

# Loxley NDP Community Consultation Event

30<sup>th</sup> May 2018, Loxley School, 7.30pm

Number present: 38 villagers plus 5 Parish Councillors

## Introduction and overview

Glynn Jones, Chairman of LPC welcomed everyone to the meeting requested following the launch of the draft consultation plan at the LPC Annual Meeting in mid May.

GJ explained the background to the plan and the thinking of the PC, making the following points:

1. **Resident led:** That the development of the NDP was only initiated after gaining sufficiently broad and representative support from the community and a number of residents had stepped forward and were willing to lead the plan. The plan was not therefore developed at the instigation of the Parish Council but was developed and led by residents via the NDP working group, with support from LPC.
2. **Why now?:** The background to the plan and its formation was the designation of Loxley as a Local Service Village (LSV) reflecting strong housing pressures facing the district. The plan is an opportunity for residents to influence the form and location of development rather than leaving these decisions to the market.
3. **Poor quality of sites:** Due to geography of the village, the site appraisal process had demonstrated to the Council in a systematic way that there were no sites for development in Loxley that were not compromised in one way or another to varying degrees – particularly in respect of access. For this reason, the Plan did not represent the Councils view of which sites it was supporting / promoting, but rather all of those that could not be definitively eliminated : this left a collection of a few relatively poor sites on which the Council would take a more definitive view following the results of the consultation and survey results. However, ultimately the Council were clear that they were providing the residents with a choice – ultimately it would be up to residents to take a view.
4. **Meaning of site allocation:** Just because sites are allocated, it does not mean that they will definitely be developed for a number of reasons :
  - a) **Land for development:** the landowner may not wish to sell and ultimately the development timescale would be theirs to decide when and IF they decided to develop;
  - b) **Development economics:** no detailed site development appraisal had been undertaken – a developer would need to be convinced that a site was profitable to develop taking into account costs, values and market conditions, which ultimately may constrain sites from being developed either for periods or possibly the duration of the plan;
  - c) **Outline permission :** the plan identified a number of sites where development in PRINCIPLE could be encouraged. However, this did not meant to say that a detailed planning application would be acceptable to either LPC or SDC. An agreement to the principle of development did not guarantee the approval of any one detailed proposal. This was the difference between outline and detailed planning consent ; one did not guarantee the other.
5. **Why include site D having previously rejected it?:** The most controversial site had proved to be Site D. LPC had put this back in the plan, because – since all sites were compromised to some degree - to reject this site, the Council would felt it would also have to reject the other sites.

While it had previously rejected a specific application, inclusion in the plan was acknowledging the principle that a scheme might be made to work on this site – but not any scheme. Resubmission of the same application would lead to refusal on the same grounds. Further consideration would need to be given to access and the form and layout of development.

6. **If all the sites are poor, then why bother with a plan?** Accepting housing development enables us to tackle some longstanding issues facing the community, namely:
- a) demography of the village which is unbalanced and skewed to older people that can afford the mostly larger executive houses available, which tend to be occupied by more affluent people.
  - b) A small population also has implications for the viability of facilities – the school, the pub, the church and even the parish council.

The challenge was to get more housing AND a benefit of the NDP – as opposed to the market - is that it would leave the community with more influence to influence the location and mix of housing, including providing more modest affordable housing. This would help older residents looking to downsize but remain local and younger people struggling to find a deposit. The plan provided a logical / consistent response to these key issues faced by the village: choice of housing and viability of facilities. Over a longer period the community had been losing facilities and services – to date this had proved to be a one way direction of travel.

7. **What are the benefits of the plan?** In a nutshell, the plan helps provide a degree of certainty, it can help influence the location and potentially the mix of housing and finally, the community will receive some financial contribution via CILS.

In summary, GJ set out his and other Councillors concerns regarding the potential - on the current trajectory - for the community to end up becoming a retirement village with even fewer facilities. The plan provided LPC with a basis on which to address these issues, although clearly it had no magic wand.

He likened the current position to the ‘prisoners dilemma’ in which everyone acting in their own self-interest could result in a situation which proved to be the worst outcome for everyone. While development could bring benefits this would also require some compromises.

He then handed over to the audience for questions.

## **Questions from Audience**

### Rachel Butt

Was it correct that our target from SDC was 35 houses? Do we have to meet this target? Can houses built since 2011 be discounted?

Reply – original target was around this number, but SDC now has sufficient houses from developments in LSV’s. And yes, existing planning permissions can be deducted since 2011.

### Yvonne Brocklehurst

Is the target set in stone?

