

**BOXTED PARISH COUNCIL – NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLAN COMMITTEE**  
**MINUTES MARCH 2015**

The Minutes of the Boxted Parish Council Neighbourhood Development Plan Committee Meeting held on Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2015 at Boxted Village Hall, Cage Lane, Boxted, Colchester, Essex.

**Present:**  
**Chairman:** Councillor R Cryer  
**Councillors:** Councillor T Brentnall, Councillor Mrs A McLauchlan, Councillor H Large, Councillor G Pugh, Councillor T Wells, Councillor Mark Parratt and Councillor Mrs C Damen

**Co-opted members:** Councillor N Chapman  
The Clerk to the Council Mrs D Humphris, Beverley McLean Colchester Borough Council, Chris Bowden Navigus Planning; 18 members of the public.

<b>001/15</b>	<b><u>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</u></b> <b>RESOLVED:</b> to accept apologies from Councillor S Lawrence.
<b>002/15</b>	<b><u>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</u></b> None
<b>003/15</b>	<b><u>HILL FARM SITE</u></b> The Chairman Councillor Cryer gave some background details with regard to progress of the Neighbourhood Development Plan project with specific reference to the inclusion of the Hill Farm site as a potential site for development of new homes in the Village.  Councillor Cryer outlined that the site already has planning permission for light industrial use but in the current climate and with other employment sites such as Cuckoo Farm nearby there is a lack of demand and the landowner has been unable to attract interested businesses to the site and has therefore considered using the land for housing development instead. Taking into account that the site has planning permission and that therefore some development will occur at this site the Parish Council felt that considering this matter under the auspices of a local Neighbourhood Development Plan would give the community the opportunity to control and manage inevitable development as well as gain s106 monies for use on community facilities and acquire much needed affordable housing.  The landowner has consulted with the Parish Council, and following council meetings which were all open to the public, amendments have been made to the plan submitted for approval and subsequently declined by both Colchester Borough Council and the Planning Inspector at appeal.  It is this second amended plan (which has not yet been submitted for planning approval) which the Parish Council have been looking at when putting together the policies for the Neighbourhood Plan. The new plan has less houses, more affordable homes which are expected to be legally protected in perpetuity for Boxted residents and families, and the addition of a small village green, with landscaping, trees and house design suitable for a rural village. Additionally, it would be expected that the local community would benefit from substantial s106 monies which under current legislation developers are obliged to provide.  The process followed so far was explained as follows:  An Open Day was advertised and well attended back in 2011 when the project was started and questions were asked about many community facilities including local housing needs and preferences for the future of the Hill Farm site taking into account that planning permission had already been granted as detailed above. An Affordable Housing survey was carried out which identified a need for local affordable housing. The themes resulting from the Open Day were developed further in a questionnaire that was delivered to every household in the Village and the Council's proposed policy relating to Hill Farm has emerged from this research, which, as well as the Open Day and questionnaire, has included formal local consultation and a stand at the Village Fete in 2014.  Following feedback from the Planning Inspector at the recent appeal hearing, the Parish Council now needed to re-visit the policy relating to Hill Farm to establish whether small amendments could be made to the wording or whether the policy needed to be completely re-written and/or possibly backed up by further consultation.

Chris Bowden of Navigus Planning communicated further information.

He emphasised that the initial plan for housing on the site was the plan that had been rejected by Colchester Borough Council and the Planning Inspector and that it was the second amended plan that was proposed for the parish NDP.

The Planning Inspector had commented that at 43 units, the density was too high and the existing NDP policy had included wording 'up to 43 units' indicating the parish council's agreement that there should be less than 43 units on this site. It seemed that there may be some value to changing this wording to clarify the position and specify a maximum number of houses permissible. This had not been done beforehand as it had been felt that Colchester Borough Council as the planning authority with more detailed knowledge of acceptable densities would set the appropriate level for the number of units for the site but that it would definitely be less than the suggested 43.

The second plan put together by the developer after consultation with the Council does include the suggestion that more 1 and 2 bedroom houses should be provided, with consideration of many other other amendments as suggested by the Council, including the inclusion of a Village Green.

Additionally any affordable housing on the site needs to be protected in perpetuity for those people who have family links and/or employment links in the Village and the Boxted NDP could facilitate this.

The Inspector had also made comments about employment and the loss of employment sites due to a change of use of the site so potentially any new application could consider mixed use home/working/business/residential units with space for home working/businesses.

Some comments had also been made about the potential for a community shop and the existing NDP document has a policy enabling this if there is sufficient interest in the community to run this. The Council have advertised for volunteers but at this stage insufficient volunteers have come forward to make this viable but as the plan is proposed to cover a 15 year period it is hoped that more people may volunteer for this in the future.

Beverley McClean from Colchester Borough Council added to this by advising that the Borough Council had wanted the new NDP to run its course and had declined the planning application in order to allow the community to decide via the NDP.

