

Effects of the Localism Act

Should Barford St Martin have a plan?

Presented by the BWPC



Aim

The aim of this presentation is to advise parishioners of Barford St Martin on the options available for more community involvement in future plans for the village.

*“The purpose of planning is to help achieve sustainable development. Sustainable means **ensuring that better lives for ourselves don’t mean worse lives for future generations.** Development means growth.”*

Objective

To ascertain if there is sufficient interest to form a group to create a Community Plan of some form in response to the changes under the Localism Act.

Background

As a result of the introduction of the localism Act and the changes in the planning process, the Parish Council decided to setup a research group to greater understand the effects of the changes brought in by this Act.

Research

The first action of the Group was to carry out research to determine the potential impacts of new planning regulations on Barford and whether the parish needs to do anything to ensure that future development would not be detrimental to parishioners.

Analysis

- SWOT Analysis
 - A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis was undertaken to get a picture of the village, with the following main outcomes:
 - The village had no kind of community plan in place.
 - Parish had little control of the B3089, i.e. effects of developments in local villages.
 - The Village had no school, doctor or major employer.
 - The area is designated an Area of Outstanding Natural beauty.

Report

BWCP Report

- A report has been produced by the Group which details all the information and knowledge gained up to this time. This report has been presented to the Parish council and has also been made available to the village.

Purpose

To allow the parishioners to have a greater awareness of the impact of the Localism Act and allow them to make a judgment on whether they think the village needs to do something about these changes.

Options

The main options available:

- Parish Plan
- Village Design Statement
- Neighbourhood Plan
- Retain the present situation – Do Nothing

Parish Plan

These holistic plans covered everything from police, education, the natural environment, as well as planning and were meant to be evolving documents, outlining how a community would like to develop over the next 10 years and usually included an action plan detailing how these developments would be achieved.

Parish Plan - Advantages

- Covers more issues than “planning” e.g. when the group produced a SWOT analysis transport, no gas connection, no village hall, low crime, broadband speed, sense of community, history, fishing, low light pollution were a few of the issues that were discussed. These would be unlikely to be included in a Neighbourhood plan.
- The parish plan could provide a mandate for the parish council to set priorities for the future. It could demonstrate to parishioners the need for an increase in the precept.

Parish Plan - Advantages

- It would enable the diverse groups in the village e.g. the fete committee, to be part of the planning action.
- Working with other villages in the area could be encouraged and the differing strengths be reflected in the parish plan e.g. the community transport group.
- The plan would be open ended and reviewed annually.
- Less demanding in skills, expertise and effort than Neighbourhood Plan.

Parish Plan - Disadvantages

- It is not accepted as a supplementary planning document (SPD) by the planners. Now superseded by what is called Material Consideration.
- A parish plan could be used for material consideration, but this would mean that for each change, the plan would have to be resubmitted for approval.
- The report commissioned by DEFRA in 2007 on Parish Plans commented on restraints in Parish Plans and the newer village design statement and neighbourhood plans appear to have taken action to improve the acceptability of community plans by the statutory authorities, but limited the scope.

Village Design Statement

- The purpose of a VDS is to manage change, whether that change is major new development or just cumulative, small-scale additions and alterations. They are not about whether development should take place, but about how planned development should be carried out so that it is in harmony with its setting and contributes to the conservation and, where possible, enhances the local environment.

VDS - Advantages

- Allows the village to have an input into planning decisions and must be considered in planning applications.
- The community and local planners get a greater understanding of what forms the village i.e. history, landscape setting of village, nature of the buildings themselves, shape of settlement, areas of natural beauty, transport links and what makes up the community.
- Allows the community to have greater involvement in how they would like to see the village (within the confines of the local planning policy).
- A number of VDSs have already been produced and approved these could be used as guidance in producing one ourselves.

