Pan Purbeck Action Campaign

Update August 2017

The Pause

After overwhelming opposition in 2016 to the proposed 3,080 homes in addition to the 2,520 already proposed for Purbeck over the next 17 years in the previous Local Plan, Purbeck District Council (PDC) decided to 'pause' the Partial Review of the Local Plan. There was much talk from councillors about 'involving the public'. PDC decided to call in the Planning Advisory Service for help.

The Planning Advisory Service

We met with Derek Stebbings and put the case that the housing numbers in the Partial Review were flawed. He proposed that PDC should pause the review process and wait for a revised method for calculating housing need to be produced by central government, as there were indeed flaws in the way housing requirement had been arrived at. He also recommended that the review should no longer be called 'Partial', and suggested local forums as a means for involving the public in the creation of a local plan that was supported by the electorate.

Housing White Paper

Published in February 2017 it said there would be a consultation to develop a revised methodology for calculating housing need. The consultation was expected soon after that.

Sajid Javid has just announced that the consultation will be further delayed until Autumn 2017

Environmental Capacity and Infrastructure Study (ECIS)

This important study should have been written as part of the original Partial Review. PDC commissioned one in February 2017. The document was due to be delivered to PDC in May 2017.

Nothing has been published.

Employment Numbers

At a meeting with us on 14 December 2016, Bridget Downton stated that the estimated number of additional jobs from economic growth in Purbeck used in the Local Knowledge Growth Scenario was 3,900 over the next 20 years. (including 2,000 at Winfrith!). That number of additional jobs from economic growth - 3,900 - was the main driver for the 3,080 additional homes. It is critical that the number can be justified. After all, the number of 3,080 was 40% of all additional homes required in the whole of Eastern Dorset. We have never seen any justification for this number, and it is unclear how it was created and by whom.

In December 2016 Bridget Downton said that PDC/DCC would be revising the number in the light of changed economic circumstances.

No revised numbers have been published.

'Affordable' Housing

It has been obvious from the start that the so-called 'affordable' housing (at 80% of market value) which is supposed to form part of any new development is far from affordable. In Purbeck the average house costs fourteen times the average salary - the highest outside London. In fact no one in Purbeck who is eligible for this 'affordable' housing can afford it. Community Land Trusts (CLTs) may be able to offer homes that are truly affordable. PDC has been granted over £900,000 to aid delivery.

The public is being misled (by use of the term 'affordable') into thinking that new private developments will deliver housing that they and their children can afford.

Forums

PDC announced forums in February 2017 – five for local areas and an infrastructure forum – three meetings of each. Initially they were to be run by councillors, then it emerged they would be run by 'facilitators'. And we were invited to register – though it was unclear what registration meant as it turned out that anyone could contribute to the forums. A week before the first forum was due to take place all the forums were cancelled. The reason given was that the 'facilitators' were not able to do the job. When we asked who the 'facilitators' were we were told this could not be disclosed because 'no contract had been signed'.

One week before the forums were due to begin, and no signed contract?

A Full Consultation on the Revised Local Plan

There was considerable doubt that there would be another full consultation on the revised local plan – there would instead be forums and a 'random survey'. PPAC and Parish Councils were suspicious, and requested that PDC have a further full consultation.

Some members agree that there should be a further full consultation, but then others say something different.

What happened to the Local Plan Advisory Group?

After the County Council elections in May 2017, Councillor Wharf was elected to be deputy leader of Dorset County Council. A few weeks later he was removed from that post. At the same time the PDC Local Plan Advisory Group of which he was chairman was disbanded and the work of reviewing the Local Plan was given to the Policy Group. This was done in an unscheduled emergency motion to the June meeting of PDC.

No reason has been given for the emergency motion, and we question whether that is legal.

Let's Delegate

At its June 2017 meeting PDC resolved that there would be a full public consultation on the revised Local Plan, as well as forums, and a survey. Responsibility for the structure of these was delegated to Bridget Downton, in discussion with Gary Suttle, Barry Quinn, David Budd, and two other unspecified Conservative councillors. This means that the consultation documents to be published, as well as the whole methodology of the consultation, the forums, and the survey, will have no public review before the consultation is launched.

How does delegating everything to Bridget Downton ensure that the next consultation will have fewer flaws than the last?

In Summary

We have seen nothing since the review was paused. And we will see nothing until some documents are published at the start of the six week consultation expected in the Autumn of 2017.

We, the public, have not been involved.

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Let's get It Right For Purbeck

panpurbeckactioncampaign@gmail.com

www.panpurbeck.org.uk