

The Parish of Berrick Salome Oxfordshire

NOTES FROM NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN MEETING

These notes record the meeting on Sept 29th 2016 at the Village Hall, Berrick Salome, held to consider whether the Parish should proceed with the production of a Neighbourhood Plan (NP).

The meeting was chaired by Ian Glyn, with Simon Rowberry (SR), Interim Planning Policy Manager SODC, invited to present an introduction to Neighbourhood Plans. Forty parishioners attended. SR's introduction follows:-

History

NPs were introduced in 2010. SODC is in the national vanguard for NPs, with the Thame plan being the first significant plan to be adopted in the country.

What are they and what's in it for us?

They are about the community having a vision that they choose to express in a formal planning document. Such documents have statutory weight, forming part of the statutory development plan, along with the [SODC Local Plan 2032](#) which is being worked on at the moment. NPs have significant weight and are taken account in appeals decisions; for that reason alone, one would expect a parish to want its own NP.

Our political leadership sees localism as the way forward. They see the District Council being as hands off as possible, leaving details of decision making down to the local level as far as possible. The Parish needs to decide on its priorities, building on particular focuses we might be interested in, such as heritage, car parking, community facilities etc..

SR advised us not just to focus on housing. NPs are about much more: our environment, transport improvements. However, the NP can't deal with strategic issues – for example, it couldn't allocate an out-of-town shopping centre, or propose less development than the local plan will.

The NP has to conform with the SODC Local Plan 2032, which is currently emerging, so the producers of both plans should be talking to each other as the two plans are developed to achieve their eventual convergence.

Contents of the NP

This is largely down to the parish. The district is not proposing a significant housing requirement; there is an overall guideline for all smaller villages of a 5% increase on average for all housing stock by 2032. But we don't expect every village to manage to deliver 5%, given the prevailing constraints which might exist.

As Berrick doesn't lie within an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) or within the Green Belt, this makes it more important that the Parish should consider preparing a NP. If it were within either of these, there would be much more protection against speculative development.

During the coming months, the Local Plan would develop the framework within which NPs could define more locally based development management. Whilst they should be compliant with national policy, they could reflect the local character, issues and constraints that exist.

How long would be NP last?

Normally one looks for a ten year time horizon. But one mustn't sit back for ten years having prepared it. Generally it will require a revision every five years and will need to be continually rolled forward.

How do we prepare a Neighbourhood Plan?

Two ways of doing it:-

1. At least twenty one people request a neighbourhood forum; they require no connection with the Parish Council. SR didn't elaborate because...
2. It is far easier and better for places like Berrick that the Parish Council (PC) leads its production. The PC creates a working group, not necessarily all councillors; Cholsey have done it this way. SR very strongly recommended the PC-led way of doing it.

SR had another suggestion as to how it could be done. We could do it by joining with an adjoining parish to spread the workload even further.

Also, the NP does not have to cover the entire parish; it could simply cover a selected area. SR's advice is that it should cover the entire parish.

Funding

The Parish would receive a grant of £5000 from SODC to employ NP consultants to help us with the technical work. There are potentially other funding sources available. SR emphasised that the NP would be the Parish's plan, not SODC's.

Nevertheless, they do have powers to throw it out if it's not legally compliant or doesn't fit in with national or local plans. SODC don't want to do that; they want to work with the Parish to help us produce a fully acceptable plan.

Biggest Pitfall

Having too great expectations of what a NP can deliver. This is particularly true of towns and urban areas. (Link roads to motorways are not on!)

NP Production Process

1. Advise SODC how the NP production is going to be constitutionally organised, hopefully through the Parish Council.
2. Apply to SODC for area designation.
3. Start work, using consultants and establish a draft.
4. Consult on the draft, with SODC.
5. Produce the final draft, which will be examined by an independent examiner. Normally he passes the draft because if there were anything wrong with it, SODC will have warned us earlier and the consultant used will have advised us accordingly.
6. Once examined and passed, it goes to a referendum of the parishioners where at least 50% of those who vote are required to support the adoption of the plan. It can then be described as 'made'.
7. SODC incorporate it as part of the development plan process.

