

## **Report from the Housing Group for Parish Council Meeting 11 December 2006**

1. Since the last Parish Council meeting there has been an Exhibition in the Village Hall, 5 members of the Group attended a meeting with senior members of the TVBC Planning and Housing departments and the Group has met to review consultation feedback.

### ***Exhibition on 28 November***

2. The Exhibition - chosen as an early consultation event in order to provide background information in a complex subject area - was attended by over 160 people from the village many of whom completed feedback forms. The presentation is now published on the web site for those who could not attend and a hard copy is available in the village shop.
3. The written feedback will also shortly be available on the web site in non attributable format with comments from the group. We plan also to publish responses to frequently asked questions.

### ***Meeting with TVBC planning department on 29 November***

4. The meeting was attended by Jeremy Barber, Mary Jo Darrah, Cheryl Dowler, Fiona Gould and Mike Johnson from the Housing Group. TVBC officers at the meeting included Steve Lees, Maddy Winter and Graham Smith from the Planning Department together with Pat Brooks and Alison Whitehead from the Housing Department.
5. This was a meeting we had requested in order to be able to respond in more detail to some of the questions prominent in the village consultation. At the same time we also provided feedback on the consultation process so far and this led into a discussion of some of the concerns that have been expressed as well as the future consultation programme.
6. Graham Smith is producing a set of meeting minutes for approval. However the following is a summary of our record of some of the key points in the meeting.

### **Sites**

7. The TVBC officers advised that they had some concerns about two of the three initial sites (The Spinney and the Football Field) due to road access and tree issues. This tied in with comments from villagers in the previous day's exhibition. In addition, the Group reported some concerns had been raised about drainage on the Zurich site. The Group passed over the map from the exhibition with villagers' input on alternative sites, and asked for a speedy response on the sites identified by green dots at the exhibition and on the 3 sites initially identified. Steve Lees warned that

exploring alternatives needed to be treated carefully, as this could stall forward progress. He would be discussing alternative sites with landowners.

8. Subsequent to this meeting, the TVBC officers have responded to the 21 potential sites identified on the exhibition map. They were not able to support 15 of these, which leaves six new potential sites adjoining North Acre for which they are consulting colleagues. Apart from these, officers had concluded that “of the 8 initial sites and following consultation within TVBC the site with the least constraints is south of North Acre (i.e. the Zurich site)”. They concluded, however, that, “mitigation will be required to satisfy constraints/concerns of officers”.

### **Rural Exceptions policy ESN06**

9. This is a new policy that became part of the new Local Plan in August this year. There has been no application yet within Test Valley under this policy. It is also a complex policy involving community and landowner in an unusual mix. Because the interpretation of the policy is still evolving within both the planning department and the Council. We asked for clarification of a) how community support will be determined, b) how the economics of “community gain” work and c) how is the economic relationship between the affordable housing element and the market housing element to be determined.

### **Community support**

10. In their commentary on ESN06 (at paragraph 6.3.43) TVBC say that, “The extent of public involvement and support will be important considerations in assessing its merits.” This is what led us to say in our leaflet about the Exhibition that the project will “only go ahead if the village supports it”.
11. When it came to the issue of demonstrating village support for the development, the Housing Group asked the TVBC officers who would be making the decision that the requirement of ESN06 for community support had been demonstrated, and what criteria would be applied. The Officers replied that their statutory planning responsibilities meant that TVBC is required to be the final arbiter of community support and this is not a decision that can be made within the village. They will take into account all representations and the consultation processes followed by Longparish. They encouraged the village to follow as open a process as possible, encouraging a rigorous debate. The Exhibition and the proposed Open Forum were seen as good examples of this.
12. The Housing Group agreed to make this process of measuring community support clear in its report to the Parish Council. The Housing Group undertook to provide TVBC with all the completed feedback documents and open letters that we receive during the consultation process and to ensure that the process of consultation is as wide and engaging of all villagers as possible. The Housing Group will also encourage villagers to additionally make representations directly to TVBC.

