

Minutes of West Alvington Parish Council Extra -Ordinary Meeting held on  
Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> July 2013:

The Parish Council met in the Village Hall at 7.00pm to discuss the only item on the Agenda, the Homefield Development Proposal. There was an attendance of all Parish Councillors. Mr & Mrs Horton the Landowners, Mr A. Lethbridge the Architect and Parishoners.

Apologies for absence: None, all Councillors present.

Open Forum: The Chairman then opened the Open Forum, first he explained that there would be a 20 minute opportunity for discussion, after that the Open Forum would be closed and the Parish Council would then look at the proposal and discuss the results of the open day drop in session. The first Parishoner then said that she and others were strongly against the development for several reasons, the privacy issue, the public footpath is inadequate, both accesses are bad, there would be more children for the KCC which is already full, which means they would have to go elsewhere. Mr J. Stevenson then spoke on behalf of the Parishoners who are against the proposal. He stated that the Parish Council had voted against the K5 proposal over concerns to the infrastructure and that it would not meet the housing need., the road through the Village would share the same problems and building in a prime location such as Homefield would mean that even the shared ownership would not be affordable and the open market would definitely not be affordable. They felt it should be rejected as unsuitable. There were also environmental issues. The views from the footpath would be obliterated along with the lane views to the estuary. It is in an AONB area and conservation area views will be lost. There are also significant traffic issues. The site access is not sustainable for public transport, cycling etc. pushchairs, it will be cars that are mainly used. He asked the Council to put personal aspirations aside and consider the proposal for the whole community.

Another parishoner commented that the drawings show the affordable close to the existing houses and the luxury down the field, and couldn't they all be pushed further down the field? It was also commented that the date of the presentation day was changed without notice and that a lot of people were not even aware that it was on.

Mr A Lethbridge – the Architect refuted this and said that the date had not been changed, flyers had been distributed a week before the meeting by members of the Parish Council. He said that everyone here tonight had seen the presentation and the explanatory notes and he believed he didnt need to go over it all again tonight. The drawings reflected the response to policies and the aspirations of SHDC, the numbers were as a result of the local needs survey. The mix and size are a result of what they have been asked to provide. The results of the drop in were circulated to the Parish Council and SHDC. There were 62 people in favour, 22 against and 16 had no particular view. 28 papers were taken away from the drop in session, some had been returned others hadn't. There were also comments made by email, although some of these were from the same people who had already commented at the drop in session. All proper procedures had been followed.

Another parishoner felt that the drop in response form was not clear and they had been pushed into making a decision based on “do you agree with what we are proposing, and not are we for the site” Mr Lethbridge said the form was clear about the potential development proposal and that it stated in favour, against or no view. The statement that forms were not allowed to be taken from the drop in session was also untrue as many were taken. The idea is now to refine a scheme with everyone in conjunction along with all authorities and all comments should be considered. Another parishoner said that it was originally stated that if the “whole village was not in favour it wouldn't go ahead” and that TRAND had proposed a referendum. It was asked what was the definition of an affordable home, something that has been discussed on many occasions before.

At this point exchanges became a bit heated and cross conversations were taking place across the

room with several people trying to speak at once. The 20 minutes were up and Chairman closed the Open Forum much to the annoyance of some of the Parishoners present. Mr J. Stevenson expressed his disappointment that the Open Forum was not longer for more discussion.

Declarations of interest: At this point the Chairman declared an interest at Parish level as he is on the Development Control Committee at SHDC. Mrs M. Kitt declared a personal interest as her granddaughter would like an affordable property but has already been told by the housing officers at SHDC the that she would not be eligible as she doesn't meet the criteria as she is not in need.) Mrs L. Gritton also declared a personal interest for the same reason, as it is her sister. At this point Mr J. Stevenson left the hall rather angrily, to a round of applause from the parishoners on whose behalf he had spoken. Mrs S. Jones asked whether he should be able to stay. The Chairman too left the hall, followed by a lot of very angry parishoners.

