Town Councils in the Epping Forest District who are actively engaged in the process.

Will it make us a softer target? (If we do not have a Neighbourhood Plan).

This would depend on a number of factors, including how well residents in the Parish feel that the Local Plan will reflect what is needed for their area. It's important to remember that the Neighbourhood Plan does not stop development, but gives people an opportunity to say what they want and where.

Can we influence the zoning? Can we allocate areas where we think it will be best to develop?

Part of the Neighbourhood Planning process affords local communities the right to create 'Right to Build' orders, meaning the local community can specify areas where development should be, and effectively give planning permission for that area.

If you take houses and homes out of the equation, what sort of other developments get taken into account?

Whilst most people see Neighbourhood Planning primarily about housing, it also has a number of other functions including protecting valued and open green spaces, heritage assets, locally significant areas or spaces, transport or infrastructure, etc. For example, if the community felt a doctors surgery was needed in the area, providing they were willing to do the research and speak with the NHS and secure all the relevant services providers necessary, a Right to Build order could be created.

The Neighbourhood Plan is a pro-development plan, if you have a look at the wider picture, I am concerned about our infrastructure.

This is understood, however it's a chicken and egg situation. Without the extra houses, you won't get the infrastructure needed. A Neighbourhood Plan could specify certain policies and requirements of any new development in terms of the infrastructure needed. In addition, the creation of a Neighbourhood Plan would mean an increase in any CIL received by the District Council to 25%, meaning more funds would be available for any infrastructure projects.

If we as a group say yes we will go ahead (with Neighbourhood Plan) will EFDC consider that before agreeing their Local Plan?

The Local Plan process is well underway and nearing its latter stages with a draft plan expected later this year. It is likely that any Neighbourhood Plan would come simultaneously with a Neighbourhood Plan if its creation starts soon, and as such this is not necessarily something that EFDC will consider before agreeing their Local Plan.

Would we be in a stronger position just for making the decision to take part in a Neighbourhood Plan?

This could be the case, yes, as the District Council, Developers, Landowners, and residents will now that the residents want to be actively involved in the development of their area going forward.

What level of support can we expect from the Parish Council on this?

The Parish Council is the Relevant Body authorised to progress a Neighbourhood Plan, however it would expect the plan to be created *by* the people *for* the people with the guidance and support (both financial and administrative) of the Parish Council. The Parish Council will be actively involved in the process. The Parish Council already holds around £30,000 in funds to create a plan, but further funds may need to be precepted.

If more houses are built what would happen with the local school (there are not enough places now, it is being extended to take in children that Epping can't take, parking is bad)?

Any associated infrastructure including schools or school places is considered as part of any large planning application. This is something that is considered by EFDC as the Local Planning authority. The Parish Council did raise this as an issue in response to the recent consultation on the proposed school extension, however evidence was submitted to ECC stating parking would be sufficient. This would need to be taken up with ECC directly.

Can we not plan to keep it (North Weald) as a village, do we need to be a town?

It is possible that a Neighbourhood Plan could create a Right to Build Order in an area separate from the existing settlement (subject to ensuring the appropriate evidence and support is there) to create a detached settlement within the Designated Area. This would ensure the village remains a village.

Following the Q&A session, members of the public were informed that there could be an argument that 35 residents out of 7000 in the Parish could not be deemed a fair representation of the community and subsequently a statement of support for a Neighbourhood Plan, and that over the next few weeks residents should speak with their neighbours, colleagues, etc about the Neighbourhood Plan, stating that they should register their interest with the Parish Council if they support its creation. At the 7th March Parish Council meeting, Councillors will review the amount of interest and make a decision how to proceed. It was made clear that without public support, a Neighbourhood Plan would not be possible.

The Clerks thanked everybody for attending.

Meeting closed 8.50pm