Reply – there is flexibility because Loxley is at the smaller end of the thresholds for LSVs so Stratford DC in previous discussions had indicated that as a smaller village they would be prepared to look at a smaller number of houses. However, since the Core Strategy has been adopted the DC has met now met its allocation.

The issue is as much to do with our own aspirations for the village – and with no or limited development there would be little opportunity to address either the limited choice of housing in the community or halt the on-going decline in local service provision. There were some difficult choices for the community – but the Council were keen these were flagged up, although ultimately it would be the community to choose.

And also should housing pressures increase over the period of the plan, the momentum developing the current plan may be lost.

Jane Darlow (owner of Site E)

Stated that she only wanted 2 or 3 not 10 on Site E.

Reply – Acknowledged this and noted that the site appraisals had identified potential numbers that could be accommodated on a site, ultimately the landowner would determine whether and when a site would be developed. The lower number was included in the plan.

Stephen Butt

Asked about the concept of BUAB? Why had other sites not been considered in the parish?

Reply: the plan has to conform with National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This was clear that development needed to be focused in existing settlements where some services were located. LPC were therefore directed by SDC to focus on opportunities in the village.

Then asked about how many houses in settlement?

Reply – there were 100, which put the village at the lower end of the threshold for LSVs. It was not therefore the number of houses in the parish overall but the village that had been key.

Rachel Butt

Asked whether owners of allocated sites have indicated that they wish to sell?

Reply – Of the sites identified all landowners had been informed and wished to develop, with the possible exception of one site.

Maria Garcia

GJ had said that the Plan would give certainty and the ability to resist development on land not in the allocation. However, this was not her understanding based on discussions with SDC?

Reply – GJ asked who she had spoken to at SDC? MG had the names but was not aware of their seniority within SDC.

GJ explained that the plan was a statutory document – and unlike the parish plan or village design statement – was backed up by legislation. Planning decisions must be in accordance with the plan which has the same legal status as a local plan. While nationally there would be circumstances in which ‘other material considerations’ could be considered; as with a local plan, these will be exceptional and rarely applicable to a rural parish like Loxley. These might apply more in urban areas

where there is an over-riding need to also consider strategic national interests or projects such as HS2. Outside of the BUAB, there would be some exceptions that would be supported, including for example: social housing, rural provision eg agricultural workers occupation or redevelopment of derelict barns.

GJ asked MG, if the plan provided no protection against development why would any community go to the trouble of developing one?

#### Paul Jennings

Asked whether if a site was in the Plan, it was more likely to get planning permission?

Reply – ultimate inclusion of a site in the plan represented an approval in principle to bring forward a detailed application, but consent would then depend on the specific detail of the application. In Loxley, since all the sites were ‘compromised’ to some degree and had difficult access issues it could not be automatically assumed that approval in principle would lead to approval of a detailed application. The number of sites and potential homes were therefore to some extent a theoretical maximum – there remained a number of practical hurdles to overcome. In this respect LPC were concerned that even if voted positively on a number of sites might struggle to ever get developed due to difficulties with pedestrian access or viability.

#### Jeremy Chatwin

Asked why a couple of sites which had been left out by the Steering Group were put back in by PC?

Reply – the working group is small and there is always the danger of accusations of bias. LPC felt especially given the small size of the community, it was important Councillors were happy the selection process and so on this basis had:

- Reviewed the work of the working group including site appraisals and the process for inclusion and exclusion
- Focused on sites that had been included by the independent consultant (appointed by the NDP working group), but then rejected by the working group
- For these sites reviewed whether they should or should not be included in the plan by LPC. After lengthy debate LPC unanimously decided to exclude two of the sites owned by Peter Gregory Hood, plus a further site on Manor Lane (where consultation had already indicated widespread local opposition), but include Site D which had been accepted by the consultant as being potentially suitable for development since the obstacles to development were no greater than any of the other sites.

#### Hazel Mills

She said that when the original village discussion was held in The Fox, there had been a stated preference to preserve the linear nature of the village. Why was this not now so? Inclusion of Site D was against the linear nature of the village ?

Reply – reiterated that LPC wanted to provide an opportunity to comment on all sites left following the initial sieving given the number was limited and they all had disadvantages – people may well place different weights on the advantages / disadvantages of different sites now that they are able to view this in the round (ie in relation to a much wide number of factors and relative to all development options).

Second, many on the working group appeared to have undergone a change of heart and wanted to see development in the 'heart of the village'. Putting site D back in gave the community an opportunity to fully consider by the community at large.

