

BRECKLAND COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

LDF TASK & FINISH GROUP

**Held on Wednesday, 25 November 2009 at 9.30 am in
Memorial Hall, Norwich Street, Dereham**

PRESENT

Mr P.J. Duigan	Mr B. Rose
Mr A.P. Joel	Mr F.J. Sharpe (Vice-Chairman)
Mr K. Martin	Mr A.C. Stasiak
Mr I.A.C. Monson	Mrs A.L. Steward
Mr D.S. Myers (Chairman)	Mrs L.S. Turner

Also Present

Mr S.G. Bambridge	Mr P.D. Claussen
Mr W.P. Borrett	Mr J.R. Gretton

In Attendance

Mark Broughton	- Scrutiny Officer
Phil Daines	- Development Services Manager
Helen McAleer	- Committee Officer
Phil Mileham	- Senior Planning Policy Officer
Sarah Robertson	- Planning Graduate
David Spencer	- Principal Planning Policy Officer

29/09 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2009 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

30/09 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs M Chapman-Allen and Mrs P Quadling.

31/09 URGENT BUSINESS

None.

32/09 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Mrs A Steward declared a personal interest in item 5 as a family member had put land forward for consideration in Shipdham.

**33/09 SITE SPECIFIC POLICIES & PROPOSALS DEVELOPMENT PLAN
DOCUMENT 2001-2026 REVIEW OF RURAL SETTLEMENT
BOUNDARIES - NORTH-EAST PARISHES**

The Chairman welcomed the Ward Representatives, Parish Councillors and members of the public attending.

He explained that there were 83 rural settlement boundaries in the

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district currently under review, to consider if they were still fit for purpose. The Council wished this process to be consistent, transparent and just, for all parties.

This meeting was part of a long process and there would be three further opportunities to make representations. The Task & Finish Group's conclusions would be presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Commission in February 2010, who would in turn make recommendations to Cabinet. A six week consultation would then take place with landowners and town and parish councils. The results of that consultation would be presented to Cabinet in July 2010 and then to Council. A further six weeks of consultation would follow. Finally, in spring 2011 representations could be made to the Inspector at the Examination in Public of the Council's final decisions.

The Chairman apologised for the omission of Tavener Ward from the agenda running order and noted that it would be dealt with after Swanton Morley. He then concluded by explaining that following the officers' presentations there would be discussion by the Committee and the opportunity for Ward Representatives and Parish Council representatives to comment.

The Principal Planning Officer then presented his report. He said that as part of the Site Specifics process, it was necessary to reassess the form and function of the settlement boundaries, in light of changes to local and national planning policies.

The purpose of the settlement boundaries was to consolidate development around existing built-up communities and to protect areas outside those boundaries as countryside. In the countryside there was a presumption against development unless it was needed for the rural area (such as affordable housing or business expansion) and there were policies in the Core Strategy document to allow for that.

Settlement boundaries also defined areas that had some form of service provision to support sustainability. Only 44 villages were considered to have two key rural services.

There were three options available to the Group:

1. To delete or remove the settlement boundary (Appendix A)
 - where there were very limited or no opportunities for further development;
 - where there were less than two key rural services.
2. To keep existing settlement boundaries (Appendix B)
 - where they remained fit for purpose
 - this option included boundaries that had been updated using new mapping technology.
3. To amend existing boundaries (Appendix C)
 - to tighten them to exclude areas;
 - to loosen them to allow additional small-scale sites;
 - to update inconsistencies.

Each Ward was then discussed in turn.

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EYNSFORD

Bawdeswell - two small changes proposed.

Mr David Shannon, representing Bawdeswell Parish Council, said they supported the recommendation and they were also in agreement with the decision not to include the major development sites put forward. They did however support the three small proposed additional sites at the south-west corner of the village. They did not want a large extension but would support limited social housing there if a need was proven.

Foxley – proposed to delete settlement boundary.

Mr John Harvey, representing Foxley Parich Council, said that Foxley was made up of two hamlets, split by the A1067. There were no services in the village, but they wished to keep the settlement boundary as it gave them a sense of identity.

