

**NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING  
PUBLIC MEETING  
HELD on 26<sup>th</sup> April 7.50 pm  
at LITTLE MUNDEN MEMORIAL HALL**

**Present:** Jonathan Pool (Chairman), Keith Williams, Jenny Macintosh, David Hart, Tracey Harding, Geraldine Ward (Clerk)

**In Attendance:** Councillor Ken Crofton, Hertfordshire County Councillor (Hertford Rural), East Herts District Councillor (Walkern), Members of the Public: 20

**Apologies:** Paul Kenealy, East Herts District Councillor (Mundens & Cottered)

**NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANNING AN INTRODUCTION BY JONATHAN POOL**

Paul Kenealy, our District Councillor, was due to give a short talk on Neighbourhood Planning, but today had unfortunately to cry off. So I will try to fill in, starting with some background:

As a Group 2 village, Dane End is protected from development, other than infill, through the emerging East Herts District Plan; a Neighbourhood Plan, if approved by the community, will put in place planning policies for the future development and growth of the neighbourhood with the intention of revitalising the village and helping to ensure the continued existence and success of local services.

The PC has in the past considered whether we should/could embark on the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan, but we rejected the idea because, as a Group 2 village, with the consequent limitations on development, it did not seem necessary unless we could identify a particular benefit of development outside the existing village boundary (e.g. to boost numbers at Little Munden Primary School). Nor were we confident that a village the size of Dane End could find the (unpaid) resources, time and skills to manage the lengthy and complicated process without direct involvement from start to finish from a third party.

Money is also an issue. Before we commit, we need to know that we can afford the total costs - it would be irresponsible to start something of this magnitude which we cannot carry through to finish. We have reviewed information from other parishes where it seems that an estimate of around £20,000 - £25,000 is the sort of figure we should expect to incur, assuming we can muster a level of 'free' expertise within the parish and the District Council. Total costs should be offset to some extent by grants of up to £9,000. The PC retains funds from the New Homes Bonus for special projects, of which a Neighbourhood Plan could be one.

The NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN paper which has been distributed seeks to summarise how Chapter 10 (villages) of the emerging East Herts District Plan affects our village and the process to be undertaken if we were to produce a Neighbourhood Plan.

There are 29 villages classified by EHC as Group 2 villages, of which Dane End is one. Of the other 28, only 4 have defined the 'neighbourhood area' and applied for area designation to East Herts Council. That is not to say that other Group 2 villages have not started the process, but I don't know.

As you can see, the first step is to get the community on board. That is the purpose of this meeting. Do we, as a community, think that the preparation of a neighbourhood plan is particularly appropriate for our village?

If so, the second step is to establish a steering group. The steering group will probably comprise a minimum of seven people – Chairman, Vice-chairman, Treasurer, Secretary, others representing local interests (such as landowners) and persons with relevant skills – up to a dozen or even more. Are you prepared to put yourself forward to be directly involved in what would be a lengthy and complicated process?

This, I hope, gives you all a flavour of what a Neighbourhood Plan is and the first steps to be taken. For more detail, I suggest you look online at the East Herts web site and the web sites of other villages both Group 1 and Group 2, not necessarily only in the East Herts district, to see how their plans are progressing and the detail of what's involved.

If the community wants to go ahead, we need commitment from parishioners to form a steering group. This is a community led group, not a PC led group, though the PC would offer what support it can, including financial.

You've probably got lots of questions. I'll try to answer if I can. If not, Ken Crofton may be able to help. Otherwise, we'll note the question and respond later.

Is there anyone here now who is prepared commit and to try to get together a steering group?

A question and answer session then ensued, which included the following questions from the floor:-

### **What will happen if we don't have a Neighbourhood Plan?**

If there isn't a Neighbourhood Plan, the emerging District Plan policy is that, within Group 2 villages, limited infill development will be permitted, which development should take place within the village boundary. An example of this would be the recent application for an infill house on Pearman Drive, though this was in fact was turned down.

### **In what way would a Neighbourhood Plan benefit the village?**

The purpose of a Neighbourhood Plan is to guide and shape development, putting in place planning policies, specifically adopted by the community, for the future development and growth of the neighbourhood. It may help towards the continuity existence and success of local services; for instance, more housing may ensure the future of the school.

### **What area would be covered by the Plan?**

As mentioned earlier, one of the first things a Steering Group would do is to define the neighbourhood area to be covered by the Neighbourhood Plan.

### **Is there any possibility under the emerging District Plan for development outside the village boundary?**

No. As far as we know, the District Plan policy is that, within Group 2 villages, only limited infill development will be permitted.

Ken Crofton explained that development proposals can always be put forward through individual applications which makes it difficult to express with certainty that development can ever be fully restricted in Dane End.

