

1. EMAIL EXCHANGES BETWEEN FRANK AHERN, LAURA BRIGHT AND STEVE DRING

From: Steve Dring <steve.dring@bcpcouncil.gov.uk>

Sent: 16 January 2023 19:14

Subject: RE: Local Plan Consultation

Dear Mr Ahern,

I respond to your questions below in blue text.

Kind Regards



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From: ftahern@btinternet.com <ftahern@btinternet.com>

Sent: 11 January 2023 11:56

To: Laura Bright <laura.bright@bcpcouncil.gov.uk>

Cc: Subject: RE: Local Plan Consultation

Dear Laura,

I have not received any information about the local plan since I wrote to you in October (See below.) The second part of this email is the question I asked at the Council meeting last night and the answer that Cllr Broadhead gave.

I would be grateful for answers to the following questions:

1. In the first paragraph, Cllr Broad suggests that the Cabinet has been 'engaging' 'communities through targeted sessions undertaken in conjunction with Future Places and specific meetings with the community groups, keeping that work going and these events are all face-to-face.' Could you please give me details of the communities that have been engaged 'face-to-face', including dates and venues.

We committed to starting public engagement in the Autumn of 2022 to run through to March 2023 – please see the extract of from the Local Development Scheme shown below para 10 of the [JulyLocalPlanUpdate](#) Report. We expect to continue this engagement through spring and summer to help us shape a draft plan for Cabinet by September 2023.

In Summer/ Autumn 2022, there were a series of charettes focussing on the issues in Poole and Christchurch town centres hosted by BCP Future Places (I can ask Laura to forward the dates and venues if you want them). The Planning Policy team held a workshop with Poole Quays Forum last week (12 January 2023) and we plan to meet Christchurch Town Council shortly. Over the coming weeks and into the spring we will be extending the invitation to discuss the BCP Local Plan with to other community groups. These discussions can focus on walkable neighbourhoods; possible development within the urban area including areas of protection or change; local infrastructure needs, etc.

I chose to pause discussions around Green Belt sites with local groups and developers during Autumn 2022 in order that: (i) my team work up some detailed options for the amount and location of development; and (ii) to wait and see if the government would make any announcement about national policy that was rumoured. That has now happened. The government consultation on the proposed changes to the national planning policy - <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/levelling-up-and-regeneration-bill-reforms-to-national-planning-policy/levelling-up-and-regeneration-bill-reforms-to-national-planning-policy> provides a very clear direction of travel. I have just drafted a Cabinet report (meeting

on 8 February) to respond to the government consultation with the implications for the BCP Local Plan. The 2022 Issues and Options consultation gave us a clear message from the local community about protection of the Green Belt. Now that government has clarified in the consultation that we do not have to review Green Belt to meet housing need through the BCP Local Plan we are in a much better position to provide clearer answers when engaging with the public during the Spring.

2. Would you please let me know your understanding of the status of changes to planning law in the proposed Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill? Cllr Broadhead suggests that 'Now that we have some certainties around these issues we will be stepping up the engagement process'. My understanding, having looked at the relevant government website, is that the bill is still at the consultation stage, and will remain so until the 2nd March.

The government [consultation](#) covers multiple aspects. The most important one for the BCP Local Plan are the planned changes to the National Planning Policy Framework. Other changes require legislation and are included in the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill that you refer to. The NPPF changes do not require legislation and so can be brought in much quicker (Spring 2023) through the publication of an updated NPPF.

Whilst this is only a consultation it is a clear direction of travel and past experience tells us these changes will go through with minimal change. We therefore have greater certainty in knowing what we have to do in the Local Plan and can get on with preparing a draft for the autumn. One such change is the clarification that we do not have to alter Green Belt boundaries through a Local Plan Review – here is the [government's track change version of the NPPF](#) highlighting this change in new para 142. As I say above the implications for the BCP Local Plan will be made clear in the Cabinet Report on 8 February.

3. Would you please give me some idea of what the 'stepping up the engagement process' will consist of? Are there likely to be 'face-to-face events' in the distant environs of north Poole in the coming months?

As above, we will shortly be contacting community groups to discuss the emerging local plan proposals now that we have more clarity on our approach. These are expected to be face to face meetings and we can happily discuss with you about a session in North Poole later in the Spring. We can tailor the meetings or workshops to whatever the local community wishes to discuss – please do let me know what you would like to discuss or we can keep it as broad such as a local plan update. Ideally we would like to be invited to an existing meeting/event if there is one scheduled in March/April/May you think it would be useful us attending?

4. I thought I was on a mailing list dedicated to keeping residents updated on the local plan. I have received nothing since July apart from your October response to my seeking of information. I have therefore been unaware of any of the activities outlined in Cllr Broadhead's first paragraph. Has the notion of keeping the residents of BCP updated been abandoned?

We do intend to keep BCP residents informed, but there has been no news to feedback since July, as we have been working away in the background on improving our evidence base. With the government announcement we feel there now is some news we can report, once we get Cabinet approval to respond to the government consultation. We are still on target to publish a draft plan in Autumn 2023.

Please note that I am copying Susan Zeiss into this email so that she is aware of the date I am asking you these questions. I look forward to hearing your answers.

Kind regards,

Frank Ahern

2. QUESTION POSED TO CLLR BROADHEAD AT COUNCIL MEETING OF 10TH JANUARY 2023

In July, the revised Local Development Scheme and amended timetable were unanimously approved by Cabinet, who stated: 'We are keen to continue to engage our communities and stakeholders in the BCP Local Plan in order that they can influence the plan. Appropriate time is therefore set out within the LDS to continue to actively engage our communities before the draft of the Local Plan is published.'

The *BCP Local Plan Update* states that 'face-to-face engagement will be an important component of our ongoing approach' (para 26) and identifies Autumn 2022 for the 'Further engagement.'

This has not happened. Why not?"

3. CLLR BROADHEAD'S RESPONSE

We received a large amount of incredible useful feedback to the response to the comprehensive Issues and Options Consultation which ran from January to March last year and indeed it was one of the largest and most successful consultations ever done by this council. Since July the Cabinet have been engaging with stakeholders and other communities through targeted sessions undertaken in conjunction with Future Places and specific meetings with the community groups, keeping that work going and these events are all face-to-face and continue to add to our knowledge of the various issues and views of our communities across different parts of the BCP area.

However, we were also aware of potential changes the government were proposing in relation to plan-making. Consultation of these has now been published and these changes will have significant implications, I think positive implications for our local plan. Undertaking consultation in the autumn would therefore have been abortive given the nature of the changes proposed at national level. In particular, and after much work with government directly on this issue, I am delighted that the proposed changes to the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill now mean that our new local plan can formally protect our precious Green Belt from inappropriate residential development – something which I was determined to ensure in our local plan despite the challenges in doing so, but which is now much easier to facilitate. I can now therefore give the firm pledge that this Conservative administration will protect BCP's Green Belt from residential development, safeguarding it for the future.

Now that we have some certainties around these issues we will be stepping up the engagement process ahead of that work on the draft local plan, something which again is being done cross-party through out local plan steering group. We have a tremendous amount more work to do on this and plan to have further face-to-face events in only the next few months. And, as I mentioned earlier on, the draft of the local plan will then be published in the autumn.