

GAVINTON, FOGO & POLWARTH COMMUNITY COUNCIL

NOTES ON PUBLIC MEETING TO DISCUSS DRAFT LOCAL PLAN 2ND SEPTEMBER 2004 AT 7pm IN GAVINTON VILLAGE HALL

The meeting was chaired by Mrs Bridget Darling.

About 40 members of the public attended.

Apologies were received from SBC Planning Department, who are not visiting any small communities, also Councillor Margaret McCrave and Mr Ian Gill.

Mrs Darling welcomed everyone and said:

I thought a recap of events concerning the Scottish Borders Local Plan might be useful.

In March 2003 the Community Council considered 3 proposed Candidate Housing Sites, these were

South View (Butterwell Park) - the field in front of the village
Woodside – between the village and playing field
Crimson Hill

Butterwell Park – one member abstained, the other 10 did not support the application.

Woodside - Mrs Darling declared a non-pecuniary interest, Mrs Seed declared a pecuniary interest, neither took part in the discussion.

The Reporter's Report from the Public Inquiry, 1992 was read out stating "The proposal to develop it conflicts with the important objective of conserving the character of Gavinton as an 18th Century planned village of great charm and interest. However good the quality and design it would cause the West end of the conservation area village to lose its direct and important relationship with the rural landscape"

Crimson Hill, it was unanimous that a small development of affordable housing should be supported, with the possibility of relocation of the village hall. (This was of course before the current Village Hall Committee sent out their questionnaire.)

14th April 2003 Minutes show the Community Council letter of observations had been placed on public record at Scottish Borders Council.

On 24th May 2004, the Community Council Minutes state "The Local Plan draft is now available in Duns Library. No candidate building sites in Gavinton. The Plan will be discussed by the Community Council at a future date."

The next meeting was 5th July when it was decided that a full discussion would take place on 16th August. At that meeting with public attending, a public meeting was suggested. Scottish Borders Council Planning was invited but unable to accept.

Last night saw a public consultation in Duns for all Community Councils in the area and public. It was very disappointingly attended. However, Bridget, Frances Renton (Fogo) and Janie Seed (Polwarth) attended.

Tonight your Community Council wants to hear views to take forward to their decision making meeting on 27th September.

Members of the public were invited to speak and the following are some of their comments.

For the village to thrive it is essential that it has more houses and not be standing still.

Some people are disappointed that no houses are allocated for any villages in Berwickshire.

If a building were to enhance a village then it would be taken into account.

It is better to build in villages and keep people together rather than build 2 or 3 houses here and there.

Has anything changed since the last Local Plan?

Planning applications have been made round and about over the past 2 years. Westruther has quite a bit of building.

Scottish Borders Council looks at the big picture. We cannot see things just as we want it. They see a wider view of the whole Borders.

The Structure Plan is set and it is the skeleton on which the Local Plan is hung. Its policies determine what is in the Local Plan which is the criteria. It has to be exceptional circumstances for the Local Plan to change.

Houses should not be built where people have to commute. Transport is a problem, it is not recommended that houses be built where 2 cars would be needed.

Is there a shortage of houses in Berwickshire? – No.

There is a shortage of affordable houses. What is affordable?

People from Edinburgh can afford higher prices so house prices are pushed up.

The problem with affordable houses, which are generally built by housing associations, is that tenants have the right to buy at a value from the district valuer less discount. After 3 years the house can be sold on. Berwickshire Housing Association continue to rent and build houses but there is a lack of infrastructure like sewage.

In the first instance you could build smaller houses but the price goes up on demand.

This village is a very healthy village with a good range of people and a good range of houses old and new.

More housing does not mean that more people will join in the community.

The draft Local Plan will not become operational until the end of 2005.

For changes in the community, Councils have to plan years ahead. There is no chance of changes taking place now you have to look 5 to 10 years ahead and should vote on to the Council councillors who will change things in the future.

Scottish Borders Council is responsive to what people say and what they want to do. They are prepared to listen to the Community Councils. The planners took on board what was said at the Duns meeting where there was strong feeling about black lines around settlements. The general opinion was that it is too set in stone and there should be more flexibility with village plans. Planning Department are pleased to hear views from villages.

Conservation villages are slightly different.

The original plan for Crimson Hill was for outline planning permission for another row of houses. What was built was different from the original plan. Access was left for further development.

People need to make their own response to Scottish Borders Council and also contact the Community Council with their views. We are not looking for a decision tonight. We have a lot of comments, some people want some building some do not want any. There are very many vested interests. Whatever the Community Council puts forward will be the view of the committee taking into account comments made this evening.

Does the Community Council have to make a response? No, but it will be discussed at the next meeting on 27th September. All Community Council meetings are open to the public.

At the end of the meeting those present were invited to make their personal replies to the Scottish Borders Council Planning Department, reference B13, p 61. 29th October 2004 final closing date.

There will be a presentation of the Local Draft Plan at the Berwickshire Area Committee on Tuesday, 28th September 2004 at 6.30pm in Duns Council Chamber.

The meeting closed at 8 pm.