

**A review and update
of the
Dunsford Parish
affordable housing and
car park project
October 2020**

Produced by Dunsford Parish Council – October 2020
and delivered to all households in the Parish

If you have any questions or comments after reading this document, please contact any of the Affordable Housing and Car park Research Team of Councillors: -

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1. Introduction & Background

In 2017 your PC established a Parish Plan Steering Group to find out what topics were of concern and/or of interest to residents. An Open Meeting was held in the Village Hall and in addition a questionnaire was hand delivered to 95+% of households. After lots of pushing a 52% return was achieved but there were significant demographic gaps, most notably in the 35-50 age range. The Steering Group pooled topics under 3 headings and created a team to progress each. A full summary and all updates can be viewed on the Village website www.dunsfordvillage.co.uk The remainder of this report will focus solely on topics 1 & 2 of the Parish Plan Housing and Infrastructure group, see below highlighted in yellow. This report aims to advise residents of the current status of the Councils research into how/if these proposals might be delivered. ***Nothing has been decided, and there will be a full public consultation before any decisions are made. Similarly, while both Housing and the Car Park are addressed together in this report, there is no reason why one could not proceed without the other.***

1.1 Parish Plan Housing and infrastructure findings

Parish Plan scoring system: S* = Strength of Support from community:
High, Medium, or Low

P* = Priority: 1 = start immediately, 2 = start within 8 months, 3 = may take longer to resolve and require external help, 4 = not requiring action at present, review in 12 months

Summary: -Our community is rural, unspoilt and generally has good infrastructure; residents want to keep it that way. Limited, affordable housing is required, which should be spread out. Parking, speeding, particularly on the B3212, and road/ditch maintenance are issues.

	*	P*	Issue/ opportunity	Plan of action
1	M	S 1	Housing development / type /location	Discuss and develop ideas with Dartmoor National Park Authority (DNPA)/ landowners and developer
2	H	2	Lack of car parking in the village	Plan A is to incorporate with housing plan and, if impossible, develop plan B
3	H	1	Road maintenance/ pothole issues	Encourage on-line reporting; Government supported iPhone & android app: Fill That Hole
4	M	2	Traffic speed, particularly on B3212 and Briton Street	Create a focus group to meet with DNPA & Devon County Council (DCC) - Highways
5	H	1	Community bulk purchase of oil*	Signpost people to the current syndicate run by Tony Clapham.
6	H	3	Poor flood prevention/ ditch maintenance	Seek support from landowners & DCC to clear their ditches
<p><i>* Several bulk order ideas were discussed but dismissed due to possible impact on local traders.</i></p>				

1.2 Housing Need Survey

In order to generate data on the Housing Need (item1 above), the PC asked Devon Communities Together to conduct a survey.

The summary findings are listed below: -

- The survey identified a need for 10 affordable homes within the next 5 years.
- The survey found 10 households in housing need who could not afford to buy or rent in the open market.
- All of the households in need qualified for affordable rent.

Size of Property Required: -

- 7 x 1 or 2 bedroom properties for single/couples.
- 1 x 2 bedroom property for a family
- 1 x 3 bedroom property for a family.
- 1 x 4 bedroom property for a family

Other Findings: -

- The survey achieved its aim of identifying actual households in need. 350 surveys were delivered and 112 survey forms were returned. The response rate was 32%.
- 79% of those who answered the question said they would be in favour of a small development of affordable housing for local people. 10 households did not answer this question.

