

# **Bere Regis Neighbourhood Plan Questions and Answers**

## **General Background**

### **Q1: Why does Bere Regis need a Neighbourhood Plan?**

- Neighbourhood planning is a right for communities introduced through the Localism Act 2011. Communities can shape development in their areas through the production of Neighbourhood Development Plans.
- Neighbourhood Plans, once confirmed by referendum, become part of the Local Plan and the policies contained within them are used when determining planning applications.
- Planning policies in the Neighbourhood Plan cannot block development that is already part of the Local Plan. What they can do is shape where that development will go and what it will look like.

### **Q2: What happens if we do not have a Neighbourhood Plan?**

- The Purbeck Local Plan (2012) and the emerging Revised Local Plan will indicate the number of new homes required in the District up to 2033. If Bere Regis does not have a Neighbourhood Plan, there is a risk that developers will be able to decide the number of new houses to be built in Bere Regis and where development will take place.

### **Q3: Who is preparing the Neighbourhood Plan?**

- The Parish Council decided at an early stage that we should prepare a Neighbourhood Plan. Our work has been advertised widely since we started in 2012, with regular updates and invitations for parishioners to join our workgroups and public meetings. There have also been questionnaires and letters posted to every dwelling in the parish as shown in the Supporting Evidence.

### **Q4: What does the Neighbourhood Plan cover?**

- Initially the Parish Council wanted the Neighbourhood Plan to cover all areas of the parish, and to provide guidance on a wide range of activities and aspirations of our residents. However, we subsequently became aware that the Neighbourhood Plan is primarily a planning document that will be considered when planning applications for new residential development are determined.

### **Q5: Where can I see a copy of the draft Neighbourhood Plan?**

- A copy of the draft plan can be downloaded here. However, the plan is still evolving, so the final plan might differ slightly from the current draft, and you are advised to check for updates over the coming months. You will be contacted automatically if you have submitted your e-mail address to the Parish Council to be kept informed.

### **Q6: Why is the Neighbourhood Plan so important to the Parish?**

- If we do not have a Neighbourhood Plan we are concerned that the parish will lose control over the number of dwellings that will be constructed in the

parish up to 2033. The parish will also have less influence on where these dwellings are developed, or what they might look like. Consequently, the Parish Council believes it is important that we have a robust plan to provide appropriate protection to the parish.

**Q7: Where has the number of new dwellings come from?**

- Policy NW of the Purbeck Local Plan (2012) required around 120 dwellings to be constructed in the Bere Regis area in the period to 2027. Some of those dwellings have now been constructed, but demand for housing has increased. Consequently, there is a shortfall in housing numbers that the Parish Council have tried to address.

**Q8: How did you know what land could be included?**

- Purbeck District Council called on local landowners to identify land that might be suitable for residential development under the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA). Nominated sites were assessed by Purbeck District Council, and have since been independently considered by the Housing Working Group that was set up by the Parish Council.

**Q9: Is the number of new dwellings fixed?**

- Provided the Neighbourhood Plan is adopted, we can be reasonably confident that additional housing in settlement extensions around Bere Regis should not exceed 105 units. However, additional houses might be required by Central Government and more dwellings might be constructed in the village as 'windfall' development. In the alternative, if the Neighbourhood Plan is not adopted there is a risk that developers will identify Bere Regis as a convenient location for additional development, and we might not be able to resist development.

**Q10: Why is there a risk more housing might be allocated to Bere Regis?**

- Purbeck District Council need to consider all available sites when considering how to meet the identified housing need. Consequently, sites in Bere Regis have to be assessed equally with others across the district. Bere Regis Parish Council has been working hard to avoid taking on an excessive proportion of the additional housing required through Purbeck.

**Q11: How have the five housing sites been chosen?**

- The Parish Council decided at an early stage that several small to medium sites would be preferable to all development going onto a single large site. The Parish Council then ran a series of workshops and public meetings from 2012 onwards to seek public support in identifying sites that would be suitable for development. Each of the sites was then assessed against criteria drawn up by the Housing Working Group.

**Q12: What criteria have been used for assessing the suitability of housing sites?**

- The full list of criteria against which individual sites have been assessed is in the Supporting Evidence. However, issues included: accessibility to facilities; accessibility to the school; visual impact from outside the village; effect on townscape elements; impact on key building groups; access for traffic; ease of construction; ecological impact, and; ability for the sites to accommodate other facilities.

