



NOTES

of

BRANTHAM CONSULTATION EVENT

19 June 2013, 7.30pm held at Brantham Village Hall

Paul Revell welcomed attendees and parishioners to the meeting and made introductions:

- Mike Smith (MS) (Senior Planning Officer – Babergh District Council)
- Rich Cooke (RC) (Head of Planning Policy – Babergh District Council)
- Andy Plant (AP) (St Francis Group)
- Trot Ward (TW) (District Councillor – Babergh District Council)

Trot Ward addressed the meeting and stated that because of his position on the development Committee at Babergh District Council he was attending the meeting in an observatory capacity and would not be taking part in the discussion.

PR asked any Councillors present to declare any pecuniary interests. None were declared.

PR made the following statement:

“Meeting Objectives:

This meeting has been arranged in order that Parishioners can express their views with regard to the proposed development of 600 houses on Greenfield land between the Brantham Industrial Site and Brooklands Road. We are not here to consider a planning application but how Babergh District Council’s new policy document will shape future applications. Your Parish Council requires a mandate from Parishioners to incorporate your views in its response to Babergh District Council before the deadline of 4.30pm on Tuesday 9th July 2013. Concerned Parishioners may also submit their own individual responses either electronically or on paper. Paper response forms are available from Babergh District Council offices at Hadleigh and I understand mobile libraries.

House Rules:

I am aware of how emotive this issue may be to some Parishioners. However, this meeting will be conducted with decorum and respect. No one will be entitled to speak without the authority of the Chair (i.e. myself). A microphone will be available to those parishioners permitted by the Chair to address the meeting. I will endeavour to allow 3 minutes time to all those Parishioners who wish to speak. However, protracted submissions or irrelevant matters may be curtailed by the Chair.



Presentations:

We are fortunate to have here tonight representatives from both the St Francis Group and Babergh District Council who will now make their presentations in respect of this important regeneration site. After these presentations I will open the meeting up for questions, answers and views.”

Andy Plant (SFG):

AP reiterated the point that at this stage there is no application or proposal for development of 600 houses, and that the aim of this meeting was to discuss the modifications to the Core Strategy in reference to the development on Greenfield land.

Rich Cooke (Babergh District Council):

RC outlined the responsibility of BDC to develop a core strategy. When an application comes forward for this land it will be for Babergh District Council to make a decision about it.

How did we get here?

Over some years the Industrial Site in Brantham has become derelict and vacated by its main users. BDC produced a local plan to guide the future of this site. BDC is now developing a newer plan under current guidelines. Due to the strategic importance of this site it was decided to set up an updated plan for the site. There have been previous consultation events held, views of other agencies have been received and the Inspection has been undertaken. As a result there have been some changes to the policy proposed and now the plan is not far from adoption.

The overall objectives for the site have remained the same; to regenerate the brownfield site which is currently run down and derelict and to retain as much employment on the site as possible. This presents a number of issues that are complex and long-term; such as land decontamination, access to the land and ensuring economic viability.

Currently it is proposed that ITW will remain on site as it is now. South of the railway line will remain open land. North of the railway land will focus on employment (whilst retaining most of the employment that is currently there).

However, all of this will need some “enabling development” which is usually found through housing.

BDC is currently halfway through the public consultation process. All responses will be sent to the Planning Inspector who will then write up a report with feedback and recommendations. Following this, BDC will consider the overall plan and whether to adopt it. Responses to the consultation can be made on paper, by phone or by email.



Once the plan is adopted a Planning Application will come forward, and consultation on this will be undertaken by the developers in partnership with BDC and HCA (Homes and Communities Agency). BDC are currently discussing with HCA the best way to involve the local community in this consultation.

The meeting opened for questions from the public.

Question – In 2006 proposals were put forward and consulted on BUT there was nothing about the Greenfield land in these proposals. Therefore isn't this new, and shouldn't the process start at the beginning again?

Response (MS) – We are currently not at application stage. This development is a new idea to cover the costs of development of the Brownfield site. How much development is to be resolved in the future.

Question (AG) – Why has it taken so long and all of a sudden we are this far down the line?

Response (RC) – The planning process at that time (2006) was not as rigorous or so evidence-based as it is now. The Government wants District Councils to prove that things are viable. The developers/land owners therefore agreed that additional development beyond the brownfield site was the only way to make the development possible. It has taken so long because of the planning system and the level of scrutiny.

