

## **MAGWATCH LOCAL PLAN MEETING WITH BCP OFFICERS**

**13<sup>th</sup> March, 2023 5.30 – 7.00 p.m.**

*Canford Magna Church Centre*

### **NOTES FROM PRELIMINARY MEETING – 6<sup>TH</sup> March**

*Present for BCP: Steve Dring (Interim Planning Policy Manager), Laura Bright (Senior Planning Officer)*

*Present for Magwatch: Frank Ahern (SLNoM), Inge Axt-Simmonds (Merley Park Rd Group), Marion Brown (MPRG), Peter Chesterfield (BAG), Gail Lankstead(BAG), Leslie Legg (BAG), Tim Lister (SLNoM), Elaine Napier, Jeremy Orme, Dominic Stubbing (SLNoM),*

#### **1. Presentation on BCP Local Plan (Steve Dring and Laura Bright)**

The purpose of the BCP Local Plan is to bring together one up-to-date set of planning policies for the BCP area, rationalising over 300 existing policies down to around 60. This will make the planning process easier for all those involved.

##### *1.1 Timetable*

2023 Spring	Ongoing community engagement and evidence gathering
2023 Autumn	Preparation of and publication of draft Local Plan
2024 January and February	Plan submitted to Secretary of State
2024 March to September	Examination in public by and indepent planning Inspector
2024-December	Adoption of approved plan

##### *1.2 Examination*

After a draft of the plan has been taken through the cabinet process in September 2023 it will then be published for consultation. The comments received at that stage of consultation will be sent, along with the draft Plan, to the Secretary of State for examination by the Planning Inspectorate, who will check that the plan is in accordance with national planning policy, relevant legislation and represents a justified strategy for the area.

The examiner will hold sessions on various chapters of the plan and consider the comments which have been made by the public and other organisations. The public can attend and speak at the examination sessions. At the end of the examination the Inspector will suggest modifications to the plan to ensure it is sound.

##### *1.3 Proposed changes to the Planning System*

A revised National Planning Policy Framework is due this Spring, possibly April. Key elements include changes to wording surrounding Green Belt and other details connected to five-year housing land supply. The Council are largely supportive of these changes.

##### *1.4 Housing needs and delivery*

The governments standard methodology calculation for housing need for BCP is 2,800 homes a year. Given the constraints of the BCP area (such as heathland and flood risk) this figure is not achievable. The BCP are hoping for government approval for a target of 1,300-1,600 per year.

##### *1.5 Green Belt*

The changes to the wording relating to Green Belt will give BCP more choice about whether or not to pursue changes to the Green Belt boundary. Given this change, BCP's strategy will be focused on development in the urban area and will not involve the release of Green Belt sites. The sites which have been promoted to us for residential uses in the Merley and Bearwood area will therefore not be taken forward in the draft Local Plan.

A Green Belt review assessment was undertaken in 2020 to consider how different parts of BCP's Green Belt perform against Green Belt purposes; the sites in the Merley and Bearwood area typically make a high contribution to Green Belt purposes.

### *1.6 Developers*

Nevertheless, developers (who invariably tend to favour green field sites over brownfield sites) are still likely to promote these sites and push for their inclusion through the Local Plan Examination process. They will likely be focusing on the delivery of family-sized homes and affordable homes. In the Merley and Bearwood area the existing allocations will already deliver a large number of family-sized and affordable homes. As these sites have not been delivered yet they will roll over into the BCP Local Plan. Developers may also try to bring forward the sites for other uses or put forward speculative developments.

### *1.7 Local Elections*

It was explained that the Local Elections in May will represent an element of uncertainty to the BCP Local Plan process. The incoming administration may want to consider a different strategy or undertake further consultation which would alter the timetable. To date the governance of the Local Plan has included cross party membership to try and seek consensus across all parties to the proposed strategy.

### *1.8 Consultation*

Reference was made to notion that Bearwood and Merley was 'over-represented', a phrase used in the report of the Spring 2023 consultation which caused considerable consternation amongst many local residents. It was tacitly admitted that there were better words or phrases that might have been used. It is, however, a statistician's term and, as such, should not carry pejorative connotations.

It was confirmed that, as a result of the consultation, the phrase 'city region' would not be appearing in the Local Plan vision.

The lack of local support for developing promoted Green Belt sites in the Merley and Bearwood area was highlighted.

