

Minutes of the open **Meeting called by Brentor Parish Council re AFFORDABLE HOUSING**
Held in **BRENTOR VILLAGE HALL** on the **16th February 2015** at **7.30pm**

Present: Cllr S Burrows (Chair), Cllr J Adams, Cllr J Burrows, Cllr J Drury, Cllr L Hill,
Mrs C Sellars (Clerk)

In Attendance: Stephen Belli (DNPA Planning Officer), Alex Rehaag (WDBC Strategy Enabling
Officer), Sue Southwell (Devon Communities Together (formerly Devon Rural
Housing Partnership)), Cllr Terry Pearce (WDBC), many members of the public.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE Cllr A Frankland

Cllr S Burrows opened the meeting by thanking all those who had come and introduced the other people in attendance. She outlined the reasons for the meeting as advertised in the Brentor News, on the Parish website and on the village noticeboard.

'Affordable housing need remains – various sites have been identified and landowners have expressed an interest offering their sites for building affordable housing relative to the Housing Needs Survey and the Call for Sites process conducted by DNPA.

One outline planning application has been made which was refused by DNPA Development and Planning Committee. The site (Hammer Park) and other sites in Brentor remain open for applications by landowners and developers

We now await the next phase for taking this process forward and hope tonight's meeting will clarify what remains to be done in order to fulfil those housing needs. We look forward to hearing from DNPA and other guests in this regard.

Tonight's meeting has been called specifically for this update and not as a full Parish Council meeting – the next one being Monday 16th March

Mr Belli (and perhaps other guests) will outline where he and they see the process as of today, outline the next steps and hopefully provide a timeframe'.

Introduction by Mr Belli

Mr Belli explained that the call for affordable housing sites identified 9 potential sites. Each site was then considered and following discussions, the list was reduced to 5. During this time the Hammer Park planning application was received. The application for 12 houses was considered and refused because, amongst other things a) the application failed to address the Affordable Housing needs and tenure which had been previously identified (ie who was going to live there), b) The application was for 12 houses not 10. The owner does now have the right to appeal the decision and is within his rights to submit a new application.

Mr Belli explained that the process now needed pushing forward to a satisfactory conclusion for the community and following the refusal of the Hammer Park application, a letter had been sent out by Janice Alexander (Devon Communities Together) on 28th January 2015 to the 5 landowners, asking for responses to specific questions by 11th February to be discussed at this evenings meeting.

The letter outlined the process to date and asked the following:-

1. Is the land immediately available?
2. Have there been any changes or updates since the process began?
3. What further progress has been made or consideration given to Affordable Housing?
4. How can the land meet 100% of the Affordable Housing need?

Site 1 (Hammer Park) – Bibio Ltd on behalf of the landowner responded that yes the land was immediately available, no changes have been made, no further progress has been made other than the planning application. And Bibio has a track record of delivering affordable housing.

Site 2 (War Memorial) – Christopher Jones (Architect) responded that yes the land was immediately available, no changes had been made, no further progress had been made as the owner was waiting for positive responses from the enablers before proceeding further. Finally he wrote that yes, the land could meet the need for affordable housing albeit with the offer of development greater than the declared housing need.

Site 3 (Shell Park) and Site 4 (Station Road) – John Downing responded by confirming that the land was still available and he was happy to proceed.

Site 9 (Station View) – Simon Robinson responded that yes the land was immediately available, no changes had been made. There had been no further progress, in fact Mr Robinson stated he had been advised in July/August last year that the process had ceased. Mr Robinson felt he was not qualified to answer the final question as he is not a developer or planning consultant but as the land owner he is happy to discuss any aspect of the process.

Mr Belli summed up by stating that the housing need was still there, the same sites are still available but that only 1 site (Hammer Park) has shown that all aspects are achievable and deliverable in a reasonable timeframe and is ready to go now.

Questions from the community were then invited.

1. Would the application in Mary Tavy (Down Garage) have any bearing on this matter and would it be reviewed?

SB replied that it wouldn't as the site was not being considered for affordable housing. AR advised that Mary Tavy had a separate housing need anyway. SS advised that once the need for housing had been established, it would be expected that the need would remain fairly stable so there would not be a review.

2. What about the vote the Parish Council had? Why are the 5 sites back 'in the pot' again? What is the point in the Parish Council voting?