Question – SFG knew that the land was contaminated when it was bought so why does there need to be additional development now?

Response (AP) – When the site was purchased there were tenants on it. They went into receivership and therefore the site was no longer viable or running. Yes, SFG did know the site was contaminated.

Question – A large number of houses will mean a large number of additional people in the village (about 50% more)! Where are these people going to work – this is not just about building houses, it is about the PEOPLE who live in them!

Response (AP) – The infrastructure will need to be catered for in terms of education and medical etc. This will be part of the viability discussion.

Question – When did SFG purchase the Greenfield site?

Response (AP) – In 2008, after the purchase of the Brownfield site.

Comment – 600 additional homes would mean at least 600 – 1200 additional cars. This will present a safety issue on the roads in Brantham

Question – In the tendering process for the development of the Brownfield site was there competition?



Question – this now seems to be progressing at a fast pace. What guarantees does the community have that this is not already a done deal?

Response (RC) – The original 2006 plan included mixed use with some housing. There is no clear indication of how much housing. There has been no deal done – this happens at the point at which a planning application is submitted and approved. The plan at the moment is trying to set out the details of the plan and working towards them. The planning application process is now very complicated and the principles need to be agreed first before an application can come forward.

Question – on the radio this morning the BDC representative (Simon Barratt) stated that unless the Greenfield land was developed the Brownfield land would not be developed – is this the case?

Response (RC) – They were unaware of these comments.

Question – Under EU law shouldn't polluters pay for the costs of the pollution on site which would mean that additional funds would not need to be found through housing? What about ICI?

Response (AP) – The original polluters are no longer in business and therefore they cannot pay for these costs. The pollution pre-dates ICI.

Question 1 - 40 acres of the Brownfield site is currently being marketed for sale through "Invest in Suffolk" with BDC as a contact. Does SFG just want to develop the Greenfield site and sell the Brownfield site?

Response (RC) – BDC and SCC are involved in the proactive development of these kinds of sites. In order to attract development from potential investors these sites are marketed for sale for investment.

Question 2 – What guarantee do we have that once the Greenfield land is developed that the Brownfield site won't be sold/left?

Response (MS) – this is an issue that BDC will need to address. This will be done through planning conditions to ensure that things happen when they are supposed to happen.

Question – If the Factory Land is polluted won't this have spread to the Greenfield land?

Response (AP) – The nature of the pollution is that it will not migrate and this therefore cannot happen.

Question – In the National Policy Document sustainable development is outlined as development which improves the lives of people NOW, following 12 principles. How does this development improve the lives of the people currently living in the village?

Response (RC) – There is currently no application in front of us at the moment. Any application will need to be considered in light of the national Planning Framework. One of the considerations will be that any residential development is proportionate to the area.



Comment - BDC "want shot of" the Brownfield site. SFG bought it to develop it. They have decided that it will take a lot more to develop it than they anticipated. SFG will develop the Brownfield site provided they can build 600 houses on the Greenfield land. The Council has already made up it's mind!!

Question – where has been the Community Involvement since 2006?

Response (PR) – there was a public meeting in 2008 and then nothing was heard until 2013. The Parish Council has made representations about how unhappy it was about this. Now, all information about the plans is put straight on the village website. Today, we are here to consider the amendments to the core strategy.

Question - Why is the dangerous structure of Chalkwell House still standing?

Response (AP) – This building has a private owner at this stage and therefore cannot be demolished.

Question - Are the bungalows on Brooklands Road (Opposite Pattern Bush Close) sold to SFG?

Response (AP) – They are not currently sold but SFG have the "Option to Purchase" them. This means that should the homeowners decide to sell SFG have the right to buy them.

Question - Has BPC sought support from other Parish Councils?

Response (PR) – Support has not been sought from East Bergholt since they have indicated to the Inspector that they would support the development in Brantham. Comments have not been sought from other Parish Councils.

Question – Why are we even considering 600 houses in a Core Strategy because that will completely change our community!

Response (RC) – the Policy Statement doesn't give an actual figure. There is more work required and more stages to go through. The Core Strategy does not specify a number for development.

Question – Under the 2006 Plan it was envisaged mixed development of the Brownfield site (including 300 houses with the Industrial site). Does that remain? If so, isn't 300 houses enough for the village at the moment?

