

COPYTHORNE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

TUESDAY 25th OCTOBER 2016

ITEM NO: 10 – AFFORDABLE HOUSING

An update report from the Copythorne Parish Council Affordable Housing Working Group (AHWG): Recommendation to re-start the investigation and consultation process into the potential for Affordable Housing in Copythorne

Purpose:

This paper sets out a summary of the latest development work by the Affordable Housing Working Group. The report also makes a recommendation that, in the light of current developments locally and at national Government level, the process of investigation and consultation into the potential for Affordable Housing provision in the Parish is re-started

The Previous Work Programme and Consultation

As a result of the issues at that time identified within the new Housing Bill and their potential to impact negatively on our agreed criteria for any potential development, the Parish Council agreed, at its meeting on 22nd March 2016, to halt our process of investigation and consultation into Affordable Housing until we had clarity on the final Housing Act content.

The Housing Act is now, since June 2016, on the statute book and various possible clauses which could have impacted on our agreed criteria, were removed prior to the Act becoming law. Our key criteria, agreed at the meetings of the Council in September and October 2014, were as follows:

- People with a strong local connection to the parish would always be given first priority for occupation
- A section 106 Agreement would be put in place to ensure that the housing units remained affordable in perpetuity (Right to Buy would not apply)
- No shared ownership units to be provided – all units to be for rental only
- A maximum of 15 units in total, to be spread over at least two independent sites
- Properties to be let on fixed term agreements
- No approach to be made to Copythorne regarding any further affordable housing for at least ten years.

Recent Developments

Since the Housing Act became law, there has been a resurgence of activity nationally by the various groups involved as the factual information regarding what can and cannot be achieved have become clear.

As a part of this, a meeting was convened by HARA in association with New Forest District Council and the support of English Rural Housing Association (ERHA) and New Forest Housing Association (NFHA) in Brockenhurst for members of Parish Council. This meeting was attended by Joe Reilly, Sarah Coombs and Simon Lucas, the members of the Copythorne Parish Council AHWG. At this meeting, a discussion took place regarding the fact that future potential developments which would incorporate our criteria would still be possible, providing the funding requirements could be met. At this meeting, the AHWG members were also able to

engage with the representatives from ERHA and NFHA and seek their support, were we to progress any re-start of our investigation and consultation process, to which, they agreed.

As a consequence, the AHWG met with representatives of HARAHA, ERHA and NFHA on 14th September 2016, to explore what would be possible in terms of original investigation and consultation process combined with our newly affirmed understanding of what may or may not be possible within the parameters of the Housing Act.

It was confirmed that our criteria could stand as agreed and that they could be applied to any development. (However, it should be noted here, that, as the funding arrangements have now changed as a result of Central Government cuts, any new Affordable Housing development would have to be self-funded via some form of cross-funding arrangements. The exact nature and ramifications of this will be the subject of the next report, once the AHWG have had a chance to obtain more information regarding this issue. However, ERHA explained that this was now the model for any new projects and, therefore, very clear guidance will be given in the near future).

Outcome of Discussions and Considerations of the Issues

At the end of the meeting on the 14th September, some conditions were set out by the AHWG as to the mechanism for any re-start of the investigation and consultation process. These were:

1. That the Parish Council was clearly and firmly in the lead role via the AHWG and would maintain complete control of the process;
2. That the AHWG was the sole vehicle for communications between the Parish Council and the partners represented at the 14th September meeting;
3. That the AHWG would create a report to gain agreement of the Parish Council for the re-start of the process prior to any work being undertaken;
4. That the Parish Council would have an expectation that the three agencies (HARAHA; ERHA and NFHA) would work together to support the Parish Council in its work on this issue;
5. That the process would involve a re-start from the initial publication of information and a re-run of the 'event' held in January 2016, and
6. That the AHWG would, if approval to re-start is obtained, then define and publish the programme for the process and also the nature of any 'events'.

These were all agreed.

Therefore, in the light of the information now available, the Copythorne Parish Council AHWG is recommending a re-start to the investigation and consultation process. This report seeks approval for that re-start. Further reports will be made to the Council in October and November regarding the detail of the process to be adopted and also clarification on areas such as the funding arrangements.

Recommendation

1. That the Parish Council agree in principle to a re-start of the investigation and consultation process into the potential for Affordable Housing to be developed in the Parish area, based on the overarching criteria previously agreed in September / October 2014, and
2. The Parish Council authorises the AHWG to proceed with more detailed planning and development work for the re-started programme, to be reported to near future Council meetings.