## **Economics of Community gain.**

13. The Officers explained that the policy is designed so that villages share significantly in the financial benefits of the sale of the ‘open market housing’ by providing investment for the kind of village facilities and amenities that are likely to support the sustainability of the village community.

## **The Relationship between Affordable and Open Market houses**

14. They also clarified that the policy is driven by the need for affordable housing within a village community, something the Housing Group agrees with wholeheartedly. The open market housing element is there in order to provide some financial incentive to the landowner to release land which would otherwise not be made available and to enable significant community gain within the overall scheme.

15. The financial incentive to the landowner is therefore a function of the number and plot sizes of the open market houses and the split with the ‘community gain’ element. The Housing Group has agreed that we should only support a development within our recommendation for 12 Affordable homes of up to 6 open market houses and believes there could be an opportunity for this number of open market houses to be reduced.

16. The Officers accepted these points and explained that the detailed negotiation around these splits would be conducted between TVBC and a landowner.

## **Review of Consultation process**

17. We explained that our assessment of village support at this stage is that there is a spread of views including a) those that strongly support, b) those that are opposed to any development whatsoever and c) others who accept the principle of providing affordable homes within the village against an identified need but who also have concerns about specific sites or other issues.

18. We described 5 areas of concern that had been expressed by some in the village including

- whether the housing need has been demonstrated,
- scale of development ,
- visual impact on the village,
- ensuring that now and in the future the occupants have a strong village connection and
- whether we could limit further development and “planning creep”

19. The responses from the planners included:

20. The Housing Needs Survey is a well-proven objective method of determining housing need within a community. Survey methods are nationally agreed and follow questions set out by DEFRA. Put together with the current Housing Register numbers (21 with a Longparish connection) there is clear evidence of housing need in the village, according to TVBC, which has the statutory responsibility for determining housing need.

21. Maddy Winter acknowledged that the only way to fully ensure that new affordable homes would go to those with a local connection is to deliberately constrain supply within forecasts of demand for affordable housing. This means building fewer than the 23 on the housing needs survey. The view of the professional planners was that a development of 12 affordable houses plus the minimum number of market houses needed to deliver those units was the best way forward to meet affordable housing need in Longparish in a way that gained community support
22. We explained that there will be an 'Open Forum' meeting in January or February as a further step in the consultation process. The Officers suggested that we consider an external moderator to facilitate this meeting and that we should ask subject experts to attend to respond to technical questions. We agreed.
23. The TVBC officers asked for a list of the principles which should be taken into account in negotiations and the areas where the community could gain. The group agreed to provide these items, taking account of consultation so far.

### ***Housing Group meeting 3 December***

24. The meeting considered both the comments and advice from TVBC and the feedback from the village consultation so far.
25. The Housing Group has agreed to recommend a development limited to 12 affordable homes plus the minimum number and up to a maximum of 6 market houses. The Housing Group has therefore rejected the idea of a second phase in the project. In the light of feedback from consultation and our discussions with TVBC, we consider that a project on this modest scale will address local need whilst at the same time ensuring that the affordable homes go only to local people.
26. The Housing Group also agreed to advise TVBC that in any discussions it conducts with landowners that the village priority is to secure the land for 12 units of affordable housing, and to limit the number of market houses to the number below six that were needed to secure the affordable housing, whilst maximising the size of the community gain.
27. The group considered the list of principles and community gains requested by the TVBC officers. The current draft is attached - Annexe B.
28. The Housing Group welcome the many constructive contributions villagers have made, both in writing and in discussions. It was decided to publish
  - The Exhibition material (now done with links to some external supporting information)
  - all comments from the exhibition anonymously
  - 'open letters', having sought the permission of the authors
  - Housing Group minutes.

- The information we have been given about the current housing list (copy attached as an Annexe)

We will continue to meet with individuals of groups of people who wish to discuss the issues.

29. With regard to the 'Open Forum' it was decided to seek an outside Moderator with expertise in this field and to invite a panel of subject specialists.
30. Finally, The Housing Group members have incurred minor costs relating to the printing of the exhibition leaflet, and data protection registration and will also incur some costs for future consultation including the Open Forum. The group therefore seek the authority of the Parish Council for reimbursement of these expenses from the £3,000 allocated in the parish council budget for Parish Plan implementation.