VDS - Disadvantages

- It does not carry the same weight as a Neighbourhood Plan, in that it does not become adopted as part of the Wiltshire Local Plan.
- An effective VDS takes a considerable amount of effort for the community to produce, taking between 12 to 24 months, although it would need far less effort than a neighbourhood plan.

VDS - Disadvantages

- Unless we have members of the village who are willing to give their time and skills to be able to create a VDS, there will be a cost to produce one which would be dependent on what effort we would need to outsource. This might make the production of a VDS prohibitive from a financial perspective.

Neighbourhood Plan

Neighbourhood planning is a tool to promote sustainable development and will not be able to prevent development in an area. Neighbourhood plans can only include proposals for an equal (or greater) amount of growth than is set out in the local authority's development plan. They must also accord to national planning policy.

Neighbourhood Plan Advantages

- They are also a statutory instrument, part of planning law and can ensure site-specific protection is given to areas where development or change of use would not be desirable.
- Local Authority cooperation is assured and has statutory status.
- If approved, the policies outlined in the Neighbourhood Plan become part of the Wiltshire Local Plan. This means that there is less opportunity for a developer to build the type or style of development that the community does not wish to see, provided that the plan is robust.
- Parishes with a Neighbourhood Plan in place will benefit from 25% of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) rather than the standard 15% i.e. Barford Parish Council would get to spend this money in Barford.

Neighbourhood Plan Disadvantages

- May be unjustifiable effort and cost for just a small village such as Barford that has no planned development.
- A Neighbourhood Plan can be as detailed or specific as required, although every time additions need to be made, it requires going through the process again.
- Neighbourhood Plans can be costly and funds need to be applied for.
- They are time consuming and could take in the region of two years to complete.
- They cannot stop development, only control it at a local level.

Present situation

Barford has not produced a plan for the village. Planning guidance is determined by the Local Plan produced by Wiltshire which incorporates a detailed planning map produced by the former Salisbury District Council. This map designates most of the village as a “conservation area” within Cranborne Chase & West Wiltshire Downs AONB. Barford is designated as a small village with only infill development deemed to be sustainable.

Present situation - Advantages

- No effort required, easiest solution.
- If any major development were planned the Parish Council would be consulted.

Present situation - Disadvantages

- The Localism Act has a positive view towards development, if we do nothing we may find that the local planning approve a development that would be unacceptable to the village. Some kind of community plan would at least give the planning department/developers a understanding of what the village would feel is acceptable.
- Although the village is only marked for infill and exception development. The local planning authority do not define “Infill”; decisions are made on a case by case basis.
- There is a recent upsurge in community interest engendered by jubilee celebrations and an associated application for a grant for improvements to the village field. A formal plan representing the views and wishes of all residents would build on the recent initiatives.
- There is perceived to be a significant problem with the present system of notification of planning applications, in that residents most likely to be affected by proposed changes may be unaware of the proposals until it is too late for them to comment.

The Research Group Conclusions

- Residents are largely unaware of:
 - Local plans for development in Barford
 - How to become involved in planning the process
- If the residents are to become more involved in the future development of Barford, steps are need to consult the whole community to:
 - Discover their views on the future development for the village.
 - Discuss the planning options available.
 - Determine the resources necessary for each option and the willingness to contribute either in effort/skills, or financially through the Parish Precept.

The Research Group Recommendations

Residents should be consulted to determine whether they:

- wish to become more involved in future development of village.
- are prepared to contribute to the resources required to produce a plan that reflects the needs of the whole community.

Questions

Anything you would like to know before you answer:

- Should Barford have a plan?
- Would you like to become involved?
- How much time could you make available?

What To Do Next

- Arrange a date for interested parties to meet, this assumes you have not taken the Do Nothing option.
- Form a committee, with assistance from the parish council.
- Determine which option is most manageable to generate success or you may find other options outside of the research group findings. [The appendices to the report provide a useful starter pack to build on.]
- A number people in the research group are parish councillors and would be more than happy to assist the new committee getting started.