**Q13: What is meant by the terms housing/dwellings?**

- These terms have been used interchangeably both during consultation and in the draft Neighbourhood Plan. Both terms refer to a unit of self-contained living accommodation comprising a house, bungalow or flat. The Parish Council envisage a need for a variety of sizes and designs to ensure units are available for occupation by the elderly; young families; larger family groups, and: for those wishing to downsize.

**Q14: Will any of this housing be available to people on low incomes?**

- All of the sites will need to provide 40% affordable housing, unless there are valid reasons why such provision is not required. Need for affordable housing will be assessed by Purbeck District Council when planning applications are submitted.

**Q15: What is affordable housing?**

- Affordable housing includes social rented and intermediate housing that is provided to eligible households whose needs are not met by the market. Affordable housing should be available to eligible households at a cost low enough for them to afford, as determined against local incomes and local house prices. The plan suggests that the 40% affordable requirement should be made up of 15% shared ownership homes; 15% discounted sales homes, and; 70% social and affordable publicly rented properties.

**Q16: What will the dwellings look like?**

- The Neighbourhood Plan specifies that dwellings must be designed sympathetically to fit in with the existing townscape, both in design and site layout. By adopting the Neighbourhood Plan, the Parish Council and neighbours will have more influence on such issues.

**Q17: Have Dorset County Council, Purbeck District Council and other consultees approved these sites?**

- The Parish Council has consulted with Dorset County Council and Purbeck District Council regarding the proposals. Other statutory consultees have been consulted as part of the ongoing process. However, our draft plan will be sent out for consultation in early 2018, and, at that stage, all consultees will be invited to comment, and responses will be considered before the plan proceeds.

**Q18: Is there a deadline for making comments on the draft Neighbourhood Plan?**

- Following the public meeting on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2017 the Parish Council have been receiving feedback. There will be another chance for public consultation in early 2018. All responses that are received will be passed to the independent examiner for consideration prior to the referendum. Once the plan has been adopted there will still be a chance to comment when planning applications are considered for the various sites.

**Important Issues**

**Q19: What about wildlife across these sites?**

- The Parish Council commissioned ecological surveys across all of the sites at an early stage. Further surveys have since been carried out. No protected species of flora or fauna have been identified across any of the sites.

Developers will need to carry out their own, more detailed ecological assessments and provide method statements detailing how they intend to deal with ecological issues on each site, prior to development commencing. Dorset County Council will assess whether the proposals are acceptable.

**Q20: Why has the Parish Council not commissioned detailed ecological and archaeological reports on all the sites?**

- The Parish Council are not required to carry out such assessments and does not have the finance available to commission such reports. This is the responsibility of the developers on each individual site

**Q21: How will we cope with traffic during construction works?**

- Developers will need to prepare method statements detailing how they intend to carry out development on the sites, and how conflicts will be avoided with existing road users. Dorset County Council will determine whether the proposals are acceptable prior to works commencing. The parish council have requested that access for construction traffic be taken from the A35 rather than through the village.

**Q22: What about all the waste that will be produced from the excavations?**

- The Parish Council have suggested as part of the Neighbourhood Plan that earth bunds be created alongside the bypass, as a way of reducing noise to the new dwellings, and also to provide noise protection to the remainder of the village. These bunds will be formed of material excavated from the sites, which should help to reduce traffic movements through the village and along the local road network.

**Q23: How will the village cope with traffic from the extra houses?**

- The Parish Council is aware of existing problems with traffic flows and parking through the village. The draft Neighbourhood Plan indicates that a minimum of two car parking spaces should be provided for each new dwelling. Otherwise, traffic is an issue for the highways department at Dorset County Council. So far, DCC have not raised any concerns regarding the number or location of proposed dwellings. The Parish Council will continue to liaise with DCC regarding traffic and parking problems in the village.

**Q24: Why have you included play areas on the housing sites?**

- The Parish Council supports the recommendation from Fields in Trust that residents should have access to play areas. Consequently, we have recommended provision of play areas on sites that are remote from the sports field or playground. These areas might comprise grass areas with a bench for quiet contemplation, or they might be fitted with swings or other play equipment depending on local need.

