

Here is an **update** on the stage the Beccles Neighbourhood Plan (BNP) has got too, and some thoughts about the changes to the planning system proposed by the current Government.

In November 2020 Beccles Town Council decided to submit the BNP to East Suffolk Council (ESC), without the late amendments suggested by ESC and the Broads Authority.

The BNP now has to be considered by ESC and the Broads Authority and approved for consultation prior to the appointment of an Examiner.

Ben Wright of the ESC has no strong concerns about the BNP being able to meet the Basic Conditions following ESCs comment on the final version of the plan.

The purpose of the consultation is to make people aware of the opportunity to make comments on the BNP for consideration by the Examiner.

ESC is currently working on the final details of the consultation, such as when it will take place, and will confirm these with us and the Broads Authority as soon as they can.

They are considering an eight week consultation.

Beccles Town Council has offered to help with the publicity and I think we should consider how we can help.

Looking further ahead, Referendums have been put on hold until May 2021 and must anyway be affected by the general state of what lockdowns are in place.

To summarise, the BNP is going through its processing, and we wait to hear when the consultation prior to the appointment of the Examiner will take place. My guess is that it will be in Feb March but this would also depend on what other Neighbourhood Plans are in the pipeline.

On the wide issue of **changes to the planning system**, as you may know, in August 2020 the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government issued a White Paper: Planning for the Future, which proposed major changes to the current planning system.

The proposals relevant to the BNP are about Neighbourhood Plans and the Infrastructure Levy.

The White Paper includes as Proposal 9 “Neighbourhood Plans should be retained as an important means of community input, and we will support communities to make better use of digital tools”. Paras 2.55 – 2.57 elaborates this.

The White Paper also proposes to roll Section 106 agreements (normally about infrastructure impacts of new development) and the Community Infrastructure Levy –

a fixed rate fee which can be used for a variety of purposes - into a consolidated 'Infrastructure Levy'

At the moment there is no indication about when the White Paper proposals would be implemented. Professional opinion I have looked at on the web is broadly supportive of changes with the usual concern about whether the HR training and staff implications of the changes will be properly met, plus the detail of how it would work and how the Infrastructure Levy would be shared between the interested parties.

Chris Greenhill Chair, BNP Operational Group