

## **Affordable Housing in Dunsford**

### **26 Jan 2023**

#### **1. Why are the FAQs being provided?**

The FAQs were promised by the Parish Council following previous consultation. The questions have been taken from different sources such as email enquiries, responses to the leaflet that went out in November 2022 and discussions at Parish Council and Dunsford Housing Working Group meetings. Some of the questions asked have been quite technical. We have tried to answer them as succinctly and clearly as possible but recognise some questions cannot include the full technical, legal debate.

#### **2. Why are you only asking about the site off Reedy Hill/Fulford Road?**

This site was one of six sites being actively looked at by the Housing Working Group. The Working Group were following a sequential testing process against key constraints, opportunities of each site, (particularly opportunities for car parking) and the site availability as an exception site, at exception site values. That technical process had not been completed which is why further consultation had not taken place. This process is important in Dunsford because of the flood risk issues. However, the Reedy Hill site had scored highly in the process. Hastoe were in confidential negotiations on the site when Mr Lewis stepped in.

The reason this site has come forward sooner is that separately to the work of the Working Group, Mr Ed Lewis, has obtained an option for this site with a view to making a planning application for affordable housing.

The Parish Council's Housing Working Group has asked Mr Lewis to engage with the community and Hastoe with a view to trying to ensure any development on the site meets the community's needs. This is because unless there is evidence of high levels of housing need requiring 2 rural exception sites for affordable housing, only one site is likely to be supported by Planning Policy. Mr Lewis acts as the landowner as he has an option on the land.

A pre-planning enquiry has been made to Teignbridge planners by the site agent to obtain guidance on the planners' requirements for the site. If a project does come forward, then the Parish Council will be asking Mr Lewis to provide further details, so that a parish wide consultation can take place.

#### **3. What is the Dunsford Housing Working Group (DHWG)?**

Dunsford Housing Working Group is a sub-committee of the Parish Council. It was set up after the 2019 Housing Needs Survey to identify the options for meeting the needs of local people needing affordable housing and at the opportunities and constraints of up to 6 sites in the village. Membership is made up of 2 Parish Councillors (Paul French and Pip Hayes), one Teignbridge District Council Representative (Mary Ridgway, Housing Enabler), one Hastoe Housing Association representative (Jo Petford) and from time to time, one representative from DNPA.

DHWG makes recommendations to the Parish Council. It can only make decisions if given delegated authority by the Parish Council. It cannot decide a planning application. Neither can the Parish Council determine a planning application but it can comment as a consultee on planning applications. A parish Council's comments on exception sites are important. The Terms of Reference for DHWG have been agreed by the Parish Council.

#### **4. Who will decide if there can be housing on the site?**

The site is in Teignbridge Planning Authority area as it is just outside, but immediately adjacent to, the national park boundary. Dartmoor National Park Planning Authority are statutory consultees which means their views will be important. Other examples of statutory consultees include Devon County Council as the Highways authority, South-West Water and utility companies.

Because the site is outside the settlement boundary but immediately adjacent to that boundary it is considered to be in open countryside and so subject to national and local planning policy for 'Rural Exception Sites' which is set out in the Local Plan. For this site this is the Teignbridge Local Plan.

#### **5. When will we have more detail about what is being proposed?**

At the moment we only know the location of the proposed site. The number, size and affordable tenure of the homes, design and layout, drainage requirements and access have not been agreed. Many people have raised questions about this detail in their responses to the November 2022 leaflet.

To date no technical surveys have taken place. This is because the developer has submitted a pre-application enquiry to Teignbridge to establish what is needed for an application to comply with the legally adopted planning policy.

When the feedback has been received from the pre-application process the developer can draw up an initial feasibility layout which takes account of the site features such as ecology, access, topography, visual impact, drainage requirements and likely number of homes. The Parish Council have asked for further consultation when this is available so that local people have an opportunity to comment before more work is done.

Dunsford PC has asked the developer to make as much information available as they can when it is available.

#### **6. How do you know there are local people that need affordable housing in Dunsford?**

In 2019 an independent Housing Needs Survey identified a need for 10 affordable homes. This was based on the information provided by respondents and an assessment of whether they could qualify.

A Housing Needs Survey is only valid for a maximum of 5 years and after 3 years a refresh is usually expected by the planners. Dunsford PC have requested an updated survey. Teignbridge Enablers are talking to Devon Communities Together to obtain a quote and how soon this could be carried out.

Often people in need do not register on Devon Home Choice unless they think there is a reasonable chance of being housed. These people can be picked up on a Housing Need Survey. Part of the Survey analysis is to check eligibility for rented affordable housing through Devon Home Choice.

**If you think you need affordable housing to rent it is very important that you register on Devon Home Choice. You can phone 01626 215200 or visit Teignbridge's website on [Renting via Devon Home Choice - Teignbridge District Council](#)**

## **7. Why do you need a housing needs survey?**

Exception site policy is a national policy and all Local Plans are expected to include this policy. It is particularly important in rural areas where local people struggle to find affordable homes that enable them to stay in their communities. This policy sets out what is needed to justify building affordable housing as an 'exception' to Local Plan policy. This includes the need to evidence the need.

## **8. Will there be a new Housing Needs Survey?**

The Parish Council have agreed there needs to be a new Housing Needs Survey, subject to some detail on the questions included. This will be commissioned independently from Devon Communities Together later this Spring. In this case it will be funded by Teignbridge DC from their community led housing budget.