Lyng – one small change proposed.

Sparham – proposed to delete settlement boundary.

Mr David Sayer, representing Sparham Parish Council, declared a personal interest as he had put forward a plot of land for consideration.

He said that the LDF should take account of why people chose to live in a place. Sparham was close to Norwich and adjacent to Great Witchingham, the location of a large employment source (Bernard Matthews). The proposed Northern Distributor Route would converge nearby, leading to further employment opportunities on industrial land there and direct access links. For education there was Reepham High School (which now had a sixth form college) and Easton College, both with good reputations. All these services were within a two and a half mile radius.

Sparham had had 30 new dwellings since 1989 and was not unsustainable. It had a large village hall and a church and was a thriving community. It was near the airport and had an hourly bus service. They wished to keep their settlement boundary to provide the potential for staged increases during the life of the LDF.

Mr Bambridge, Ward Representative, commented as follows:

Sparham – he fully supported Mr Sayer's comments. The Parish Council had put in proposals to include two pieces of land to allow steady, sustained growth of another 20/25 houses over the next 20 years. He objected to the label of 'unsustainable' as there were two doctors, three post offices, three primary schools and one secondary school all within easy walking/cycling distance of the village.

Bawdeswell and Foxley – he broadly agreed with the proposals, but supported Bawdeswell's suggestion of the small additions.

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Lyng – he suggested a small reduction in the settlement boundary at the north-west corner of the village. This was an area of large houses with large gardens and they wanted to keep it that way and resist backland development. The Parish supported the inclusion of LY.1 as development land.

Bylaugh – there had been a number of attempts at large developments in the village and he asked for the land to be well protected into the future.

Members discussed the points raised. One pointed out that a resident of Sparham was probably closer to facilities than a resident of Dereham living in Humbletoft. He questioned some of the sustainability criteria.

It was noted that the additional areas suggested for inclusion in Bawdeswell had landscape and highway restraints. It was further pointed that there was a policy which allowed for affordable housing development outside the settlement boundary. If the land was included it might be used for private development.

The Development Services Manager raised the general point that settlement boundaries were a planning tool and not meant for social cohesion purposes.

The Principal Planning Officer said that the proposal to extend the settlement boundary in Sparham was a good example of the dilemma faced in rural areas. There had been about 20 new houses in the village in the last seven to eight years. Previous policies had not stopped development, but services had declined. The nearest facilities were two to three miles away, some across the busy A1067. There was no certainty that releasing land would bring services back to the village. From a planning perspective there was not a strong case to retain the boundary.

In the case of Foxley there was an alternative option to retain the boundary.

In Conclusion

Bawdeswell – minor changes agreed.

Foxley – retain settlement boundary.

Lyng – agreed change to include LY.1 and the exclusion of the north-west finger of land.

Sparham – retain settlement boundary.

Bylaugh – stay as at present.

SHIPDHAM

Shipdham – four small amendments proposed.

Written comments had been received from the Ward Representative, Mr Hewett who agreed in general with the proposals, but noted that two additional sites (former coal yard off Chapel Street and a small area off

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Parklands Estate) had been discussed at a previous meeting and if approved by Cabinet would be included within the settlement boundary.

Sylvia Tuck, representing the parish council, said they were concerned about the effect of the changes on the preferred options status from the previous meeting. There were strong objections to over-development in the middle of the village and the change at SHP.1 could affect decisions there. The village had no children's play facilities or village hall and there was a very poor bus service. The main concern was the effect on proposed development from the previous meeting combined with these proposals. They would welcome the opportunity to move development from the centre of the village and needed more time for consultation.

The Principal Planning Policy Officer explained that there would be future opportunities for the parish council to comment. They would be consulted on the proposed changes and on options to include a small part or the whole of area SHP.4.

Mrs Tuck said that they were essentially in broad agreement with the proposals but were concerned about the ramifications.

Members felt that the parish council should be given more time to discuss the proposals and it was **AGREED** that consideration of Shipdham would be postponed until a future meeting.

