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**20<sup>th</sup> December 2018**

**Report for Acton Trussell, Bednall and Teddesley Hay Parish Council and South Staffordshire Housing Association on the Public Consultation Event of 20<sup>th</sup> December 2018 concerning the Possible Future Provision of Affordable Housing for Local People in the Parish.**

## **Background**

A Housing Needs Survey was carried out in the parish in 2015, partly because the Parish Plan findings: '*Some parishioners feel that affordable housing is needed, but this is outside the scope of a Parish Plan*'. A survey questionnaire was mailed to every household in the parish using the Council Tax record – the housing association retains a record of this distribution. The Housing Needs Survey Report of October 2015 revealed a need for an additional 8 affordable homes for rent and shared ownership for local people in the parish. A site has now been offered to South Staffordshire Housing Association with a view to meeting that need. The site, which could accommodate 8 affordable homes for local people, is in the village of Bednall and also offers land for a parking area for the village together with renewed use of land for the school playing field. The Parish Council and South Staffordshire Housing Association considered it important to hold a public consultation to inform parishioners of what has taken place to date and to seek the views of the local community on housing need and the potential site before taking any further decisions on the sketch proposals that have been prepared.

It was decided to hold a public consultation event on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2018.

## **Publicity**

A drop-in session was organised for the Acton Trussell Community Centre from 10 am – 3pm on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2018. The session was publicised online and by notices posted across the parish.

## **The Event Format**

An exhibition of display board and table top information arranged in a storyboard format comprised the housing needs survey report and its key features, a

Section 106 Agreement demonstrating how any proposed homes are kept in perpetuity for local people, what is meant by local connection, what is a rural exception site together with photographs of completed homes by South Staffordshire Housing Association on exception sites in Pattingham and Swindon.

For the proposed site in Bednall which lies adjacent to the western edge of the settlement policy boundary to the south of Common Lane, an architect's sketch layout for eight proposed affordable homes was presented. The proposal currently comprises of 1 x 3-bedrooms and 7 x 2-bedrooms homes being for four shared ownership and four rented in tenure to be accessed from a cul de sac off Common Lane. The sketch layout showed the proposed new parking area also. It should be stressed that should the proposal advance, the proposed scheme details may change though not the overall size of the scheme.

A comments or feedback sheet was available for attendees to complete.

In attendance to provide members of the public with explanation and further information were Lesley Birch of South Staffordshire Housing Association and John Lancaster, consultant Rural Housing Enabler. Parish Councillors, including the current Chair, Mr T Williams, were also available to respond to public questions and issues.

## **Public Response**

There were 37 people who completed the signing-in sheet at the drop-in event plus 5 who 'escaped' without doing so! Of the above completing the signing-in sheet, 35 gave their address as Bednall.

There were 13 completed feedback sheets and the section below records these observations. The information in the analysis below is based wholly on these comments from parishioners.

Note: 2 attendees took away feedback sheets to be returned electronically but these were not received by the deadline given of the end of Monday 17<sup>th</sup> December.

## **Analysis of Written Responses of the Public**

The feedback form invited comments about:

1. The suitability of the proposed site.
2. What kind of housing you think the parish needs?

3. We have identified a proven need for 8 affordable homes. Would you support such a development?
4. Do you think you may qualify for one of these proposed new homes, either for rent or shared-ownership?

There was a wide range of opinion, support, opposition and concerns. To represent this spectrum of comments, the 13 written public responses have been divided into the following two broad categories:

**1. Support for the proposal ( 7 responses )**

**2. Opposed to the proposal ( 6 responses )**

**1. Support for the proposal ( 7 responses )**

- I think it is a fantastic idea to keep family together. The car park will be an asset to the village. Please make sure that it is kept affordable.
- I have lived in Bednall all my life ( 24 years ) and think this would be a good idea as I would like to stay in the village and stay close to my family – I wouldn't be able to without these affordable houses as houses prices are extremely high.
- 1. The site is at face value suitable. 2. Affordable housing – shared ownership etc. is the right housing for development of the village. 3. Yes, I would support development of affordable housing. Main comments – 1. The development of the car park must be linked to the approval – dependency! 2. The car park should be covered by a covenant such that it cannot be developed on. 3. Parking restrictions need to be reviewed/ added.
- The village has an ageing population with the school increasingly having a large proportion of children from outside the two villages – resulting in issues with parking and traffic issues. If the proposed development would be built to house young families who have a connection to Acton and Bednall, this would protect the future viability of the village and I would support the development.
- 1. Concerns about parking actually being used – may need parking restrictions elsewhere in village to ensure parking facility is used. 2 and 3. We think this type of housing will help to sustain and widen the demographics of the village. 4. One of our children might be interested, but the lack of facilities in the village might be prohibitive.
- No objection, in principle, to affordable housing. But do feel should look at housing on 'chicken farm' opposite. Owner has looked at having housing on there before. Need to ensure parking is implemented as understand have no funding at present. Also ensure it blends in ie not tarmac! Lack of paving/ footpath to rest of village therefore need to look at infrastructure.