1.3 Subsequently

Your PC established a team to take this further, this involved: -

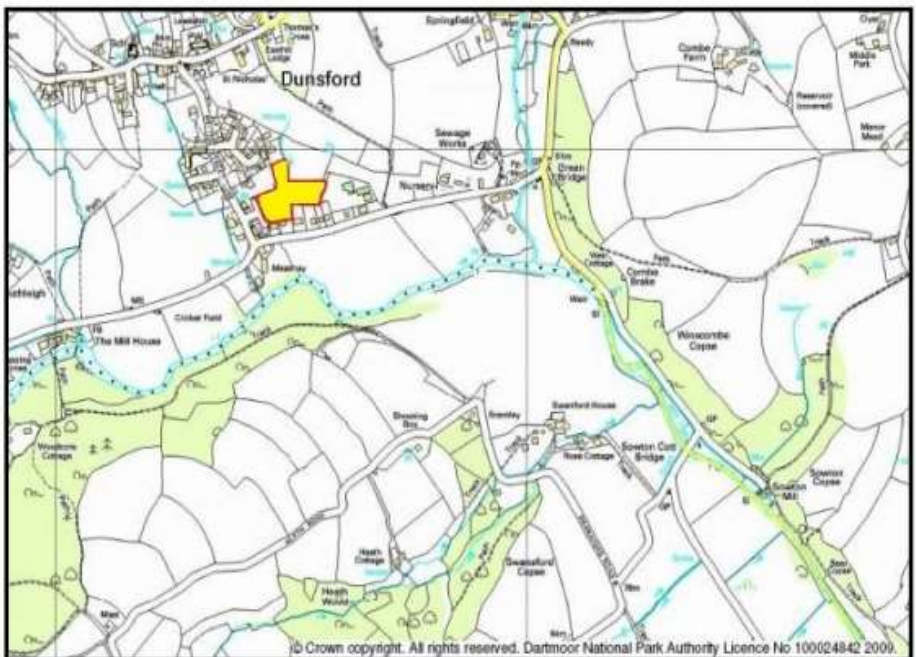
- Exploring with local Landowners possible sites for a car park and/or development
- Several meetings with members of TDC & DNPA Planning Dept.

The latter resulted in three proposed sites being dropped based on inputs from DNPA. Two on landscape issue (neither had flood risk) and the third because it was too far outside the Settlement. **DESPITE RESERVATIONS EXPRESSED IN THE LAST (2017) SLAA (Strategic Land Availability Assessment)** about all the three remaining sites, the view taken by the Planners was that they were all technically “viable” and that the issues highlighted in the SLAA could be overcome (at a cost). For full details of the S/LAA see the August update on the website.

The sites: Highlighted in yellow on the maps

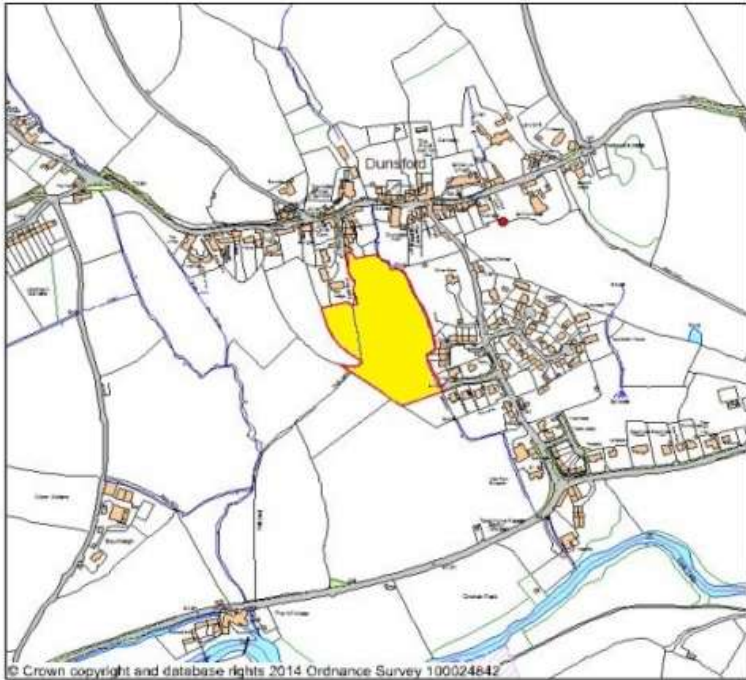
SITE 4

Site Reference and Name: DNP08/025, Great Mead, Dunsford



SITE 5

Site Reference and Name: DNP08/047, Land to the south west of Dunsford, Dunsford



SITE 6

Site Reference and Name: DNP10/061 Land at Townsend Farm, Dunsford.



