

Overview

1. What is the Neighbourhood Plan?

The Government has adopted a new approach to the way in which local communities can decide how their area should be developed in the future. This is called Localism and it encourages Parish Councils to develop a Neighbourhood Plan. Such Plans will guide councils when making important decisions about our community and facilities. The plan can guide development, make our needs for more affordable and market housing known and indicate where houses should be built. The plan can also make provision for appropriate educational, leisure, recreational and tourist based facilities to be provided.

The needs of the parish will be assessed by distributing questionnaires to every household in the parish, holding a series of public meetings and then considering the results. After due consultation, a draft plan will be circulated to everyone in the parish. The plan then has to be approved by Purbeck District Council and by central government via an independent inspector. Once those bodies are happy with the plan, it will be put to a referendum of the parish. It must achieve a 50% majority of the voters to be adopted. The Neighbourhood Plan will then be accepted as a legally binding document and must be considered by District and County Councils when any planning application is submitted. It is essential that the Neighbourhood Plan is in accordance with the District Council's Core Strategy.

2. What is the Purbeck Core Strategy and will it affect me?

The Core Strategy has been prepared by Purbeck District Council with assistance from town and parish councils after extensive consultation with all residents of the Purbecks, including all the residents of Bere Regis. Our parish was consulted two years ago regarding where housing and commercial development was needed, and the amount of development that should be allowed. The consultation also considered protection for areas of the natural environment.

3. If we have the Core Strategy and a parish plan, why do we need a Neighbourhood Plan?

The Neighbourhood Plan will define where development can take place and may require developers to provide additional works that are beneficial to the community. For example, it might protect space for a southern by-pass around the village, or space for a new village hall and other facilities that we would like to see available in the parish. It could also define any areas of land we would like to protect against future development. The Neighbourhood Plan has some considerable weight in law, unlike the Parish Plan, developed some 6 years ago, which was more of a wish list

4. Where can I see the Core Strategy?

The document is available on-line at www.dorsetforyou.com/purbeck_consultation or can be inspected at the council offices, Westport House, Worgret Road, Wareham; Monday-Thursday 8:45am – 4.45pm, and Friday 8:45am – 4:15pm.

5. What does the Core Strategy say about development in Bere Regis?

The strategy states that 50 houses should be built in Bere Regis before 2026, together with the development of land by the Shell Garage for commercial uses, which will be accessed from the A31/35 junction. The strategy also mentions a possible need for a "larger health centre, employment site, community meeting space and the

opportunity to relocate the school as part of the DCC's proposals to expand Bere Regis first school into a primary school."

Section A – Housing

6. Do we need to have 50 houses in the village?

Yes. A Purbeck Housing Needs Survey was carried out in 2004 and identified a need for 120 new homes within the northern Purbeck area. Bere Regis is considered the most sustainable location for 50 or more dwellings, of which 40% are to be affordable homes for local people. The housing needs survey carried out for Bere Regis in 2012 showed that there is still a need for this level of residential development in the parish.

7. Could we not have fewer houses?

The Parish Council believes that 50 new dwellings represents a realistic level of housing growth in order to maintain our vibrant community and support our shops, pubs, bus services and surgeries. The Neighbourhood Plan has no power to reduce this number.

8. Could we have more than 50 houses?

Yes, indeed some people would like to see more housing provided in the parish.

9. Is there any guarantee that all these houses will be built?

No, there is no guarantee they will be built. All we can do is to set out an intention. It is up to landowners and developers to submit planning applications for sites that comply with the Neighbourhood Plan and the Core Strategy.

10. If we have 50 houses, do they all need to be on one or two sites?

Not necessarily, but there are many advantages to having development centred on one or two large sites:

- (i) Developers would be obliged to offer more tangible benefits to the village as a condition of planning permission being granted. These may take the form of traffic calming measures, providing additional open spaces, installing noise suppressing bunds, etc.
- (ii) Relying on infill development could result in the loss of the open spaces around the village that currently provide considerable character.
- (iii) In general, affordable homes will only be built as part of large developments. It is unlikely that small developments would need to provide affordable homes.
- (iv) It would probably be difficult to find enough small sites to meet the 50 house requirement.
- (v) Developers are obliged to provide upgrades to infrastructure for large development sites which could result in an improvement to roads, footpaths and services. Development of small site is likely to stretch existing facilities.

11. What sites have been considered so far?

Several sites were considered during the Core Strategy consultation. Only three sites were considered suitable for development and the Neighbourhood Plan needs to concentrate on those areas.

The attached plan shows these sites and those areas that were deemed unsuitable for development.