The role of key organisations in the Local Plan was discussed. Wessex Water was highlighted as an important organisation to consider, with questions about water shortage becoming increasingly important in this area. There has been regular dialogue with statutory consultees such as the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England. More important will be their input into the draft Local Plan consultations.

## **2. Key Assets of Bearwood, Canford Magna and Merley**

Local people value: the remaining Green Belt around us, the mini greens of Merley (built as a 'garden village', the Merley shopping parade, the village of Canford Magna 'model village' (as it was known in Victorian times), the River Stour, Canford Heath, and Footpath 29 which connects Merley, Bearwood and Wimborne with a scenic route.

What is missing? The Cruxton Farm development (U1) has no shops. Unless this changes, a great deal of pressure will be put upon the Merley shops, which already struggle to provide enough parking at times.

## **3. Canford Magna village**

The impact of traffic on the village was highlighted, including the proximity of homes to the road, with its increasing levels of air pollution, noise and damaging vibration. The route is used as a rat run and carries a high proportion of commercial traffic. Issues exist at the Willet junction and Queen Anne Drive junction.

There are no pavements in parts of the village, making cycling and walking – including those with buggies – difficult; and it is impossible for those in wheelchairs.

Changes to the lights at the Queen Anne Drive end have not solved the issues in moving through that area.

School parking from Canford School around the area was noted as an issue.

Concerns were raised about the proposed car park for the SANG in the UE1 area: its size; how the entrance is positioned on a dangerous bend; its potential use by school sixth formers.

These various issues will not be resolved under the approved planning application for UE1 and need to be addressed under the Local Plan.

## **4. Transport**

### *4.1 Junctions*

A number of junctions were reported as problematic

- Canford Magna/Magna Road / Arrowsmith Road: The proliferation of traffic lights and issues with the phasing of lights are causing problems. The possibility of removing Arrowsmith Road lights was mentioned.
- Merley Park Road/Gravel Hill: There are difficulties for residents in turning right out of the junction. There is no footpath. The possibility of making the whole of Merley Park Road 30mph was discussed – with enforcement through average speed camera or similar – and traffic calming in the first section of the road by the existing houses. Development in Corfe Mullen has reportedly made the issue worse.
- Bear Cross roundabout and Magna Road: There are high levels of congestion, and potentially further issues as more traffic lights are introduced and UE2 is constructed. The junction of King John Avenue and Magna Road remains problematic. There is simply not enough capacity on the network.

### *4.2 The Local Transport Plan*

It was confirmed that a range of work was underway to consider transport issues across BCP, with various solutions being considered. As part of the regional work, strategic level schemes are being prioritised. The Local Transport Plan 4 is also underway and will identify schemes of local importance to BCP. This will be subject to consultation in the future. The Local Plan will link to these pieces of work and, where the work is far enough advanced, will include reference to specific schemes/areas for improvement. Additional road building is unlikely to be feasible or realistic in our area and the focus will be improving options for walking, cycling and public transport, while undertaking capacity improvements on the existing network.

### *4.3 The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP)*

The lack of a joined-up cycle network was discussed. Currently there is a shared pedestrian / cycle path from the Willett Arms to Canford Bridge. However, there is no cycle path north of the Canford Bridge along Poole Rd into Wimborne, a stretch that remains hazardous to cyclists. It was suggested that BCP should take the matter up with Dorset Council with an aim to resolving the matter before UE1 is built.

Issues with cycling through Canford Magna village were also pointed out.

It was confirmed that a LCWIP had been prepared for BCP which identifies key routes and planning improvements.

[More information and access to the LCWIP can be found here:

<https://www.bcpCouncil.gov.uk/News/News-Features/Transforming-Travel/Local-Cycling-and-Walking-Infrastructure-Plan.aspx>]

## **5. Green Corridors**

The potential for improving routes through the Green Belt and across the heath was highlighted.

It was confirmed that the Stour Valley Park project would help bring forward recreational corridors along the Stour Valley with connections into existing areas. However, encouraging routes across the heath is difficult due to the need to protect the heathland habitat.

## **6. UE1 facilities**

The lack of facilities included in the UE1 development was briefly discussed, along with the potential of the remaining part of the allocation around the existing Cruxton Farm buildings. Because the original plan for these buildings to include start-ups has not been taken up by the developer, the use of these buildings could alternatively be for the community, including a coffee shop and Environmental Centre.

## **7. Further Engagement**

It was agreed that there should be a further meeting later in the spring.

FA / LB 14/3/23