SPRINGVALE AND SCARNING

Fransham – proposed to remain as it is.

Gressenhall - two small changes proposed.

Longham – two small changes proposed.

Scarning – proposed to stay as it is.

Wendling – proposed to delete settlement boundary.

Robert Kerran, representing Wendling parish council, said that they wanted to be a sustainable village. He asked for the settlement boundary to be retained and for more time to be given for the parish council to discuss the proposals. A local landowner had offered land for a playing field and facilities and if the settlement boundary was removed they would not be able to develop that and the village would stagnate.

The Development Services Manager pointed out that such a proposal did not need to be within the settlement boundary and would be supported by the Local Authority.

Mrs Gould, Ward Representative, had sent an e-mail expressing her support for the recommendations.

Mr Gretton, Ward Representative, was deeply concerned about rural sustainability and did not think it would be good to starve villages of development. There were many cases where young people wished to settle where they had grown up, and other cases where people wished to return to their roots.

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With reference to Scarning, he felt that the settlement boundary was illogical as it included a large playing field in the centre of the village which would not be developed.

In Conclusion

Members supported the proposals for Fransham, Gressenhall, Longham, Scarning and Wendling as presented.

SWANTON MORLEY

Elsing – proposed to delete settlement boundary.

The Ward Representative, Kate Millbank, had expressed her support for the parish council's view that the settlement boundary should be extended to its previous size.

The additional land was part of Heath Road which had been removed from the Local Plan in the 1990s. There were a significant number of trees there.

Mr Bill Horncastle, representing Elsing parish council, very much wanted to keep the settlement boundaries as Elsing was very spread out and the boundaries helped with containment and made a credible guideline for future development. He said they should be reinstated to the way they were prior to the last consultation.

The Principal Planning Policy Officer said that Elsing was very dispersed and the settlement boundary was in three parts. One part was close to the Flood Risk Area and the other two parts contained 20-30 properties each. There were reservations about extending along Heath Road because of the potential impact on landscape.

Hoe and Worthing – proposed to remain as it is.

Swanton Morley – proposed five further changes to the settlement boundary.

Roger Atterwill, representing the parish council, asked if the removal of the Woodgate area from the settlement boundary would stop properties there being extended and was assured that it would not. He therefore fully supported the changes except the addition of SWM.4 because of the access arrangements. The parish council would not want to see development there and an increase in traffic and he asked for the boundary to remain as it was there. He congratulated the officers on sensible proposals.

The Principal Planning Policy Officer explained that an alternative option would be to draw the settlement boundary hard to the properties at SWM.4.

A Member was concerned that there were inconsistencies in the proposals. In some places the settlement boundary was being moved out to align with garden boundaries and in others it was being drawn tight to properties.

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The Principal Planning Policy Officer said that one of their objectives in amending the settlement boundaries was to follow logical features on the ground. They were trying to move away from the position where the settlement boundary did not follow recognisable features and in some cases cut through the middle of gardens and buildings.

In Conclusion

Elsing – remove settlement boundary.

Hoe and Worthing – keep as it is.

Swanton Morley – support four changes, but retain the boundary as it is at SWM.4.

TAVENER

East Bilney – proposed to retain as it is.

Beetley – proposed to retain as it is.

Brian Leigh, representing the parish council, said that they would like the settlement boundary to be moved in, along the Elmham Road, to prevent future planning applications for backland development. They also thought that the school car park and field should be outside the settlement boundary, but were happy to make both these points at the consultation stage.

Old Beetley – proposed to delete the settlement boundary.

Brisley – proposed to retain as is, with one small amendment.

Mr Ian Doughty, representing the parish council, pointed out an inconsistency with the settlement boundary which was tight up to the houses on one side of School Road, but not on the other. He was also concerned that the parish council had not had a chance to discuss the proposal to remove the settlement boundary in the main village and said they would formally comment on that later.

Mileham – five amendments proposed.