12. What types of houses are likely to be built?

The recent housing needs survey and the attached questionnaire should identify what dwellings should be built.

13. What land will the Parish Council be providing for development?

None. The Parish Council does not own any of the land that is presently being considered for housing.

14. Is the Parish Council in favour of putting houses on the site to the west of Egdon Close?

No. The Parish Council is strongly opposed to residential development on land to the west of Egdon Close.

Section B – School

15. There is a lot of talk about a new school. Why do we need a new school?

Schools in Purbeck are changing to a 2 tier educational system which means that the number of school children attending Bere Regis School is likely to increase to about 120. There is insufficient space at the existing school site for these additional children and the outdated buildings provide inadequate facilities for them to receive the appropriate education.

16. What are the criteria for a new school site?

Three main criteria have been identified, although others are also important:

- Central to the school population
- Away from main roads and commercial activities
- Easily accessible on foot by pupils

17. What sites met these criteria?

Two sites have been considered by Dorset County Council. These are:

- Land to the west of Egdon Road
- Land at the top end of North Street, opposite the Townsend Business Park

The North Street site was not considered appropriate as:

- It would add to traffic problems in North Street as access from the roundabout would not be supported by the Highways Agency
- It is not central to the school population
- It is a difficult site to develop due to the slope of the land.
- The site is not readily accessible on foot by pupils and this would probably result in additional traffic movements.

Dorset County Council's preference is for the Egdon Close site and they are actively negotiating an option to purchase the land. That site fully meets the requirements of accessibility on foot from all parts of the village, is central to the school population and is away from the main roads and commercial activities.

18. Where would access be taken for the new school by Egdon Close?

A school drive would be created from Southbrook along the north of Egdon Close. This would be fully contained within the non SNCI part of the Souls Moor site and would only serve the school. Dorset County Council will design an appropriate access and carry out any upgrading works to Southbrook and the junction that may be necessary.

19. If I can come up with an alternative site for the school, would it be considered?

Yes, but it would have to meet the proposed criteria, which are:

- It must be central to the school population
- It must be away from a main road and commercial activity
- It must be easily accessible on foot from all parts of the village

Section C – Village Facilities

20. Why is there talk about a new village hall being built?

The Core Strategy discussed the possibility of providing a larger community meeting space because the Drax Hall has not got ready access to parking and has limited facilities. Whether a new hall is provided will depend on whether parishioners believe a need exists, but any new hall would have to provide benefits over existing meeting places.

21. Why is the Parish Council buying Souls Moor?

The Parish Council consider Souls Moor to be an important feature of the village that should be protected, both as an area for public access, and partly as a nature reserve alongside the Bere Stream. The best way to protect the land is through securing public ownership. Management of that part of Souls Moor that is SSSI will be handled by the Bere Regis SSSI Management Group in conjunction with Dorset Wildlife Trust. The Parish Council does not currently have plans for the remainder of the site. It has been suggested that it could be used for provision of youth facilities, allotments, affordable housing or as an open space.

22. What is happening with the play park in Elder Road?

The Parish Council initiated consultation on the play park and is delighted that a group of parents have now set up the Bere Regis Community Play Association. These volunteers are actively raising money to replace the play equipment. They have the wholehearted support of the Parish Council. The site is central to the village and the facilities are well used by the community.

Section D - Commercial

23. Why has an area at the end of North Street been designated for commercial use?

A modest commercial development generally implies employment opportunities for the local population. More intensive use of this commercial area will not affect the village. Vehicular access will be taken from the Shell Garage roundabout which already provides access to other commercial centres. Development of the site is dependent on a developer coming forward.

Section E – Highways & Traffic

24. What is being done about the traffic problems on Rye Hill (C6)?

Highways and traffic issues are in the control of Dorset County Council. Recommendations can be included in the Neighbourhood Plan that might be actioned by the County Council in the future and the Parish Council will continue to lobby for improvements to roads generally. The Parish Council have already lobbied successfully for the zebra crossing and the Safe Route to School. Earlier this year the Parish Council instigated an annual traffic monitoring programme to provide detailed information on the volume and speed of the traffic using Rye Hill (known as the C6).

If land adjacent to the existing school site is developed, the Parish Council would insist that appropriate traffic calming measures are provided on Rye Hill. Such measures would need to be agreed with Dorset County Council Highways Department.

25. What has happened about the south eastern bypass?

Sadly, nothing has come of this proposal. Dorset County Council were very positive about several ideas that were put forward some years ago but, in the current financial climate, it is very unlikely that anything will be done in the near future. However, the Parish Council remains firmly behind a south eastern bypass and the Neighbourhood Plan could define a bypass corridor to prevent any development within that corridor.