SB replied that although the Parish Council supported the Hammer Park application, DNPA could not support it as it was. Cllr S Burrows clarified that at a previous Parish Council meeting, the Cllrs had put the sites in their order of preferred suitability and then stated their support for the Hammer Park application.

3. Landowners were given until 11th February to respond. Is this the end of the process?

SB replied that following the refusal of the Hammer Park application, the letter was written to the landowners to establish what the position was. Hammer Park is in a position to make a new application and appears to be the only site which is achievable and deliverable now.

4. The process was paused while the Hammer Park application was considered, is it not therefore natural that the other landowners would do nothing in the meantime?

SB – No, the PC input had ceased at that point but that did not prevent anybody else for continuing.

5. What about the damage to the DNP mentioned in the HP refusal? Would this not be the same for any application?

No, the HP application was for 12 houses, not 10. There was no detailed landscape plans with the application so there was no way at that stage of telling what the final site would look like.

6. After the Parish Council gave their support to the HP site, did Mr Belli write to the other landowners and tell them to stop?

SB – No

7. Has it been made clear to the other landowners that unless they put in a planning application, they won't be considered? They might be waiting for guidance from the DNPA. Is it not the case that the first past the post has won?

SB – Nobody has stopped the other landowners from putting in applications.

8. The Hammer Park site has always been one step ahead of the others. If I was a landowner, it is reasonable to assume that I would wait for the first application to be concluded before I spent any money on progressing my application.

Cllr Pearce stated that following the Housing Needs survey completed 4 years ago, only 1 landowner has come forward to discuss the matter with the Parish Council and other organisations. Cllr Pearce believes that everyone has had the same opportunity to discuss their individual sites and doesn't accept that they haven't been given plenty of time. AR (and several members of the public) agreed with this. AR also stated that she had stated at a previous meeting that more than 1 application could be considered at the same time.

9. The lack of knowledge from people on the DNPA Development and Planning Committee had been shocking, and it was disappointing that when such a major planning application was being considered, many of the committee members hadn't even been to visit the sites. Reassurance was sought from SB that people on the committee would have the courtesy to visit the sites before any future decisions were made. Another parishioner commented that if this was the case, how could the people on the committee know about the road problems?

SB confirmed that he would take these observations back to the committee, but stated that reports from experts eg Highways, chartered surveyors had been provided and these people had visited the site, made a professional assessment of the risks and this shouldn't be challenged.

10. What if there is no HP appeal? Do we just muddle along or do DNPA make a decision?

SB replied that the purpose of this meeting was to gauge the feelings of the parishioners in the room and that his next course of action would be to speak to Mr Cunningham (HP landowner) and if requested help him mould a new application which would then be submitted which the Parish Council and DNPA would consider.

11. Cllr S Burrows voiced concerns that there would soon be a period of Purdah and also potentially a new Parish Council would be shortly formed, and wondered if continuity may be lost.

SB replied that the housing needs survey previously completed was a working document and would still be used.

12. Will the outcome of the meeting be relayed to the other site owners?

SB – Yes

13. Why is everyone so obsessed with giving these people even more time? The whole process has been devastating for the village and the community and has been very badly managed. The Parish Council has worked very hard but there has been a lot of wasted time deciding who can/can't vote.

Cllr Drury added that the process is flawed and will be addressed at separate meetings with DNPA. He also stated that the call for sites isn't a statutory requirement and arguably therefore DNPA had provided a wider democratic and open process which people may not have been necessarily aware of. He also pointed out that only one landowner (HP) had expressed any direct interest and they had put forward practical economically viable plans. None of the other sites' landowners had ever made contact or requested meetings with the Parish Council to discuss their proposals and he saw that as a lack of commitment on their part. Information has been posted on the website and in the Brentor News which goes to every household in the Parish so everybody has been made aware of the situation.

14. Are there any other site owners present in the room?

One other site owner indicated that he was there but made no further comment.

15. One parishioner commented that on a positive note, Brentor was in the privileged position of only being asked to consider 10 houses rather than 100's of private dwellings.

SB concluded that the meeting had been very useful, and he now felt confident to be able to go back to Mr Cunningham and hopefully help him to submit a new, more suitable application in the next few months. Any other applications made would also be considered and given the same help and support. He also stated that comments he had made tonight had been on a without prejudice basis.

The Chair thanked the panel for their participation and time in attending the meeting and also the Parish audience for their questions.

The meeting ended at 8.30pm