The Chairman Councillor Cryer then opened the debate for members of the public present to speak.

The debate was at times heated and it was clear that there was much opposition from those people at the meeting to any development on the site. Some people present advised that they had arranged a petition with 67 signatures which they had presented to the Planning Inquiry opposing any development on the site, although it was noted that this has not been shared with the parish council.

Queries were made about the density of the site and the council agreed that the wording of the existing NDP policy needed to be changed to reflect a lower density. Beverley McClean advised that an average density for a site of this size may be around 31 units but each case would be considered individually in line with the need to meet other policy requirements for housing development. Lower density would probably mean less affordable housing on the site and it was noted that the Planning Inspector did not have a copy of our Affordable Housing Need Survey when making his judgment.

Queries were raised about whether Colchester Borough needed any new housing at all and if it did why any of this had to be in Boxted. This was addressed by advice that Colchester Borough Council had a rolling plan for housing development as new homes have to continue to be built to meet demand and this meant that the Borough have to continue to find new sites.

There were calls for the land to be used for recreational purposes, and discontent about the fact that people could not walk their dogs on Parish Council land and therefore needed somewhere to go. In response to this

it was made clear that this was privately owned land with existing planning permission for industrial units and so some development would happen and the landowner could not be compelled to give the land up for community recreational use.

Concerns were raised about substantial profits to be made by the landowner from this project but members of the public were advised this was not a valid concern as clearly the landowners had purchased the land as a commercial business prospect.

Accusations were made that the Parish Council were accepting the potential s106 monies in order to provide a blueprint for the developers to work to – it was re-iterated that s106 monies had to be provided for community use from all developments and that the parish council were not providing a blueprint – they were merely trying to negotiate with the landowners to obtain the best possible outcome for a central village site which had existing planning permission and clearly would be developed at some point in the future in some way. The Neighbourhood Plan is the only way to provide the opportunity for local people to have a say on how this site is developed given that the site already has planning permission, the parish council had entered negotiations on the basis that if they did not do so, the Village may end up with industrial units and heavy commercial traffic in the centre of the Village close to the school.

Chris Bowden further advised that the laws were changing so that brownfield sites could be developed for housing with no obligations on the landowner to provide affordable housing or s106 monies meaning that failure to include these matters in our NDP now could mean the village would lose out in the future.

Queries were raised about how much s106 money may be available and what this would be used for. The response was around £200k with some consideration having been given to improvements to the Sports and Social Club. Comments were made that this would not be a popular decision as Boxted villagers do not use this club and therefore villagers would not benefit but it was made clear that any suggestions re the potential use of any future s106 monies would be welcomed and considered.

Other concerns were made about the untidiness of the site and concerns about travellers having to be removed from the site recently. The public were advised that the parish council may be able to liaise with the landowner to undertake a general tidy up of the site.

Queries were raised about the publicity for various stages of the plan and it was pointed out that all aspects of the plan have been discussed at 10 parish council meetings per year for the last three years all of which have been advertised and open to the public. Questionnaires were hand delivered to every household and various other Open Day and consultation events have been well advertised with regular updates with regards progress of the plan in the monthly newsletter delivered to all households. Members of the public present advised that they had not been aware of any of this and had not received hand delivered questionnaires as stated.

Queries were raised about the results of the questionnaire and Councillor Cryer communicated the details which whilst not conclusive had evidenced some support for housing rather than employment on the site. It was acknowledged that there had also been support for maintaining just employment and/or mixed employment residential.

The public debate session was ended with a quote from a member of the public that they did not want houses ‘full stop’.

Councillor Brentnall the parish council Chairman asked people to bear in mind that the existing planning permission on the site provided for substantial buildings and as an industrial site the potential to attract large truck and vehicle movements. He advised that both he and all other councillors were passionately concerned about keeping the Village rural.

An unrelated query was raised by a member of the public asking about the Council’s position relating to recent extensions and increase in pupil numbers at the school and was advised that at every stage the Council have strenuously objected and have continued to push for enforcement of planning conditions

relating to lighting and landscaping. However, as a Parish Council we have no enforcement powers and must therefore lobby Borough and County on these matters.

The Chairman of the NDP committee summed up that the original plan presented for housing on the Hill Farm site included 55 houses and this had been negotiated down to a more acceptable level. Moving forward we would need to consider whether it is appropriate for the plans to be amended to include a blend of housing, affordable housing, work units and landscaping to minimise any impact on the Village. It may be necessary to consider a further local questionnaire relating to the Hill Farm site and/or amendments to existing policy wording and these matters will all be looked at in more detail in coming weeks to try to ensure a successful outcome at local referendum stage.

Chris Bowden confirmed that to be successful at referendum the plan needed to receive a 'yes' vote from 50% plus 1 of the votes cast.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 8pm.

CHAIRMAN

DATE