**Q25: Why does the Neighbourhood Plan suggest commercial development at Townsend?**

- The employment site at the end of North Street was allocated in the Purbeck Local Plan (2004) and carried forward to the Purbeck Local Plan in 2012. The site has not yet been developed due to it being too small, so the Neighbourhood Plan proposes a larger area, which should be of greater interest to developers.

## **Back Lane**

### **Q26: Where will access be taken?**

- The Neighbourhood Plan proposes access be taken from West Street, as shown on the housing sites plan. Access at this point will enjoy good visibility in both directions; might allow some windfall housing to be provided alongside the new access; cuts across Back Lane at right-angles thereby having least impact on this feature, and; enters the Back-Lane site in a central position, suitable for development of the site.

### **Q27: How close will development be to the existing houses on Butt Lane?**

- It will be for the developer to prepare layout plans for the site, but a normal layout would have gardens backing onto gardens, thereby creating a reasonable buffer between dwellings.

## **White Lovington**

### **Q28: Why not develop this as two separate sites?**

- The Parish Council initially intended that this be dealt with as two separate sites. However, the planning consultant acting on behalf of the land owner has suggested that access would be better through White Lovington. Consequently, this is currently shown as a single development site.

### **Q29: What about the ecology across this site?**

- The proposed housing site comprises an agricultural field. Several assessments have been carried out, and no important or protected flora or fauna have been identified. The Parish Council are aware that hedgerows and trees around the site need to be protected, as they provide a habitat for wildlife. Consequently, the developer will need to provide ecological surveys together with method statements detailing how they intend to mitigate the effect of development across the site. Dorset County Council will need to approve the proposals prior to works commencing.

## **Old School Site**

### **Q30: Where will access be taken?**

- The existing access is not well placed, so we expect vehicles to enter the site further down Rye Hill. All access to the site will be taken from Rye Hill and there will not be any vehicular link to Green Close.

### **Q31: Will any of the old buildings be retained?**

- At the moment the Parish Council expect all of the buildings to be demolished.

## **North Street Housing**

### **Q32: What are you doing about parking in North Street?**

- All new dwellings will need to provide off-road parking and the development should result in a wider road alongside the sports field. This should ease congestion when sports events are taking place. The developer will need to include parking proposals as part of a planning application, and these will

need to be approved by Dorset County Council before development can take place.

**Q33: What about the old hedge along this part of North Street?**

- The hedge will be lost during excavation works, with the spoil moved to the earth bunds alongside the bypass. Additional tree and hedge planting around the village will offset the loss of this old hedge, with this work being led by the Bere Regis Wildlife Group.

**Q34: Will the houses take access onto the roundabout?**

- Bere Regis Parish Council have requested that construction traffic be allowed to access the site from the roundabout. However, the Highways Authority and Dorset County Council have advised that it is not possible for this access to be kept open for future use by occupants of those residential units.

**Tower Hill Site**

**Q35: How will access be managed during construction?**

- The developer will need to provide a method statement detailing how access will be taken to site during works, and how disruption will be minimised on surrounding roads. This method statement will need to be approved by Dorset County Council Highways Department prior to works commencing. It is likely that the construction area will be excavated to form a working area that facilitates storage of materials and machinery. There is potential for a one-way system to be adopted on the highway, and for no parking zones to be created at the bottom of Snow Hill and Butt Lane to ensure traffic can flow easily.

**Q36: What about the ecology and archaeology in this field?**

- The development only affects the southern part of the field where we are advised there is no important ecology or archaeology. However, the developer will need to commission their own independent reports as part of the planning process, and these will need to be approved by Dorset County Council before any development can take place.

**Q37: How will the rest of the field be protected?**

- The land will be designated as 'Local Green Space', which is defined in paragraphs 76-77 of the National Planning Policy Framework. The Parish Council would also like to see the rest of the field designated as 'Common Land', which would provide protection against any future development while maintaining public access. We hope the land will be managed by the Wildlife Group with assistance from Dorset Wildlife Trust on behalf of Bere Regis Parish Council, with a view to enhancing and protecting the environment.

**Q38: What will the houses look like?**

- It will be for the developer to produce designs for consideration during the planning process. However, we envisage the dwellings being set at road level, possibly with living rooms on the first floor, with first-floor access to small rear gardens that will extend no further than the existing field gate. The overall design will need to respect the linear form of development that is apparent through West Street and North Street.