
Briefing Note: Westonzoyland Parish Council – 10th October 2016 – Issue 2

AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECT

Prepared by: Esther Carter Housing Project Development Officer

Email: esther.carter@sedgemoor.gov.uk Tel: 01278 435599

The purpose of this session

To update the Parish Council on the findings of their preferred parcels of land. Look at the next steps in moving forward with delivering much needed affordable housing in Westonzoyland.

Housing Need in Westonzoyland

The results of the Housing Need Survey (HNS) April 2016 have been finalised and sent to the Parish Council. The summary of the HNS found there are twenty (20) households requiring rented affordable housing and four (4) households requiring some form of affordable home ownership in Westonzoyland, a summary of the results of the survey are listed below;

Rented (20 homes)

8 x 1 bed flat/house, 6 x 2 bed house, 4 x 3 bed house, 2 x 4 bed house

Home ownership (4 homes)

2 x 1 bed flat/house, 1 x 2 bed house, 1 x 3 bed house

The Affordable Housing project stages

1. ~~Understanding the need for affordable housing.~~ Completed
2. Finding and securing a suitable site for the new affordable housing.
3. Designing and agreeing a housing project.
4. Securing funding and planning permission.
5. Construction phase.
6. Occupation stage.

Stage 1: Defining Affordable Housing

Affordable housing allows **LOCAL PEOPLE** to access a **suitable home**, at a **price they can afford**, where they were **born, grew-up, require support, work or have social networks in**.

Affordable housing is best described as housing provided at prices below the prevailing market value to people who are unable to find a suitable home on the open market (primarily due to its price).

Affordable housing can be provided on rental or homeownership basis.

Affordable housing can be provided by the public sector (the Council and-or housing associations) or the private sector (volume house builders and private landlords) or by the community (CLT etc.).

Stage 2, Finding and securing a suitable site for the new affordable housing

Following the Parish Council meeting on 27th June 2016 Westonzoyland Parish Council produced a list of sites that they would like SDC to investigate for the potential of providing affordable housing.

To achieve any affordable housing the potential developable sites will have to go through an assessment criterion, there are three stages which include **availability**, **suitability** and **achievability**

Assessment Criteria 1: Site Availability for Housing

A site is considered available for development, when, on the best information available, there is confidence that there are no legal or ownership problems, such as multiple ownerships, ransom strips, tenancies or operational requirements of landowners. The key question asked under this assessment is a simple one. Does the land owner wish to dispose of their land to support the provision of affordable housing?

Assessment Criteria 2: Site Suitability for Housing

Factors such as planning policy restrictions and limitations (designations, protected areas, existing planning policy and corporate, or community strategy policy), any physical problems or limitations (access, infrastructure, ground conditions, flood risk, hazardous risks, pollution or contamination), any potential Impacts (upon landscape features and conservation) and any environmental conditions

Assessment Criteria 3: Site Achievability for Housing

A site is considered achievable for development where there is a reasonable prospect that housing will be developed on the site at a particular point in time. This is essentially is a judgement about the economic viability of a site, and the financial capacity of the affordable housing provider to actually build the new homes.

The assessment process will also include each of the chosen sites being interrogated by Sedgemoor's Internal Development Group team. This is a fortnightly meeting with Planners, Landscape Officer, Planning Policy and Conservation Officer to provide without prejudice opinion on each site.

SDC Enabling Officers have contacted the owners of the sites chosen and have taken them to the Internal Development Group to assess any development issues which may occur in respect of residential development.

Site H291 – SDC contacted the owner's agent of this site and have had a site visit with them. The site is available and has an initial site layout designed. The site could deliver circa 40 homes; this would see 16 affordable homes on site which equates to 40% of the development. SDC's Internal Development Group (IDG) has looked at the site with the following comments.

- The site is suitable for development as it sits adjacent to the development boundary and could be considered under Planning Policy D7 or P4.
- The IDG felt that the numbers and layout was favourable.
- The Conservation Officer felt that the landscaping to the north/north east of the site was in keeping with the boundary of the registered Battlefield.
- The IDG felt that the site would pass the sequential test.

Site H043 – The owners of this site have had an initial site layout drawn up which could deliver circa 35 homes this would see 14 affordable homes on site which equates to 40% of the development. SDC's IDG has looked at the site with the following comments.

- The site is suitable for development as it sits adjacent to the development boundary and could be considered under Planning Policy D7 or P4.
- The IDG felt that the numbers and layout was favourable.
- The IDG felt that more information would need to be provided in respect of the access.
- The IDG felt that this site would pass the sequential test.

Site H019 – SDC have not pursued the owners of this site due to the small scale of development that could be achieved. If the parish council would still like us to look at this site please let us know.

Site H144 – The parish council have suggested that this site should be a Council lead scheme, I am unsure what this means and await further explanation.

Planning Policies

Development of land that sits outside the current (and proposed) Westonzoyland development boundary would not ordinarily be permitted. However there are two exception Policies within the current SDC Core Strategy these are set out below.

SDC Core Strategy Policy D7 allows development by exception outside the development boundary. Any use of this policy would only facilitate the delivery of affordable housing. The building of affordable housing requires some form of subsidy support in order to make the homes affordable. Gap funding has in the past almost always been provided by the public sector (central or local government). The government closed bidding to the 2015-20 AHP (Affordable Housing Programme) to support projects providing affordable rented accommodation. Therefore this policy is not considered appropriate or helpful in bringing forward new affordable housing at this time

SDC Core Strategy Policy P4 allows development by exception outside the development boundary. This policy would see the development of both affordable housing market homes. The building of affordable housing will require some form of subsidy support in order to make the homes affordable. The delivery of the affordable homes is not reliant on the provision of public sector funds (central or local government). This policy would allow the development of land outside the settlement boundary to provide a mix of affordable and open market homes. The open market homes would provide the necessary gap funding towards the affordable homes. SDC would typically expect to see a minimum 40% of the new homes to be affordable, with the remaining 60% of the homes built for outright sale. Some of the profits from the sale of these homes would be recycled directly into the provision of the new affordable homes, with the developer being allowed to take a reasonable profit from the project.

Indicative site layout

H291 – Liney Road has an indicative layout see below for information. The land owner has requested an audience with the parish council to discuss the next steps and possibly a public consultation.



H048 – Main Road also has an indicative layout which is attached for information. The owners of this site are happy for the site to be included in the public consultation.



The Next Step

The two sites which have an indicative layout above will provide circa 30 affordable homes for those in need of affordable housing with a local connection to Westonzoyland. SDC Enablers will work with the owner and agent of the two sites if that is the parish council’s preference.

The next step is for SDC to help the Parish Council work towards a public consultation so that the community will be given the opportunity to understand the local housing need and look at the possibility of developing homes in Westonzoyland.

SDC will continue work with the land owner and agent and will ensure that the parish council is kept up to date with information.