Mrs M. Kitt in her capacity of Vice Chairman took over the rest of the meeting. ( The Chairman had sought guidance from the Monitoring Officer as to whether or not this was an acceptable situation as she had declared a personal interest and it was supported by the rest of the Parish Council) She explained that the results of the drop in session had been seen by the Parish Council prior to the meeting, some unfortunately had been duplicated by some parishoners putting different addresses etc. Mrs L. Gritton expressed her disappointment at some people not conducting themselves properly but could also understand their annoyance at a 20 minute time slot in the Open Forum and she also felt that perhaps it was not long enough. Although that being said it was made clear at the beginning of the meeting. It was suggested that perhaps questions for the Open Forum session should be put forward

prior to meetings. Mrs A. Smith also felt that the 20 minute stipulation doesnt work but matters need to be conducted in an adult way. Again Mrs L. Gritton sympathised with the parishoners frustrations. Mrs G. Rossetti said that it was the vocal majority who live along Phoenix Place who had a “nimby” attitude and wherever in the Village you wanted to put housing you would be met with a similar vocal reaction, nobody likes change in any form and that you cannot buy a view, (loss of view was one of the concerns of the residents affected.) One gentleman disagreed, Mrs Rossetti said that “in law you are not guaranteed a view.” Another Parishoner also commented that in our lifetimes there have been big changes to the area, big developments being built in Kingsbridge and also housing in West Alvington, is this not just natural progression and filling the requirements of people needing homes. Mrs M. Kitt stressed that we must take into consideration the rules and read from the Material Planning Considerations leaflet. One lady was concerned about the privacy aspect, and another gentleman suggested that there could be other choices, such as moving the whole development down 12ft so causing less invasion of privacy. Mrs S. Jones questioned whether there should be more public discussion. Mrs A. Smith asked Mr Lethbridge why the plans showed the houses so far up. Mr Lethbridge responded by saying that the plot of land was looked at and to get as much in a small parcel of land as possible this was how the plans had come about. He also explained that the planning officers will decide on the final layout etc. this is only the first stage in the process. Wherever they may be sited there could be objections, if not from the people above then the people on the side! Mrs M. Kitt said that on one of the objection forms someone had stated they “didn't want riff raff living near me” This was also reiterated by another gentleman saying “do we want these sort of people here?” Mrs Horton explained that over the years they have been very tolerant with people walking their dogs etc over their land and they will deal with any such issues if and when they arise. Mr Lethbridge also explained that there is a policy within the South Hams which states that the homes will first go to people on the housing list that are from the immediate area or who have connections to the area and not from any other parts. Devon County Councillor Mr Rufus Gilbert explained that it worked as follows The properties for rental and shared equity would be put to parish first, if there should for some reason be no takers, it would then be extended to residents in Kingsbridge and Malborough, if after this time there were still no takers which would be highly unlikely then it would be offered to

a wider radius, until such times as the houses are filled. Mrs S. Jones asked whether this would remain the case. Mr Gilbert said that should those people moved on the same principle would apply again. He also explained that the community would benefit from a sum of money from a section 106 agreement which the Parish Council will be consulted on and how this could be spent in the community. He reiterated that the plans at present are just conceptual plans and the community has been asked to think about it. He understood it is a very immotive issue , but due to the ever increasing popular demand for housing the Government policy is that we all have to share the burden, and this is happening all over the South Hams.

He said that the landowners were not obliged to have conceptual plans and were perfectly within the law to just go ahead privately with a planning application. There is a 50% guideline for the affordable aspect in a development but it is negotiable, in some cases only 12% have been allocated. So any figure above 35% is very good. **“The unaffordable pays for the affordable “** and this is something we have to remember. That same question was again raised “what is affordable?” Mrs M. Kitt asked the parishioners present “So are you saying that on the figures given that the village doesn't want it, clearly they do?” Mr D. Horton, landowner said that the drop in session was open for any member of the parish and there had been a good turn out. He felt that negative feeling was coming from a small minority. He felt sure that there are ways to overcome their some of their issues. He said it had been said to him by one gentleman that they “didn't want affordable houses, but if they were to build more expensive houses it would enhance their properties.!”

DCC Mr Gilbert said that in planning terms the landowners have had their answer with 65.1% of the community for a development.

Mrs M. Kitt formally closed the meeting to the public. At which point the public left the village hall.

The Councillors continued their discussion with DCC Mr Gilbert present. They looked at the plans and the Material Planning Consideration guidelines as well as the overwhelming support from the public responses to the drop in session. Taking all this into consideration they voted to support the proposal. The following statement was made “ West Alvington Parish Council are in principle comfortable with the site being developed, this decision was reached after listening to the views of the community, over 65% of whom are in favour of a development”

It was proposed by Mrs G. Rossetti, seconded by Mrs L. Gritton, all in favour, it was agreed unanimously.

The meeting closed at 8.35pm.