Mr Bill Borrett spoke as the Council's Historic Buildings Champion and was concerned that the extension of the boundary at MIL.3 took it near the site of Mileham Castle and would push the development boundary right up to the ditch of the castle. He wanted to protect the historic site.

In Conclusion

Members supported the proposals for East Bilney, Beetley, Old Beetley and Brisley.

Changes to the Mileham settlement boundary were supported with the exception of MIL.3 which should not be incorporated.

They discussed the inconsistencies pointed out and it was agreed that if

parish councils had areas of concern they should raise these at the consultation stage.

TWO RIVERS

East Tuddenham – proposed to delete the settlement boundary.

Gillian Morgan, representing the parish council, said they wanted the settlement boundary to remain and for two additional pieces of land to be reinstated which were previously included in the envelope. She questioned the criteria for sustainability and said that there were primary schools nearby and shops and doctors in Mattishall which was only four minutes away. In the village there were offices, a school, two children's homes and a care home about to expand to 80 residents. These all provided work in the village. The village hall served East Tuddenham and other surrounding villages.

It was noted that the village hall had a wide use and offered a range of services to the village, adding to its sustainability.

The Principal Planning Policy Office accepted that the village had transport and a village hall and said he would need to check the employment information. He advised Members that an alternative option was to leave the settlement boundary as it was.

Hockering – two proposed changes.

Mattishall – eight proposed changes.

Ms Cynthia Wake, representing the parish council, said that they had supported the refusal of a planning application on MA1 and if the boundary were moved the land would be available for development. The sites at MA.2, 3 and 4 had already been rejected as non-conforming. The parish was hoping to extend the sports club at MA.3 and had hoped to retain MA.4 as agricultural land. With regard to the other sites, the parish were pleased that the boundary was being reduced.

It was pointed out that planning permission had already been granted at MA.1 and the change was to regularise the boundary around the new property.

With regard to MA.3, there was an option through the Core Strategy to allow development for open space provision without extending out into the countryside.

A Member was aware of concerns in the village about MA.4 which had recently had an agricultural restriction lifted. There was a large commercial building on the site with potential for commercial use although the access track was inadequate.

North Tuddenham – proposed to delete the settlement boundary.

Mr Brian Rose, Ward Representative, noted that the parish council wished to maintain the status quo.

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A Member asked about the facilities in the village. There was a garage which catered mainly for car repairs and sales, as well as a farm shop. There was no knowledge of the level of public transport availability but the village did not meet the two service facility requirements.

In Conclusion

East Tuddenham – Members proposed that the settlement boundary should be retained and the two additional pieces of land should be included.

Hockering – support the two changes proposed.

Mattishall – support the proposed eight changes.

North Tuddenham – support the proposal to delete the settlement boundary.

UPPER WENSUM

North Elmham – four changes proposed and the deletion of the two small northern components of the settlement boundary.

Mr Bill Borrett, Ward Representative, declared a prejudicial interest and left the room whilst this item was discussed.

Mr Gordon Bambridge, spoke on behalf of the Ward Representative. The parish council had not wanted any change whatsoever to the settlement boundary, but might be willing to accept the revisions at NE.1, 2, 3 and 4 to formalise the boundary around properties. They had not known of the proposal to remove the settlement boundary around the two small northern areas and would need to come back with their comments at the consultation stage. He concluded by reiterating that no additional development was required in the village which already had 30 plots approved and the potential for affordable housing development. These comments from the parish council had been based on consultative discussions with the residents.

Mr Bill Borrett returned to the room.

Members again debated the question of consistency in changes to the settlement boundary. One questioned whether there should be a set distance from the rear of a property.

The Principal Planning Policy Officer explained that the aim was to tie the boundary to a logical, defensible feature on the ground. This could be tight to the rear of a building, or along a fence or hedge line. It would be difficult to introduce a buffer zone which would be hard to identify 'on the ground'. In places, where it fitted the form and character of an area, the boundary was drawn in tight to limit backland development and in other parts some extra land could be included without harm. It was difficult to adopt a blanket approach.

Billingtonford – proposed to retain settlement boundary.

