

BENTHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Council Meeting held on Thursday 16 October 2014, at 7.30 pm in the Town Hall

Present Cllrs Adams, Bridgeman, Cowling, Pritchard, Stannard (Chairman), Swales, Townson & Vendy. Also DCllr Brockbank & Barrington, the clerk Mrs Burton and 26 parishioners

107. To Receive Apologies from members unable to attend
Cllrs Hey, Faichney & Marshall

108. To Receive & Record any member's Disclosable Pecuniary Interests
Cllr Pritchard declared a DPI in item 110, the Draft Local Plan, as a landowner of part of HB28.

109. To Receive Comment & Concerns

With so many members of the public and a single agenda item there was considerable input from residents which is summarised as follows:

The outlined plan is exciting but does not take sufficient notice of the need for improvements needed in Bentham's infrastructure to support the increased population. The transport situation has survived decades of neglect meaning there is poor road access – there is no direct route in from either the A65 or the A683 which is essential and the train service is at times unsuitable for commuters. The town requires better recognition – it is currently omitted from most guides of the area and is therefore invisible to most visitors to Craven. To support the increased population the town needs to be economically sustainable and it will diminish if the visibility and infrastructure issues are not addressed.

There is a definite need for green space to be maintained within larger developments

Looking at specific areas in the draft plan – several residents mentioned that the plan for 80 houses on HB23 appeared extremely dense development on a site parts of which are known to flood after heavy rain. Comments were also made that planning on the area had been refused previously for poor access onto the B6480 and problems with the sewerage system. Concern was expressed about the potential development of HB28 part of which is land leased by the Auction and required for the continued welfare of stock. The Auction is required for the health of the local farming community and in turn the local community in terms of the business brought to the town – which sustains the banks and helps sustain the shops in High Bentham.

110. To Consider the Draft Local Plan and agree a response before 3 November

The Council agreed that, in principle, the plan was good for Bentham, as it allows the town to grow as a business hub in North Craven whilst acknowledging the green and transport issues. A Neighbourhood Plan for Bentham would allow for greater influence over the Local Plan and is something to be worked on.

Infrastructure issues were discussed – some of the proposed sites do have access issues and without more joined up thinking in terms of bus and train services it will remain difficult to work outside the town without a vehicle.

The new affordable housing development on Bargh's Meadow is not mentioned in the plan or shown on the maps. Following this development which provided a large number of 2 bed properties for local residents Bentham is now in need of 3 and 4 bed affordable properties to house growing families – not more 1 and 2 bed houses as mentioned on page 12 of the draft.

Of the various earmarked sites the following comments were received:

HB28 (Cllr Pritchard left the room during this discussion) previous discussions with the community have earmarked the SW corner of this site as potential green space in the event of the area being developed. This would protect the view of Bentham as one enters the town down Station Road from Slaidburn. Also extra traffic at the crossroads of Station Road and Main Street needs to be carefully considered as this is already a bottle neck in the town. LB21 has access issues as does HB23. HB11, the current school site, has been identified by NYCC as an area for Extra Care housing which is needed within the town. HB27 is the site of an old tip which was filled in the 70s and as such may not be suitable for any development. This information has been supplied to the Planning Policy team on several occasions, but as yet has not been taken into account.

The original draft of potential sites had many more identified for High Bentham. A poll of the residents present was unanimous in agreeing that more but smaller developments would be better for the town – including sites like HB33, HB38, HB35 & HB26 so that the proposed sites are not over populated and development is spread around the town. This would enable better integration of the old and the new instead of putting everything in 2 or 3 areas. The meeting was also unanimous in wanting the rest of the Show Field (HB38), next to the new school to be included in the development alongside Felsteads (Campbell Hatcheries), with the green space to the other side of Felsteads and the opposite side of the road remaining as green wedge.

RESOLVED: That the Council response ask for development in High Bentham to be spread across more sites (including HB35, HB33, HB26), with fewer houses on each site, to allow better integration of old and new

RESOLVED: That the Council response include a request for the remaining land (HB38) between the new school and Felsteads (HB35) to be included and developed

RESOLVED: That the clerk should pull together the comments received into a response to Craven's Planning Policy team before 3 November

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.50pm