- Need to ensure it is affordable, stays affordable in perpetuity. Need to consider setting to church as is listed building. Need to safeguard hedges/ character of village.
- I think the general plan is good. We do need more young people in the village. The 30 mph speed limit should be extended up to the Penkridge/ Brocton Road to slow traffic approaching this development.

### **Opposed to the proposal ( 6 responses )**

- Bednall is a small hamlet and is not a suitable site for affordable housing. It would be a 10% increase in housing. The traffic situation is already a problem and the tiny lanes can't cope. We have no shop, no post office, no buses, no facilities. If it wasn't suitable for Acton two years ago it certainly isn't suitable for Bednall now.
- Strongly object to this proposed site as: 1. Dangerous site position 2. No street lighting 3. No public transport 4. No shops or other facilities 5. Traffic increase, congestion and public safety 6. Wrong type of development 7. School already overflowing 8. Increase in traffic noise and pollution.
- 1. It is not suitable, lanes are too narrow, we already have numerous accidents and it is not possible to pass. 2. I have lived here over forty years and raised a family as also my friends and no-one has asked for housing, they have saved and provided themselves with homes. Shared ownership is a farce, I know people that are well able to buy a home and are living in these houses. The village needs no more development.
- 1. Totally inappropriate in a small village like Bednall where there is little demand for affordable homes. Bednall has no facilities, no shop, post office, pub or bus service. I am opposed to any infringement of the Green Belt, even for this purpose. 2. To preserve the character of the village, only infill should be allowed. 3. Not under any circumstances. The demand for 8 such houses does not exist in Bednall and I don't think Bednall is a suitable location for such a development or should cater for the wider community. 4. I do not qualify for one of the homes.
- The proposed exit and entrance of the houses is opposite the driveway to Lower Farm. This is a dangerous blind exit and I have been hit by a car coming out of this drive. The bend by Barncroft floods badly at the slightest bit of rain. The drains have not been pumped out in years and a lot of water presently drains into the field proposed for these buildings. Therefore, proper provision for this excess water runoff needs to be properly planned. I have been informed that there is provision for soakaways to be provided for these new buildings but drainage is a big problem. The pavements are in very bad condition, down to the stones

- with no asphalt covering. The area is in Green belt and close to an area of outstanding natural beauty. The oak tree, other trees and hedges should be preserved.
- We do not think the site is suitable for housing. There is no footpath until you get to the church. There is no street lighting, no shops, no buses, no doctor, only in Penkridge. The school is already full. The problem with flooding in that part of the lane is really bad. We live in No. 1 opposite the field and we have to leave the drive blind and hope there are no speeding cars coming around that bend. And it would be worse at the proposed site which is opposite the driveway to the farm. The traffic through the village is really bad and with extra houses it would most certainly be worse. And it is Green Belt.

## **Conclusions**

The complete spectrum of thoughts, concerns, issues, observations made in written comments by attendees is presented above. A summary of these comments would be that:

56% expressed support for the scheme in detail or in principle because affordable housing is needed for young people to redress the balance of an ageing population, to maintain the local viability of the school, that the proposed parking would be an asset to the infrastructure but that the local connection for the homes needed to be protected in perpetuity.

46% were opposed to the proposal, primarily concerning it being inappropriate for Bednall because of its size and lack of services and facilities, drainage issues, access and highways safety but also around design and parking, the housing need and who the properties will be for and because the site is in the Green Belt.

2 respondents expressed an interest in being considered for any future such affordable housing.

Parish councillors present will have taken on board also comments made in their conversations with all the attendees and should take this into consideration when considering if the above comments are representative of the wider view.

## **Some Further Information**

In relation to some of the issues raised above, it is considered that the following updated information may be useful.

### **1. The Housing Need**

The Housing Needs Survey Report dates to October 2015 so updated information is provided as follows; a. the joint housing register/ waiting list of the District Council and South Staffordshire Housing Association currently shows 23 households requesting a rented home in the parish: of these households, 15 have a local connection to the parish ie live, work, previously lived or have close family in the parish; b. at the consultation event there were 2 expressions of interest for the proposed shared ownership homes; c. from the retained contact information of those respondents declaring a housing need in the 2015 survey, 9 households are being contacted by the housing association to determine whether these households are still in need of local affordable housing.

### **2. Affordable Housing and the Green Belt**

The definitive national planning policy document is now the revised National Planning Policy Framework ( NPPF ) of July 2018 ( see gov.uk ). In particular, attention is drawn to Para 77 where local councils should 'support opportunities to bring forward rural exception sites that will provide affordable homes to meet identified local needs'. And specifically in relation to the Green Belt, Para 145 which states that one of the exceptions to not allowing new building is (f) 'limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the development plan ( including rural exception sites ).' For the latter refer to the District Council Approved Local Plan.

### **3. Planning and Highways**

It is believed that in preparation of the sketch proposals, it was established that the location of the proposed site would meet the local authority's criteria for a rural exception site and that the highways authority raised no objections in principle to the proposed access.

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that the feedback from the consultation event contained in this report is taken into consideration when deciding on the next stage for the affordable housing proposal.

It is recommended that this report is made available to the residents of the whole parish through online and print outlets and that notification of when the Parish Council will be discussing the report should be widely communicated.

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