Q & A

There then followed a Q&A session and SR's responses follow.

Risk of merging with Benson

SODC have a long-standing policy (in the core strategy, so it's an adopted policy) of maintaining the identity of villages and other settlements. This policy is being rolled forward unchanged. That would give very strong weight to resist even an appeal to reduce the gap between our parish and Benson.

Would our NP help? It wouldn't do a lot in that particular instance.

Risk of village mergers within parish?

SR would not encourage us to allocate any land within the NP. Just leave it to the current infilling policy of ones and twos in appropriate gaps.

Chalgrove Airfield?

This is still only a proposal. Given the risk of substantially increased traffic flow if this goes ahead, the NP could have great emphasis on traffic management, working with OCC.

Plan Synchronisation

SR acknowledged that there is a problem in that all the NPs and the Local Plan are in different stages. SODC are trying to address this. But our parish shouldn't have a problem here in that we could start in parallel with the Local Plan work and should have a much shorter timescale for plan completion; we should be able to get our plan made within 18 months or 2 years. Note that SR advises us against making land allocation, so we need only focus on the more visionary and environmental community-based improvements.

Effectiveness of NPs

In reply to a question asking where an existing NP has influenced planning decisions, SR replied that there are currently only three NPs, but (e.g.) the one for Thame has already had a lot of influence on local decisions. SR pointed out that we're in a situation where any housing development under current policy that will be permitted here will be little ones and twos within infill sites. If there are no infill sites, there won't be any ones and twos.

Evidence

Plan making and plan decisions today are all about evidence. The plan is only as good as the evidence; this is what is tested in the plan examination as much as anything else. Within SODC, there are many studies going on which are all collecting the evidence. That evidence can be used in a very positive way in considering planning applications and for fighting off planning appeals; for example if we say that the parish has x listed buildings, the evidence for that is actually the list of those buildings. This information can be kept up-to-date and used in making planning decisions.

If our NP includes a fairly detailed assessment of our heritage characteristics and our village characteristics, that will be a really good piece of evidence in a statutory document. This can be used if we ever get an appeal. It can also be used in future roll forwards of the district local plan.

Strategic Issues

Although (e.g.) the need to increase the size of the sewage pipe to Benson is strategic, there are ways of getting round it. The NP could say that we will work with Thames Water to improve drainage of surface and foul water in the parish.

Are NPs in the public domain?

Plans, toolkits etc are very much in the local domain. You can view those for the SODC area by clicking [here](#).

The SODC NP planning toolkit (Sept 2016) can be found [here](#).

The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) site gives a [lot of information on NPs](#).

Roads

SR considers our local roads awful and many locals think this is a good thing, in that it curbs rat runs through the village. He would not imagine that situations would arise where there would be massive road building, in view of (a) the expense of acquiring private land and (b) the change of local character if that were attempted.

However, if the Chalgrove development goes ahead, and we think it could have an unacceptable effect on our parish, especially traffic, it is most important that we have our NP solidly in place beforehand, talking about all aspects of the character of the parish we wish to protect. We could say that we want to protect our small lanes. SR suggested "An intrinsic part of the character of the three villages is their narrow ...".

Conservation Area

Can a NP affect the conservation area delineation? It can propose changes to a conservation area.

The Consultant

The consultant who would help us would be a professional planner. In fact we would be invited to select someone from a list provided by SODC.

The Decision

By a show of hands, the meeting agreed by a significant majority that we should proceed in producing a neighbourhood plan.

The NP Team

SR thought that we'd need 3 or 4 people at the outset to drive the project and a couple of others later to come in and help. The most important skill for such people is realism and the ability to engage other people in the parish.

The following people have all kindly offered their services:-

Alison Blakey	Chris Kilduff	Sue Lyons	Ray Perfect
Sarah Russell	Derek Shaw	Conrad Shields	Douglas Taylor
Brian Tracey			

In addition one Parish Councillor will be required.

Appreciation to Simon Rowberry

The meeting ended with a round of applause to Simon for his extremely helpful presentation.

Chris Cussens, Parish Clerk