

Affordable Housing update – Early April 2023

On March 21st, the Parish Council had an open meeting to provide an update to the public and give them the opportunity to ask questions about the Affordable Housing project.

Seven Parish Councillors were present plus: Mary Ridgway, Teignbridge District Council (TDC) Housing Enabling Officer and Mr Ed Lewis, a developer, who has obtained an Option, to build the Affordable Houses (AH) previously identified as needed in Dunsford, on a site NE of Thomas Cross on Reedy Hill (site1).

There were fourteen members of the public in attendance.

The meeting started with the Chair presenting the history of the project so far, which is available to view in full on the website.

Ed Lewis as agent and Mary Ridgway as TDC Enabler then took questions from the floor.

A lively discussion followed in which the reasons behind the new Housing Needs Survey were outlined; when it would occur (estimated April 2023) and why it was initiated. Although it is still valid for Planning purposes until late 2024, Dunsford Parish Council (DPC) voted to refresh the survey to reflect the current needs more accurately for affordable housing.

A large variety of concerns were raised about Site 1 near Thomas Cross, in particular from residents residing in close proximity to the site. Most of these have previously been addressed on the FAQ document, which can be viewed on the website.

Because of these concerns, members of the public were requesting the PC to re-explore other site options. The Parish Council through the Working Group will be discussing this proposal with Teignbridge DC and Dartmoor NPA

It was noted at the meeting that Mr Lewis has received pre-application advice on Site 1 the detail of which is confidential to him unless he agrees to share. Since the meeting, TDC has advised DPC that there are significant policy constraints that would require significant mitigation. Two key issues being landscape impact within the setting of the national park and the setting of the conservation area.

Until a full planning application is submitted the merits of the scheme on Site 1 cannot be determined against policy. Should the application be refused all applicants have a right of appeal. This means Site 1 cannot be ruled out until the planning process is complete.

Following the meeting it has been proposed that on-site visits be made to the alternative sites to assess and record the pros/cons of those locations.

Since the meeting Dartmoor National Park Authority, Teignbridge DC Housing Enabling team and Hastoe Housing Association have commented on the proposal for a site walkabout. Their position is set out in an email dated 12 April 2023. In summary they have advised:

1. The Housing Needs Survey results are needed before any site walkabout takes place.
2. The DPC then needs to consider the results and agree the outcome of the Survey.
3. If there is evidence of housing need the DPC needs to agree a process for identifying the communities preferred site. We see this as being through the Housing Working Group.
4. The Housing Working Group remain the delegated group to work with partner organisations.
5. If a site walkabout does take place then any developer should not be part of that process.
6. A preferred Registered Provider is needed to obtain grant funding. Hastoe are willing to continue as preferred Registered Provider subject to leading the site finding & planning process. This is likely to

be required by any Registered Provider because of the reputational and financial risks involved in working up a scheme.

7. It should be noted that it is not certain at this stage if the landowner of Site 6 is amenable to the sale of the site on Rural Exception site terms.

The Housing Work Group, which is made up from representatives from Dartmoor National Park (DNP), TDC, Hastoe Housing Association and three Parish Councillors is scheduled to meet on April 18th to discuss these matters further. They will then make a recommendation to Dunsford PC.

DPC will then share with the community the next steps on the Parish web site. Please keep a regular check on the parish magazine or website for any updates.