Third, it was felt it was only fair to put site D back in, given that there had been a view expressed from members on the working group that the site had not been treated 'fairly'. Councillors had discussed at length and at the relevant Council meeting and at this meeting no Councillors objected or abstained. This included support from some Councillors who were not necessarily in favour of development on the site, but did feel it proper that the site was put to the community in the consultation plan to visibly and transparently ensure fairness.

Fourth, a few things had moved on since the original community survey. For example, it was now acknowledged that 'backfill' was not a planning concept and would need to be dropped or it would in any event be taken by the Planning Inspector on review of the plan.

Finally, in respect of the access there was some potential to alter this and improve visibility. Also things had moved on since the original application with the awarding of 'Safer Schools' designation to Loxley school - there was now a significant budget available to fund improvements in the vicinity of the school.

#### Hazel Mills

Why and how has Plot D had been put into the proposal given that the access to the site was proven to be dangerous because of its proximity to the bend, given recent accidents and dangers. HM quoted the minimum number of off road parking spaces which were recommended for any new house i.e. 1 per bedroom and noted that if the development were e.g. 6 @ 3 bed roomed houses, that would be 18 cars converging on the same point of entry/exit.

Reply - all sites had traffic issues and these are detailed in the response of the WCC highways Authority and published on the website. It may be possible to make access safer. HM queried how this could be achieved in that the original planning application would have given the best possible site for access? Reply – if it proved not possible to change the access arrangements then the site would receive the same response from the Highways Authority, bearing in mind the very strict standards that need to be adhered to.

#### Geoff Ambler

Questioned whether there might be access to Site D via Barracks Green.

Reply – unlikely due to poor visibility on the entrance to the main road.

Sarah Boyle – noted that it would also be important for people to vote on the green spaces.

#### Yvonne Brocklehurst

Asked why we have not adopted the SDC BUAB?

Reply – LPC and the working group were not qualified to advise on this and therefore had relied on the advice of the Planning Consultant, Neil Pearce who had been appointed by the working group and had previously worked for SDC. The BUAB included the current built up area boundary plus potential development sites. There were some differences in the views of SDC and the consultant, but in the circumstances the working group decided to follow the advice of their appointed consultant.

Should any of the development sites drop out following the community consultation then the BUAB would be redrawn. It was reiterated that the plan put forward was a consultation document only NOT the final plan which would depend on the outcome of a vote.

#### Emma Darlow

How could it be described as a development plan, if we ended up with no development? An open question to residents.

#### Jeremy Chatwin

Asked whether the plan would give us influence over development? In response to GJs question JC confirmed this related to both design and type/mix.

Reply - GJ replied that the Village Design Statement adopted in 2007 forms part of the Plan and has been updated. This had been a valuable and helpful document over the past decade and formed part of the plan. Where, at present it is Planning Guidance advisory in nature, as part of the plan, it would have statutory authority and provided LPC with the opportunity to influence the type and mix of housing. While it was not possible for any parish council to dictate precisely what housing could be developed, the plan explicitly mentioned the need for greater choice of housing / housing styles and need for smaller more modest and affordable homes – so there was some basis for challenging developers intent on developing yet more executive homes. LPC would stand firm on this issue but could make no promises, but had previously successfully challenged the decision of local planners.

GJ also confirmed that the plan included not just sites, but also wider community, transport and environmental objectives – but was primarily a land use policy document, unlike the parish plan.

#### M Swinbourne

What would happen if developer put in for an application for a site not in the Plan. Would a large developer be able to bring their influence to bear?

Reply – GJ reiterated that the planning decisions must be in accordance with the plan. This would enable LPC to resist large scale development. Although in Loxley sites were too small to be of interest to the major national housebuilders, nevertheless there were many developers that had been in contact with local landowners looking speculatively for sites. In the BUAB pressure would be focused on the designated development sites and planning decisions taken in accordance with the plan – this was the point of the plan.

Outside of the BUAB, there would be some exceptions that would be supported, including for example: social housing (where sites would be considered in / outside the BUAB), rural provision eg agricultural workers occupation or redevelopment of derelict barns. But these would be exceptional circumstances involving limited or even single developments, NOT large scale housing proposals.

GJ thanked everyone for attending and all their questions. Will Freeman thanked the NDP working Group for all their hard work on behalf of the village. GJ congratulated the leaders (Jonathan Baker, Peter Morris and Ian Davidson) as well as members of the working group for all their hard work. He noted that for such a small community to have got this far was a real achievement and everyone should be very proud. While ultimately everyone would have their own view, he encouraged residents to get involved and make their views known via the survey.

The meeting closed at 8.40 pm.