

## **Blewbury Neighbourhood Development Plan**

Notes of a meeting held on 24 September 2013 at the Manor Barn

Present: Dermot Mathias, Katherine Macdonald (VoWHDC), Mark Blyth, Ian Bacon, Helen Mathias, John Ogden, Jonathan Townsend, Richard Farrell, Gwyn Rees, Peter Saunders, Jo Lakeland, Phil Rogers, Vanessa Fox

### **Background**

DM explained the situation: Neighbourhood Plans exist under the aegis of the Localism Act, and are the quid pro quo of a government keen to develop, but wanting to give communities some say in the nature of developments. They have legal standing: the District Councils are obliged to take notice.

The Vale does not have a five-year building supply in place, and has failed to achieve its housing targets, and so it has to look favourably on new development and is seeking to stimulate more. As part of this process, the concept of the village envelope has been suspended, and the AONB is no less relevant. Blewbury is particularly attractive to developers.

### **NDP for Blewbury**

A Neighbourhood Plan will give us real teeth and enable us to decide where development should take place and the nature of it. As part of the plan we could also review amenities and services such as transport, recreation and places of work as well as sustainability and commuting habits.

We could look at whether the population can sustain the school, Savages, the post office, the pubs. Everyone will be entitled to a view and hopefully we will be able to stimulate engagement.

This is all part of a process of collecting evidence to support the plan. However the exact scope will depend on us. We will need to engage the whole village, all groups, all views. Everything must be evidence-based.

KM said that the planning policies would be the most important, but the wider issues could influence our planning policy. The NDP will carry the same weight as the Vale's Local Plan although it will need to have general conformity with its Strategic Framework. Its influence will work from the bottom upwards, as we will be ahead of the Local Plan. Part Two of the Local Plan which sets out housing targets is due to be finished in 2016.

IB expressed cynicism at the 'schizophrenic administration' of the government. There is always risk from a change of government, and interim changes of policy although he is still convinced that an NDP will have real value to Blewbury. RF said that the NDP will carry weight.

With the NDP in place, we must be in a better position as we are working with the Vale. The Vale wants to build some 419 houses within the eight large villages in our area between 2006 and 2029 but has not yet decided as to the allocation between those villages.

The area to be covered will need to be defined. There was a discussion about uniting with a neighbouring village, but it was concluded they we should restrict the plan to the parish of Blewbury.

RF said that we need a clear vision of what we want to achieve: to influence the Vale and to seek control of the quality of the housing provision. DM said we need to keep an open mind and trust the process. Ideally we would like to establish areas that will be the 'right' places to build. We must not raise expectations that we can do exactly what we want. Our plan will not be popular with everyone.

The time scale for the work is typically 18-24 months. There must be no prejudices, no NIMBYism. We will work with the Vale, but also with the BVS and other village organisations.

### **Next steps**

The Parish Council needs to decide whether there are enough people committed to develop a plan, and then inform the Vale that we will be going ahead. RF confirmed in the meeting that we had the bare bones needed to develop a plan and that it should be supported.

A steering group will need to be formed (KM will help with this) with a core team of say 8-9. Tasks will be allocated later.

We will hope to supplement the core team with an IT specialist to develop a website, and anyone with expertise in planning, design, sewage disposal, landscape assessment would be helpful.

We will get help from Locality (an arm of Department of Communities and Local Government, DCLG), which provides both expertise to the value of £9,500 and an individual a grant of up to £7,000. The Vale will also provide a grant of £10,000.

The money will be used for external advice on matters such as planning, an environmental survey, housing needs survey etc as well as for social events to generate enthusiasm, the use of the Village Hall, printing costs etc.

Christina and Brian Duckett have said they may be able to give us some background advice but we will probably need to employ expertise from outside the village. Others who have expressed an interest in helping include Mike Marshall, Angela Hoy and Joe Goyder.

DM concluded by thanking everyone for coming and saying that he would contact those present to see whether they were prepared to join the steering group.

Initially meetings will be monthly, then maybe fortnightly.