

6th August 2018

Request for Parish Council approval to:

- ❖ Apply for an additional Locality grant and Technical Support Package

- ❖ Commission Lucy Batchelor-Wylam to prepare a Village character Assessment

- ❖ Include site allocations in the Plan, commencing with a call for sites

FURTHER GRANT APPLICATION

- To date we've had 3 grants totalling £9,000 from Locality and another of £4,500 from Breckland Council.
 - Up to end of July 2018 we have spent close to £8,000 of this, the bulk of it on consultants (review of the entire plan; health check and communal views assessments) and village events.
 - We estimate we need to spend close to £13,000 more to complete the Plan, including village character assessment and site allocation work
- $(£8,000 + £13,000) > (£9,000 + £4,500)$ hence we need another grant

VILLAGE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT - 1

WHY?

- A number of our policies have not been fully accepted:
 - Strategic gap / Local green spaces / Communal views / Design
 - We've understood that landscape is more than just the countryside; it includes the village's history and buildings, and the three interact
 - Consultant explained the importance of understanding landscape sensitivity
 - We aim for the "right homes in the right places" but have struggled to define what that really means
 - Although village character is inherent to the Plan it's not fully defined, nor used to dictate policies that conserve and safeguard it
 - Every planning decision should be made based on impact to the village's character
- This will all come together in a village character assessment

BY WHO & WHEN?

- Lucy Batchelor-Wylam, who reviewed the communal views, will do it, starting in mid-September (subject to receipt of grant) and working over a six-week period

A VILLAGE CHARACTER ASSESSMENT - 2

What will it involve and how will we use the information?

- We will provide historical background information
 - The parish will be assessed and divided into landscape character areas
 - The sensitivity of each area to housing development will be defined
 - Sensitivity will show how each area could accommodate change without undue detrimental effect, by evaluating visual sensitivity and landscape value
 - An analysis of village character will lead to a comprehensive design guide for future developments that will include both desirable and non-desirable features
 - Key views will be reassessed and justified
 - Stronger justification for the strategic gap will be provided
 - Recommendations for new policy criteria to better conserve our landscape will be made
- **Landscape sensitivity will be a key factor in site allocations**

SITE ALLOCATIONS - 1

Why are we doing it?

- The Plan's basic aim is to ensure the *right homes are built in the right places at the right times* – and not to allow the reverse
 - But at present we don't have full control over this
 - The Local Plan dictates in general where houses can be built, but without any firm basis for that
 - Planners / the Breckland planning committee have the final decision
 - While BC want to limit new housing to a precise maximum we've been advised they will find that almost impossible to do
 - Lack of a 5 year supply of housing land in Breckland weakens our policies
- **We can address these problems by allocating sites in our Plan.**

SITE ALLOCATIONS - 2

Advantages

- Certainty about where new housing will – and will not be allowed
- Objective process will overcome the emotion that applications attract
- Conservation of the best features of village character will be a key criteria
- Unlikely a site not allocated would later get permission
- Allocated sites will get permission more easily
- For the first 2 years of the Plan we will be subject to a 3 year supply rule
- Developments can be phased
- Our consultants support it
- The only way to ensure the right houses in the right places at the right times

Potential Pitfalls

- Can be a contentious or divisive topic within a community
- Developers may challenge the process in court and get policies thrown out
- Ensuring all those who wish to propose sites are aware
- Making sure the whole process is fair and transparent
- Sites previously proposed to Breckland will need reassessment if put forward again
- Possible delay to finalising the Plan
- Missing any individual or group in consultation
- We can mitigate all of these

SITE ALLOCATIONS - 3

What will it involve?

- Issue a call for sites: this will be open for at least 6 weeks, probably longer
- Publicise it on our website (and hopefully BC's), in Saga, at PC meetings, on posters, and by writing to landowners / developers who are based outside the village
- Collate all information received and clarify proposals
- In parallel get approval for a “technical support package” from Locality for an independent group (AECOM) to assess each site proposed
- Agree with AECOM local assessment criteria to be added to their standard form
- AECOM assess all sites for suitability independently of us and send us a report
- Establish the most preferred sites to meet our housing allocation
- Define criteria for the granting of future planning permission to each site
- Add new site allocation policies to the Plan

➤ CONSULT WITH EVERYONE AT ALL STAGES

SITE ALLOCATIONS - 4

Ensuring a fair process

- **Councillors and Work Group members to declare any personal interest in any site put forward and/or any personal acquaintance with proposers;**
 - **No ad-hoc proposals: for any site to be considered the call for sites pro-forma must be completed;**
 - **All contact with those who have proposed sites, or may wish to do so, to be via the Work Group;**
 - **No ad-hoc informal opinions on proposals to be given;**
 - **Call for sites forms to be sent out only by the Work Group**
 - **Any contact information for local landowners to be passed to the Work Group**
- **Any deviations could ultimately result in challenges that may invalidate the Plan!**