## **Annexe A**

### **TVHOMES APPLICANTS FOR LONGPARISH AS AT 28/11/2006**

#### **Couples/singles = 6**

*Dates applied;*

2/02

10/03

10/04

7/05

1/06

3/04

#### **2 bed families = 5**

*Dates applied;*

4/04

11/04

4/06

4/06

9/06

#### **3 bed families = 4**

*Dates applied;*

9/02

11/04

5/06

5/06

#### **Elderly = 6**

*Dates applies;*

10/03 (*couple*)

10/04 (*single*)

12/04 (*single*)

7/05 (*couple*)

6/06 (*couple*)

9/06 (*couple*)

All of the above applicants are registered with TVHomes and have a local connection with the village of Longparish.

## Annex B

### Longparish Housing Group- "Principles"

5 Dec 06

We have a number of principles that should be applied under ESNO6 to any negotiations with landowners, housing associations, developers and/or planners:

#### **Our principles are to ensure that:**

- The size and scale of the proposed development will be modest, and not provide either the opportunity or the excuse for any subsequent development of either affordable or open market housing. Any such future development would have to be assessed on its own merits.
- The development will consist of not more than 12 affordable homes. Open market units are to be included in the development only so far as is needed to ensure that land is made available for the affordable units and to fund community benefits.
- The proportion of open market units will always be one third **or less** of the total number of housing units [ie maximum 6 commercial to 12 affordable, one third of the total of 18 homes]. This is a ceiling; the number should be as low as possible to secure the land needed for the affordable housing.
- The affordable housing is not anticipated as being able to meet all those with a local connection in housing need, but the smaller scale should mean these remain "village homes for village people", as far as is legally possible.
- The commercial and affordable units should be on the same site in location, rather than segregated, and incorporate green spaces, gardens and parking spaces compatible with its rural setting.
- The affordable housing units will include a diversity of accommodation, including flats, small houses and family accommodation.
- The open market homes should be in scale with the affordable units; that is, to cater for smaller family sizes and have no more than three bedrooms. We also look to this housing to appeal to older Longparish residents wishing to "downsize" from family accommodation to smaller premises.
- The tenure arrangements will ensure that the affordable stock is protected from "right to buy" and physical expansion through extensions as much as is legal.
- The Housing Group will have a direct role in the negotiations with housing associations, developers and builders, and will ensure that consultation with the village on these matters is delivered.
- In particular, villagers will be consulted on the proposed design and materials, which should be compliant with the Village Design Statement, in addition to any formal planning approvals by the Parish Council and TVBC.
- The development will be constructed and capable of being maintained on as sustainable a basis as is possible, in line with carbon-neutral and environmentally friendly practices, such as higher than minimum energy efficiency and water conservation standards. Any additional pressure on existing village utilities (eg water, sewage, electricity, telephone) that arise from the development will be met by the development.

## **Longparish Housing Group- "Community Benefits"**

The chief community benefit is the provision of affordable housing to meet the need of those with a local connection to the village. Other benefits sought as a result of the development include

### ***Important benefits that will significantly improve the quality of village life***

- The purchase of land to provide a village green and pond to serve as a village amenity and open space, in keeping with the rural character of the village. This area may also include space for a relocated children's playground, depending on the site chosen for development. This land will be owned by the Parish Council.
- Construction of a multi-purpose community unit, capable of providing a small meeting room, a social area (eg for coffee), and the capacity to serve as a shop should the current village shop be closed. There is, however, an express guarantee that this facility will never be developed as a shop in competition with the current village shop.
- The construction of an all-weather spinal footpath from North Acre to the school with links to the development site.
- A contribution to the refurbishment of the Village Hall.

### ***Other benefits that will improve the quality of village life***

- A number of solutions to current parking problems within the village.
- Construction of facilities to support the village football field, eg changing rooms and an equipment store.
- Community mini-bus to help transportation problems.