

Present: Leon; Laura; Astrid; Tim; John; Jules; Erika

Apologies: David

Minutes of previous meeting held on 11th March were agreed.

The Chairman opened the meeting by saying that he had hoped to discuss and decide on the grant application for funding/expenses for the neighbourhood plan.

However, at the meeting (attended by Leon, Ray (Parish Council chairman) and Astrid) on 26th March in Hereford, which was supposed to be an informative briefing on the procedure of the grant applications for neighbourhood plans, we found out, when questioning the participants from the council, that the latest version of the core strategy had been altered in a way that radically changed some of the factors we had been working with so far.

These new factors – called **Main Modifications** – in effect changed the goal posts for all the parishes which had been working through different stages of their neighbourhood plans.

For example, whereas we had been working with an assumed 18% new houses of the total number of houses in the ‘village envelope’ (according to our calculations some 16 - 20 houses), it now appeared that we had to calculate 18% of **all** the existing houses in the parish, i.e. **33 new houses (minimum!)** within the settlement boundary(ies).

We had discussed a possible 3 settlement boundary areas; now we were informed that if we did not stipulate the boundaries around certain settlements in our plan, the County Council would do it for us. (We had been minded to follow Breinton’s draft plan...).

The question of affordable housing was discussed. If less than 10 houses were built in a particular plot, there would be no stipulation for any ‘affordable houses’. If 11 or more new houses, for example, were built in one section, then 35% of those would be affordable houses. Bearing in mind Ruckhall’s unsuitability (infrastructure; topography; drainage etc) for much development and its restricted nature, this puts a bigger onus on Eaton Bishop village to absorb the majority of the new houses. It was pointed out that there is not enough space for that many houses as in-fills, and that building on agricultural land would therefore be almost the only option.

There is a contradiction between two different directives here: not to build on greenfield sites on the one hand, and the pressure from the National Level downward, through County Councils, to push parishes into building on agricultural land! It was felt that these new ‘modifications’ worked against the

choices of parishes to have a say in future developments. So, once again, central government was dictating what is done in rural communities, in spite of pretending that the latter have choices or an active role to play in their future.

It was pointed out again that the set of policies, against which development suggested by parishes could be judged, are constantly changing because the 'Core Strategy' is in a continuing fluid state.

Summing up:

85% of the parish gave their support to appropriate development as outlined at the Open Day on 7 March. Now that the parameters have changed, we – the Neighbourhood Planning Team don't have a remit. We need to report our findings back to Parish Council at the next meeting (8th April, 2015). The Parish Council will need to respond to these new developments within the (fluid) Core Strategy, by providing feedback to County Council and seeking clarification.

It was decided that the team would have to inform the parishioners of these changes; this would have to be done through the Parish Council (always bearing in mind that there might well be further 'modifications'!). A discussion at the Parish Council meeting would enable us to gather views on this new situation.

It was agreed by the group that the Chairman of the group recommend to the Parish Council that work on the plan is paused until after the General Election and also to enable us to see a clearer way forward when the changes to the Core Strategy are agreed.

Meeting Closed