Bintree - proposed to retain settlement boundary.

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A member of the public said that the village was being stifled. It had lost its post office and was losing its pub. She said there was a big piece of land available for development in the centre of the village.

The Chairman advised her to make representation at the consultation stage.

Gateley – proposed to remain as it is.

Guist – proposed to delete the settlement boundary.

A Member was surprised at this proposal as she understood that the village had a pub/restaurant, post office and bus service.

The Senior Planning Policy Officer said the main concern were the implications of infill on the specific character of the village. It was a finely balanced case and the status quo was another option.

Twyford – proposed to remain as it is.

Mr Bill Borrett, Ward Representative, said that there had been insufficient time for the parish councils to consider the proposals, some of which would have dramatic effect.

He said that Guist was a vibrant village divided into three communities with one third of properties Local Authority and elderly, one third privately owned and one third privately rented. The loss of the settlement boundary would strangle the village which was not just a dormitory settlement and deserved special consideration.

Billingford parish council was unaware of the proposals; Bintree had made no comments; and he thought that the proposed 'no change' for Gateley and Twyford was acceptable.

Members were concerned that lots of parish councils were saying that they had not had an opportunity to discuss the proposals. Due to the timescales which made it impractical to bring so many villages back to future meetings, the parishes were encouraged to make their comments at the consultation stage.

The Principal Planning Policy Officer acknowledged that this had been a consistent theme at the meeting. He said that enhanced information would be sent out to parish councils for future meetings.

The meetings were an opportunity for Councillors and the Local Authority to formulate their proposals prior to sending them out for consultation. There would then be plenty of time for parish councils to put their thoughts and arguments together for the April consultation and all comments received would come back to the Task & Finish Group.

In Conclusion

North Elmham – support the four proposed changes, but to keep the two northern area settlement boundaries.

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Billingford – change not supported – retain as it is.

Bintree – support the no change proposal.

Gateley – support the no change proposal.

Guist – change not supported – retain as it is.

Twyford – support the no change proposal.

UPPER YARE

Shipdham Airfield Employment Area (in Cranworth Parish) – proposed extension to settlement boundary.

Garvestone – proposed to retain settlement boundary.

Mr Andrew Durrant, representing the parish council, said that almost all applications for new development in the village had been for large detached houses and they did not want any more. The parish council had therefore put forward proposals to tighten all three of the settlement boundaries to minimise the potential for further large detached house development to the detriment of the social diversity of the village. They were disappointed at the recommendation.

The Principal Planning Policy Officer explained that there had to be a balance between protecting the environment and allowing some development in villages with some services. Through the LDF there would be stronger policies on the type of housing in new development. If Members wished the proposals could be reconsidered.

Hardingham - proposed to remain as it is.

Reymerston – proposed to delete settlement boundary.

Mr Andrew Durrant said that this was part of the Garvestone parish council area and that they agreed with the proposal.

Whinburgh– proposed to delete settlement boundary.

Westfield – proposed to remain as it is.

Yaxham – three proposed changes.

Mr George Crummett, representing the parish council said that they wanted the settlement boundary removed. There had been 50/60 new properties in the last five years.

The Senior Planning Policy Officer was aware of this but the amendments were proposed because Yaxham was a village with a number of facilities.

Mr Crummett said that the parish council had discussed the proposals to tighten the boundary and they agreed with that, but YA.1 enlarged it too much and should be tighter.

Clint Green – proposed to remain as it is.

In Conclusion

Shipdham Airfield Employment Area – support extension to boundary.

Garvestone – proposals to be reconsidered.

Hardingham – support no change proposal.

Reymerston – support proposal to delete boundary.

Whinburgh – support proposal to delete boundary.

Westfield – support proposal to stay as it is.

Yaxham – support proposals but further consultation with parish council re tightening of boundary.

Clint Green - support proposal to stay as it is.

34/09 NEXT MEETING

The arrangements for the next meeting on Friday 11 December 2009 were noted.

The meeting closed at 2.25 pm

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CHAIRMAN