The next logical action was to check that the landowners were willing to sell land for such a project. Meetings were set up with two landowners (Site 4 and 6 both being owned by the same person). Both landowners agreed to work with the PC to see if their land could be used. Neither agreed to sell or what price they would sell at, however both had previously been advised that any development was restricted to Affordable Housing with a max of £10K per household plot.

The planned next step was to hold an open meeting with the community to share information about the project and the pros/cons of each site, as seen by the planners and your PC BUT most importantly to gain your views of each site. Covid 19 has stalled this process. Throughout the above process, regular reports have been made to the full Parish Council (PC) and summarized in the Parish Mag and on the Village Website and noticeboards.

2.0 Where are we now?

10 households have raised concerns about the above proposals, some on several occasions. All live in an area that could be seen as impacted by any development on site 5, if selected. (5 are in the Court, 2 close to the Court entrance, 1 is a property to the East of site 5 and a further 2 at the other end by the proposed access road to site 5). It should be noted however, that when site 4 was previously proposed for development, there were in excess of 12 households raising concerns. No doubt the same, or similar numbers, would object now to development of this site.

In the assessment of the PC, the concerns raised fail to recognize: -

- i) the PC are obliged to look at the possibilities of providing the housing identified in the 2019 survey.
- ii) The PC is currently in fact-finding mode NOT DEVELOPMENT PLANNING
- iii) Nothing has been decided and there will be a full public consultation before any decisions are made.

Readers are reminded we live in a rural community, your Parish Councillors are unpaid volunteers, so things take time to get to fruition and Covid has made fact finding and other actions related to this project even slower than they might have been. Some of the correspondence received from the public on this topic has been unnecessary vitriolic. Others have given good advice and offers to help with professional expertise, which is welcomed. Your Parish Council has no fixed agenda on this subject and wants to move forward in the best interest of the community, now and in the future. Not everyone will be happy with whatever does/does not happen.

3. FAQ/comments raised - summary

Below is a summary of the most frequently raised topics and the Parish Council's reply

3.1. Affordable Housing

- is there a need for Affordable Housing in Dunsford? *Yes, according to the Housing Needs Survey carried out by Devon Communities Together in 2019. See above for details of the outcome of survey regards numbers and type of houses.*
- How, and when was the survey done? Is it old data? *The Housing Needs survey was carried out in spring 2019 by Devon Communities Together – so the data is current*
- How many Affordable Homes are needed? All should be carbon neutral. *See 1.2 above. 10 Affordable Houses are needed. All will be built to the highest energy saving (Passive House) standard, as were the 13 Affordable Houses built in Christow a few years ago; however, it will not be worth the cost/time to obtain the Passive House certification.*
- Younger people don't want to live in Dunsford but be nearer bigger towns e.g. Exeter *Agree some do but others don't. The survey showed strong interest from younger people.*

- Do not use the same Developer who built the houses at the Cheriton end of Fulford Road *There is no Developer assigned to this project. The previous mention of Hastoe houses built in Cheriton Bishop referred to the award winning homes they built further up the road past the doctors surgery, not the houses at the top end of Fulford road near the pub.*
- There is a lot of Development going on already around Exeter, Bovey Tracy, Newton Abbott; there is no need for any in Dunsford *Yes, there is a lot of Development going on in and around neighbouring towns/cities, but this is very largely, but not solely, “Open Market” housing. The Dunsford proposal is for Affordable Housing and the survey clearly demonstrated a local need.*
- Can the existing private rental properties in Dunsford be bought up and used for Affordable Housing? *This is an interesting idea but would require the current owners to sell their properties to Teign Housing (The Housing Assoc that manages Affordable Housing on behalf of TDC.) Their offer price is unlikely to match owners’ expectations.*
- Any Affordable Housing Development will require 3 or 4 large Open Market houses to cover the costs of the flood prevention

measures required *Maybe, our aim must be to keep that number as low as possible.*

- Affordable Housing in Dunsford is required even if it needs some Open Market houses to make the project viable. *This is the majority view of the Parish Council too.*
- Did the survey carried out make people aware that any Affordable Housing was likely to require some Open Market Housing to support the project financially? *No.*
- Re-run the survey with all the facts displayed *This might be one way to obtain and demonstrate the views of the whole community and is certainly worth considering if no clear understanding can be reached.*