The change of use of redundant farm buildings to dwelling houses is a different matter; for example, Lord Carter's development at Whitehill Farm.

### **Would the Neighbourhood Plan open up the possibility of development on land such as the field behind Windmills, Kingsfield Road?**

The response from the Chairman was that the field behind Windmills is agricultural land. To be a potential development site, it would have to have been identified as such within the Plan, which in turn has to have been approved by the community.

### **Concern was expressed over the media announcements of more housing being needed in parts of the South East, how would this effect the Parish?**

Within East Herts district, towns and Group 1 villages will be affected and targeted to produce a certain number of new homes by 2033.

**Is there any possibility the housing targets could spread to Group 2 Villages?**

We don't know. Obviously there can be a change of policy, either national or local, but under the current emerging District Plan policy for Group 2 villages – no, subject to Mr Crofton's earlier caveat.

The Chairman went on to explain that the development that Lord Carter is doing up at Whitehill, falls under a national policy which, as long as farm buildings have been redundant for a certain period and the height and footprint is not changed, permits application for change of use to residential.

**Why has this issue been raised again?**

Because a number of Parishioners felt that we should now consider a Neighbourhood Plan and we were persuaded to change our minds.

**If the Neighbourhood Plan is not put into effect now, can it be revisited in the future?**

It can be revisited, but the grants currently available are not an ever ending pot of money. The longer we wait the more chance we have of losing out on grants.

**Will a Neighbourhood Plan encourage development?**

There is a fundamental misconception that a Neighbourhood Plan will stop development, when in fact it will encourage it. But the community will have a greater say on where development can take place and the type of housing allowed. If you don't want any development, then protection from that should come under the District Plan. Councillor Harding felt if residents wanted to protect the area, there are other ways of doing that, taking into account environmental considerations, etc.

**How is the Steering Group elected?**

First we need individuals to come forward – it will not be formed by the Parish Council, but by those interested, with the support of the PC. So, for example, if you were interested, you could talk to your friends and other residents to persuade them to join the Steering Group.

**What effects would development have on infrastructure – services, roads, water, etc.?**

It is difficult to judge, as very few Neighbourhood Plans have been completed other than towns. No Group 2 villages, of which there are 29, have got beyond the first stage and only four have begun the process. Therefore there are no examples to look in East Herts. There is however a lot of information on Group 1 villages that illustrates the sort of detail that needs to be covered, objectives and visions of development. Through looking at these examples, you can get some indication as the amount of time and effort that goes into preparing a Neighbourhood Plan.

**If we had development, might Dane End be upgraded to a Group 1 village?**

No; not as far as we know.

**If development took place in the area, would the Community directly benefit from it?**

When the development took place 40 years ago in Dane End, the village was given a long lease on Horses' Meadow for a peppercorn rent. There may also be some recompense from the developer; we would like to think we would perhaps get additional green spaces and other facilities

\*If ak put in place – PC would support it, but not drive it. One Councillor would be nominated as contact with SC

### **What are you planning to achieve from this meeting?**

We are hoping that 6 – 10 people may come forward who would be interested in forming a Steering Group.

### **What would be the cost involved and where would the money come from?**

The estimated cost could be £20k - £25k. We do have some money set aside for special projects and there would probably be grant money available; otherwise, if there was a shortfall, the Parish Council could raise the Precept.

### **Do you intend to hold a vote this evening?**

No, we don't intend to hold a vote, but it would be nice if some interested parties came forward this evening. That is why we have an attendance sheet intending to follow up with an email to all those who have attended to ask if they wish to take it forward.

Ken Crofton re-emphasised that it would require a considerable commitment from those directly involved – it's likely to be a 2 - 3 year project.

### **To which demographic would new housing be aimed, as surely only professionals would be likely to afford it?**

Mr Crofton confirmed that the current East Herts target for affordable housing within a new development is 40%. And bear in mind that, under the Neighbourhood Plan, the community would already have approved the type of residential development (house, bungalows, flats, etc.) in order to attract a particular demographic – age, income, etc.

### **Would it be worth having a table up at the school fete where people could ask questions about it?**

The Chairman agreed that this was a good idea.

### **Can we have a Yes or No vote?**

The meeting accepted this idea.

It was decided to leaflet every household within the Parish outlining the pros and cons of a Neighbourhood Plan for Little Munden. The Chairman underlined the importance of making sure that the wording was correct to avoid any misconceptions as to what the advantages and disadvantages of a Neighbourhood Plan are. Every adult within the Parish should be asked the question:

Do you want a Neighbourhood Plan – YES or NO?

If the answer is YES, then the first step will be to establish a Steering Group.