Response (AP) – The Greenfield element will have to be developed in order to fund the other work. That site will not take more than 300 houses. There will be some residential development on the Brownfield site.

Question – What happens if SFG don't get planning permission for the Greenfield site?

Response (AP) – The Brownfield site cannot be developed without developing the Greenfield site.



Comment – Doesn't 600 houses raise a lot more money than £22 million which is what has been stated as necessary to fund the Brownfield site – surely no one needs to make that amount of money!

Question 1 – who is steering this process – BDC or SFG?

Response (RC) – It is not as simple as that. BDC have to develop a plan, but a landowner and developer have their own aims/objectives. It needs to be connected and joined up.

Question 2 – surely £22m can't be enough?

Response (AP) – The cost of the clean-up is £12m.

Question – There are currently a lot of Industrial sites not being used. Where is the evidence that we can bring employment into Brantham?

PR stated that it was recognised that every Council is under pressure to provide additional housing but that the development of the Industrial site seems unrealistic.

Comment – How will the Manningtree crossing cope with the additional traffic?

PR stated that this issue will be compounded by the narrow bridge near The Bull.

Comment – It is not just on the A137 but the additional traffic through the village will be very dangerous.

Response (RC) – SCC have been consulted on the options put forward, work would have to be done to the Highway to cope.

Question – How is this development coordinated with plans on the other side of the river (i.e. Lawford and Manningtree)

Response (RC) – BDC consults neighbouring Councils to discuss the issues and asks for feedback. These processes are in place.

Question – When the site was bought in 2006 why was SFG astounded that the companies left the site when BDC were aware that this was happening?

Response (AP) – The land was purchased with a Value Covenant. There was no indication that it would be vacated.

Response (RC) – Landowners have no compulsion to inform BDC about their future business plans.

Question 1 – Who is actually going to be interested in filling the site for employment?

Response (RC) – BDC are working on this at the moment. However, current economic conditions are not favourable.

Question 2 – So the site could be regenerated and then still sit empty?

Response (RC) – Vacancy issues in the Babergh District are very low and are usually down to quality issues instead of need.



Question – The current school is not big enough for the number of children attending if the village is expanded. If a new school is built what will happen to the site of the current school – is this likely to become even more housing?

Response (RC) – the Proposals are not yet at that stage of consideration.

Question 1 – The possible development on Greenfield land hinges on viability. SFG want to maximise profits and BDC want to maximise targets, therefore, is the viability work being done independently of these organisations, and will it involve Brantham Parish Council?

Response (MS) – BDC have an in-house reviewer looking at this. Once the application is received BPC will be able to look at it, review it and take advice.

Question 2 – Is BDC fit to consider this independently?

Response (MS) – The process is also overseen by the HCA who have viability experts.

Question: If SFG build 300 houses at approximately £125,000 each on the Brownfield site they would make a profit of approximately £83m – isn't this enough?

Response (AP) – SFG will not sell houses, they will only sell the land.

Question – How many responses do BDC need to make sure that the views of the village are considered?

Response (RC) – BDC are only doing the admin for this process. The responses will be considered by the Planning Inspector and then the recommendations of the Inspector will be considered by BDC.

Question – is it true that BDC do not have to follow the recommendations of the Inspector?

Response (RC) – BDC can choose not to take account of the views of the Inspector.

Question – If the Core Strategy is changed, does this change across Babergh or is it just for Brantham?

Response (RC) – The circumstances of each site will be looked at on their own merits. What happens here does not necessarily affect other sites in the district, but the core strategy does apply for the whole district.

Question – We have a very small sewerage works in Brantham. What will happen if 600 houses are added to the village?

Response (RC) – BDC are working with Anglian Water on this.

Before closing the public session PR asked for a show of hands from those present to indicate whether they were opposed to the development on Greenfield Land. All present indicated that they were opposed to this development.



BRANTHAM
Parish Council

PR reminded those present that all responses should be sent to Babergh District Council in respect of the proposed “Main Modifications” to the Babergh Core Strategy (May 2013). They may be done electronically or in paper form. Comments must be received by 4.30pm on Tuesday 9 July 2013. For further information please refer to the BDC or Brantham Parish Clerk. Documents are also available on the village website: www.onesuffolk.brantham.net.