3.2. Car Park

- Is there a need for a Car Park? No proven need, how would it be managed? *The work done to develop our Parish Plan clearly demonstrated the frustration of our community about parking. It was by far the biggest unsolicited comment/input to our data gathering. There is not a plan about how it would be managed currently but most likely it will be similar to the TVCH car park in Christow.*
- Was the car park proposal made clear in the Housing Needs Survey? *No.*

- We should not concrete over fields to make a car park *There is no need to use concrete or tarmac for a car park surface. Many new smaller car parks use one of several Environmental Agency approved porous surfaces.*
- the need is mostly created by school parents leaving home too late *This is probably true, but it is not solely school runs that cause parking issues. Events at the Village Hall, Church require car parking, as does our local shop and café.*
- There are already 3 under used car parks in the village; two owned by the Royal Oak and a third by the Lee Lane Allotments. *This is true but none are public car parks. Better use of these areas may be feasible with the consent of the owners.*
- A Car Park near the Village Green may lead to teenagers congregating, noise, drinking and drug abuse *This is certainly a risk. If this should happen your Parish Council would seek help from the Authorities to overcome the problem.*
- Why not have designated drop off points instead and blue badge holder reserved parking *This is an interesting idea and would certainly work to reduce congestion in the centre of the village if land could be found for this purpose. A Blue Badge parking space has been considered previously but not supported/approved.*

- Better to improve public transport and (safe) cycling routes *The Parish Council fully support this, but it is outside our remit/jurisdiction. We have requested extra buses from the Service Provider and DCC (who subsidise the route) but it was turned down. Cycle routes are similarly “controlled” by DCC Highways Agency.*
- Dunsford is in an area of special architectural and historic interest, the character or appearance of which is desirable to preserve and enhance (quote from DNP) *We can all agree to that, but population growth needs to be housed somewhere. As part of its commitment to Central Government, the DNPA are committed to deliver 50 new Affordable Homes a year across the whole Park. At this time Central Government is doing everything it can to weaken current Planning rules to incentivise Developers. It is currently unclear how this will impact National Parks, but it is not impossible that “Open Market” housing will be permitted in future. In such a scenario, landowners would make more profit from selling their land for Development than they will from the current proposed Affordable Housing being discussed here.*

3.3. Environmental

- Any development will have an adverse environmental impact

Yes, that is true, our aim must be to minimise it and possibly “offset” the impact with tree planting etc.

- Will there be an Environmental Impact assessment? *Yes, it is mandatory*
- This proposal goes against the PC declaration of a Climate & Ecological Emergency. *That is debatable. A growing population has to be housed. Limiting family size (voluntarily) would reduce the need for more and more housing but that is not happening fast enough, so we need more houses. It is important to strike a balance in everything we do and base action on evidence. There is that evidence that more Affordable Housing is needed in Dunsford. These will be constructed to high energy saving standards, so any development would have a low life-time carbon emission and be compatible with the PC Climate and ecological declaration*
- This proposal will remove wildlife habitat *It will undoubtedly alter the habitat, but every effort will be made to reduce the impact on wildlife and replacement/enhancement of the landscape would be part of any final plan.*
- Climate change is likely to increase rainfall, exacerbating existing drainage and flooding issues. *Correct, so good forward planning*

with the right drainage schemes are required to minimise flood risks and hopefully even improve on the current situation.

