

COPYTHORNE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING – TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 14TH 2021

Item 12. Statement on Affordable Housing within the Parish

I am aware that there has been recent speculation about the possibility of a potential Affordable Housing Development within the Parish.

In connection with this the following article appeared in the August 2021 edition of the Parish Newsletter:-

Affordable Housing: An update from David Rigby, Clerk to Copythorne Parish Council:

“Following a discussion at the Council meeting on 13th April 2021 regarding the above topic I have been in contact with English Rural Housing Association (“ERHA”) on a monthly basis to seek updates on their activities within the Parish and in particular in relation to the land previously identified as a potential “Rural Exception Site” behind The Haywain.

The latest response received at the end of June 2021 was to advise me that ERHA have been discussing with HCC Highways (as the Highway Authority) a possible access point onto the land behind The Haywain from New Inn Road. ERHA expect this to enable their architects to prepare a layout as part of any preapplication advice submission to the New Forest National Park Authority (“NFNPA”).

I have also been advised that ERHA trust this will allow the NFNPA to offer advice that will be helpful to them in preparing drawings that may form part of a planning application that they may in time submit to the NFNPA. Further updates will be advised as and when received.”

Since that article was written, ERHA have advised me that they have held discussions with the Planning Team at the NFNPA to help them (ERHA) develop a proposal that might meet the NFNPA’s criteria for an Affordable Housing development as laid out in the NFNPA Local Plan 2016-2036 (“the Local Plan”). **No planning application has been submitted to the NFNPA (the Local Planning Authority) as at the date of this statement. It follows therefore that no planning application has been seen by the Parish Council either.**

Those residents of the parish who have been following the discussions about Affordable Housing will be aware that there are specific planning policies within the Local Plan that sets the criteria for when such development might be permitted by the NFNPA. In the case of the Parish of Copythorne the relevant policy is known as “SP28: Rural Exception sites”. This policy states the following:-

“Small-scale affordable housing developments may be permitted as “exceptions” on sites in or adjoining villages to meet the identified needs of local people in these areas. Proposals for exception sites should:

- a) meet a particular local need that cannot be accommodated in any other way***
- b) be subject to a planning obligation under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) to ensure that the dwellings provide for low-cost housing for local needs in perpetuity***
- c) be capable of management by an appropriate body, for example a Registered Provider, the Authority, or a community land trust or similar accredited local organisation***
- d) be located where there are appropriate local services (e.g. shops, schools and public transport).***

100% of the housing on rural exception sites will be affordable.”

Any planning application for an Affordable Housing development in the Parish of Copythorne will be considered by the NFNPA (as the local Planning Authority) against this policy.

There has been some comment about any new development within close proximity to the boundary of the New Forest National Park. This subject is covered in Chapter 5 of the Local Plan which includes a number of specific planning policies to take account of such concerns.

The first of these is known as “SP5: Nature conservation sites of international importance”.

It reads as follows:-

“All development must comply with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Development which may affect the integrity of an internationally important site for nature conservation will not be permitted unless there are imperative reasons of overriding public interest for the development, and there are no alternatives. If this is the case, the Authority will require compensatory measures to ensure the overall coherence of the designated site.

Development may satisfy the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations if sufficient and effective measures are put in place to avoid or fully mitigate any likely significant adverse effects of the proposal (either individually or in combination with other plans and projects) through its lifetime on the designated sites. A contribution to the Authority’s Habitat Mitigation Scheme and/or the Solent Recreation Mitigation Partnership’s Scheme will enable developers to ensure that mitigation measures are secured for the recreational impacts of their development. The type of development and situations where recreational impacts can be mitigated are described in the Authority’s Habitat Mitigation Scheme and the Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy Explanatory Note.

Avoidance or mitigation may not be possible in some cases due to the impacts, scale, type, or proximity of the proposed development in relation to the designated site, and so the Authority will assess each case on its merits.”

Another specific planning policy is “SP6: The natural environment” which says this:-

Proposals should protect, maintain and enhance nationally, regionally and locally important sites and features of the natural environment, including habitats and species of biodiversity importance, geological features and the water environment.

Development which is likely to have an adverse effect on a Site of Special Scientific Interest (either individually or in combination with other developments) will not be permitted. Only where the benefits of the development clearly outweigh both the impacts on the special interest features of the SSSI and on the broader national network of SSSIs will an exception be considered.

Development proposals which adversely affect locally designated sites, priority habitats and species populations, protected species or those identified of importance by national or local biodiversity plans will be refused unless the Authority is satisfied that:

- a) it has been demonstrated that suitable measures for mitigating adverse effects will be provided and maintained in order to achieve a net gain in biodiversity value; and***
- b) there are no alternative solutions; and***
- c) there are overriding reasons which outweigh the harm.***

In cases where it is not possible to fully avoid or mitigate for the loss of biodiversity interests resulting from a development, appropriate compensation will be secured for any residual losses via on or off-site compensation measures. The latter may include the provision of compensatory habitats elsewhere.

In addition, opportunities to enhance ecological or geological assets and the water environment should be maximised, particularly in line with the Authority’s ‘Action for Biodiversity’. Applicants will be required to demonstrate the impacts of their proposal on biodiversity, and for certain types of Development by submission of an Ecological Appraisal, which should outline the mitigation and enhancement measures needed to achieve a net gain in biodiversity.”

There are a number of other policies within the Local Plan that a developer would need to consider and full details of the Local Plan can be found via the following hyperlink:-

<https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/planning/local-plan/>

In conclusion I make the following remarks:-

Copythorne Parish Council does not determine planning applications. Any applications submitted for the land to the rear of The Haywain would be determined by the NFNPA (as Local Planning Authority).

The Parish Council is notified when planning applications are submitted and has the ability to make comments (in favour or against).

Members of the public are also able to submit comments to the NFNPA (again in favour or against).

ERHA have advised me that if, after their preliminary investigations have been concluded, they believe that there is merit in them submitting a planning application to the NFNPA for the site at the rear of The Haywain then, **PRIOR**, to doing so they will share their proposals with the Parish Council and the residents of the Parish. This sharing is expected to take the form of a public exhibition of the plans (probably at the Parish Hall) which will be publicised by the Parish Council via as many channels as possible.

DAVID RIGBY
Clerk to Copythorne Parish Council
September 3rd 2021