## **9. Will the Housing Needs Survey go to every individual in the Parish or every household?**

A Housing Needs survey form will go to every property in the parish. For households with members needing to form a new households or Muti-Occupancy homes, additional copies can be requested.

## **10. What is meant by People with a 'Local Connection'?**

Local Connection is defined by the planning authority. There are usually several criteria at least one member of the household must meet. This includes the length of time someone has lived in an area and the length of time and hours per week someone is employed in an area. Dartmoor National Park Authority has much tighter criteria than Teignbridge Planning Authority Area. This is because of the national park status. For example, for a site in Dartmoor National Park the criteria for length of time living in the area is 5 years and for Teignbridge it is a minimum of six months unless otherwise agreed through an Allocations Plan. The revised Teignbridge Local Plan currently out for consultation proposes to increase this to 2 years.

Local Connection is also set out in a legally binding document which is part of any planning consent called a s106 agreement. The s106 agreement is also registered with Local Land Charges.

## **11. Will the homes remain affordable or sold under the Right to Buy?**

The national government definition of affordable housing is set out in a technical document called the National Planning Policy Framework. This requires affordable housing to remain affordable in perpetuity (forever). However, there are a limited number of exceptions set out in national legislation because they are a statutory right for an individual. The mains exceptions for rented affordable homes being the statutory Right to Buy, the Statutory Right to Acquire and the Right to Exchange.

## **12. Can Open Market Homes Be Built on a Rural Exception Site?**

Both the current Teignbridge Adopted Local Plan and the Revised Local Plan (which is out for consultation) only permits Open Market Housing if public subsidy is not available. At present there is public subsidy available from Homes England for rural affordable housing. The need for any open market homes on a Rural Exception Site would need to be evidenced and subject to independent viability assessments.

Extract from the current adopted Teignbridge Local Plan, WE5 f):

- f) where there is a proven need according to criterion (a) but there is no available public grant to fund the affordable dwellings, the incorporation of open market housing on the site may be permitted, at the minimum amount required to fund the affordable housing provision if in accordance with the parish/neighbourhood plan if any; and**
- g) it can be demonstrated that the proposals are in a location or of a type that will not affect the integrity of a European site.**

The Proposed Submission Local Plan (Regulation 19) currently out for consultation (closing date 13 March 2023) Chapter 5 Homes Policy H7: Rural Exception Sites f)

**f. the incorporation of open market housing on the site may be permitted, at the minimum amount required to fund the affordable housing and/or make the scheme deliverable, providing the open market element accounts for no more than 30% of the homes, their size, and their form and design is commensurate and compatible with the affordable homes, and all the following apply:**

- i. a proven need according to criterion (a);**
- ii. the scheme is demonstrated to be unviable; and**
- iii. there is insufficient available public grant to fund the scheme.**

### **13. Can other community facilities be provided on the site such as car parking?**

This depends on the local planning policy covering the site, the grant funding conditions and the developer.

- a. Homes England grant is tested for Value for Money and cannot be given for other community facilities only affordable housing. However, Hastoe Housing Association will work with communities seeking to raise other funds for additional services on site but that work would need to be driven by the community.
- b. On Rural Exception Sites which require 100% affordable housing Dartmoor National Park Local Plan does allow for open market homes only if they are necessary to generate the money to fund community infrastructure. This will need to be evidenced and subject to independent viability assessments
- c. Teignbridge Local Plan policy for Rural Exception Sites (WE5) does not include a policy for open market homes cross-subsidise of community infrastructure.

### **14. Who is Hastoe Housing Association and why are they involved?**

Hastoe is a national Registered Provider who specialise in sustainable rural homes. They are the preferred Registered Provider because of their track record on community engagement, high design quality, energy efficiency and because they already manage affordable homes in the village.

### **15. Who is the 'developer' and what is their role?**

Mr Ed Lewis is an independent agent who has acquired an 'Option Agreement' on the land at Reedy Hill. This means he is, in effect, acts as the land-owner as he has an Option to buy, this is normally on receipt of planning permission. Mr Lewis is separately exploring his options for developing the site which is why the Dunsford Housing Working Group are currently working with him to try and bring

the site forward as an Exception Site for affordable housing for local people. This discussion is in in very early stages.

### **16. Will there be further consultation?**

The Parish Council and Hastoe Housing Association as the preferred Registered Provider are committed to further community consultation on any site coming forward. This is not completely in their control and has to be negotiated. To achieve this the Parish Council, through the Housing Working Group, will need to work with the developer. The Teignbridge Housing Enabler is there to support that process. The Enabler cannot make decisions on a planning application but is an internal consultee on any application.

### **17. What are the Next Steps?**

The Parish Council is taking a cautious step by step approach. The Dunsford Housing Working Group has been in discussion with the developer about a 'drop-in' consultation at the village hall. The purpose was to give local people an opportunity to ask questions and comment on the initial proposals. This stage is sometimes called the 'initial feasibility sketch' showing options for layout and the opportunities and constraints presented by the site. Often further consultation is needed once the feedback from the first consultation has been considered.

### **Tuesday, March 21<sup>st</sup> 7 – 9pm in the Village Hall.**

The drop-in was due to happen on 21 March 2023. It was initially but has been postponed because the pre-application advice has not yet been received which should inform the proposals. This is outside of the Parish Council's control. However, some Parish Councillors felt that it should go ahead, as planned, to give residents the opportunity to gather and talk. It will now be an evening meeting rather than an all-day event. If you do attend, you will be welcome but please be aware that Parish Councillors may not be able to answer all of your queries.