- If there is a conflict the Sandford Principle applies, i.e. greater weight to purpose of conserving and enhancing natural beauty, wildlife, and cultural heritage of the area. *This is well understood and written into the DNP “rules”. It was recently invoked by Development Protesters in Ashburton but was overruled by the various Authorities.*
- It would be better to raise money in the community and via grants to create a new area for nature and wildlife similar to the Bridford Woodland Park. *The Affordable Housing Development proposal does not exclude/prevent this type of initiative being taken forward if there is sufficient interest and a “champion” to lead it.*

3.4. Site 4

- Site 4 failed before, what will be different this time? *There is no real difference. It is still an option although it would not facilitate a car park to alleviate congestion in the village centre. It failed before because the Developer said it would need 10 “Open Market” houses to cover the cost of the flood prevention measures demanded by the PC/DNP. This was rejected by the Park. Things could be different today as Developers can access Central Funding to make sites more resilient to flooding.*

- Why not site 4? *See above*

3.5. Site 5

- Site 5 was proposed 40 years ago (for what is now the Brownings Mead development) and is the most obvious site but access maybe an issue as well as drainage. *This is the most central of the available sites. Yes, like the other available sites, it has drainage/flood potential issues, but these can be overcome with the right engineering. Vehicle access would be solely via Briton Street.*
- Site 5 would create an adverse vista of the village from the B3212 and detract from the conservation area behind it. *This is a reality but provisional discussions with DNP did not rule this site out, but others were, on the grounds of adverse impact on the vista.*
- Site 5 has public footpaths crossing it and is used widely to exercise dogs *If this site was selected public access via footpaths to the B3212 would be retained and hopefully enhanced. Tree planting would be used to screen/break up the hard lines of any Development*

3.6. Site 6

- Site 6 has the least impact but maybe too small and there are concerns about traffic access through the village. *There is the option of more land in this location from the landowner should it*

be required. Traffic access is a potential issue via the village, but greater use of Lee Lane could alleviate some/most of the access traffic

3.7. All sites

- Select one site and then put it to a village wide vote *This is one of several possible ways forward under consideration by your Parish Council.*
- Not against Development if the need is proven and done sympathetically and without undue impact on the environment *Thank you for your positive input. See 3.1 for answers on proven need and clearly the design would need to blend in with our existing infrastructure.*

3.8. Other comments

- The village is largely unaware of the proposals under consideration *The PC make monthly reports to both the Parish Mag (which goes to 50%+ of our community), the Village web site and noticeboards. Sometime in the future, this report will go through every letter box - not sure we can do any more.*
- When Great Mead (Hastoe at bottom of Briton Street) was built, were any records kept of the need for Social Housing before they were built and how many of these houses were finally occupied by local people? *We have no definitive records, but the allocation*

process has changed dramatically since to ensure “locals” in most need is a priority. All 13 houses in Christow went to locals.

- This whole project could cause a lot of conflict in the village (for or against) *This is a regrettable possibility and advise and support will be accessed to try and avoid it happening. It will not be possible to please everyone.*
- If people don't respond to surveys it disenfranchises the silent majority
True, but that is a personal choice. If one does not engage, one has to accept the views of those that have. It is no different in National Elections. The current Government was not elected by a majority of the whole population, just a majority of those that voted.
- There are many reasons why people did not/could not express a view (via the survey?) *We would be interested to hear those reasons so we can learn lessons about future community wide communication – also see above.*
- This issue will only be resolved by asking every resident a specific y/n question *This is certainly an option*
- One Parish Councillor has suggested the village is in danger of dying, no children, no school, no shop etc. School numbers have fluctuated over the last 30 years and many come from outside our

village. *Dunsford is classified as a Rural Settlement within the National Park. Like many similar communities it is in danger of becoming “a nice place to retire”. House prices are already beyond affordable by many local people, so long term strategic action is needed to avoid Dunsford (and similar Settlements) evolving into a community dominated by affluent retirees.*

- *What is the approval process for this project? Can the villagers stop it? The Dartmoor NPA are the Planning Authority for Dunsford and ultimately, they have the final say but before it gets to that stage the PC want to engage the community so that everyone has the opportunity to comment. Can the villagers stop it? Yes, if the majority are against it.*
- *Having a Public Meeting to decide a way forward is not a good idea. Dominant voices will prevail not the silent majority. Yes, this is a concern so other methods of consultation and obtaining public input are being considered that will overcome the “dominant voice” issues*

The Council hope the replies to concerns raised above are clear and that this booklet has been helpful in understanding the current situation with this research.

We welcome any comments on this booklet and/or the project by email, until such time as we can meet as a community to discuss further.

Thank you.