

Extracts from the Minutes of Meetings held on 6th June 2018 and 4th July 2018

4538 – Affordable Housing – Proposed Development in Westcombe: The Chairman summarised the background to the proposed development – the high price of housing in Batcombe and the Housing Needs Survey in 2016 that had shown a need for additional affordable housing – and outlined the rules he would conduct the meeting by. The potential developer of the site, Mr Pat Bridgeman, stated that he ran a small private building company that had been trading for 30 years and that this site suited how they worked. They had recently developed a similar site for affordable housing in Butleigh. He noted that Mendip Housing decided who could live there and these had to be local people.

Nigel Humphreys asked whether the Housing Needs Survey undertaken in 2016 was still valid. Anne Page noted that with the Ash Tree Cottages the Survey took place some years before the houses were built and the District Councillor confirmed that the current Survey would be considered valid and the Parish Council would not get funding to do another one.

Richard Calver stated that he employed 40-50 people at Westcombe Dairy and was concerned that building the houses close to the rear of the cheese factory would result in complaints about noise and disruption from those living in the houses.

Peter Glaisher asked if the site was offered before the Housing Needs Survey was undertaken. The Chairman replied that the Parish Council were aware of land being offered for affordable housing but not its precise location. Peter Glaisher also asked if alternative sites had been sought and the District Councillor stated that local landowners were asked but no other sites were offered. Nigel Humphreys stated that he knew of a landowner willing to offer land who had not been approached. The Chairman asked him to provide the Clerk with details of this landowner and the land being offered.

Christine Gore felt that there were no amenities or transport in Westcombe to provide for additional housing. Asked why his proposal was for six houses Mr Bridgeman stated that the number was up for discussion. It was noted that the Housing Needs Survey had revealed eight households with a need for affordable housing.

Diana Carrington asked where the septic tank would go and the District Councillor noted that details such as drainage would be dealt with in the formal planning application.

Sheena Pool stated that not everyone was against the proposed housing. Mary La Trobe Bateman noted that Batcombe was a mixed community which she valued and was concerned that this could be lost. She expressed her thanks to Anne Page for helping to provide the Ash Tree Cottages in Batcombe.

Olivia Spenser asked if this was simply a proposal by Mr Bridgeman as the developer of the site and whether there were any other affordable housing proposals e.g. from a housing association.

Harriet Graham was in favour of affordable housing but was concerned about water runoff into the listed grotto at Westcombe Stables. Frances Graham felt two houses would be better than six.

The District Councillor noted that the conditions on affordable housing were strictly controlled. They could not be sold or the rent raised by more than a small amount each year. Mr Bridgeman noted that the land was gifted and his company funded the housing with no Government funding. He added that the specifications on affordable housing were higher than those on private housing and he would be looking to a 20-year return on the houses.

The Chairman then asked Parish Councillors for their comments. Mary Comley was concerned at the proposed layout of the site and felt the shared areas were likely to create conflict and didn't like the distance from the car park to the houses. Wiff Cox noted that there were shared areas at Ash Tree Cottages and that the residents there didn't have any problems. Justin Witcombe noted that the Housing Needs Survey had shown a need for eight affordable homes and that there was the potential

for employees of the cheese factory to be housed there. Ian Sage noted that there was a strong need for affordable housing and was aware of additional housing needs that had not been included in the Housing Needs Survey. Mr Bridgeman noted that they had recently completed a similar site at Butleigh where a Housing Needs Survey had shown a need for seven affordable homes, but 28 people from the village had applied to be housed in the homes they had built. Jayne Cox noted that people were worried about Ash Tree Cottages before that was built but that had worked well.

The Chairman concluded by stating that there was strong support for the development in some form, while there were also some clear concerns about this particular site expressed by some in the room. The Parish Council had sought alternative sites but none had been offered, although the alternative site mentioned earlier would be looked into. He suggested that Councillors met with Mr Bridgeman to discuss further the points made at this meeting. Most members of the public left the meeting at this point.

4557 – Affordable Housing – Proposed Development in Westcombe: John Sommer left the room for this item. The Chairman reported on an informal meeting of himself and Councillors Mary Comley, Jayne Cox, Wiff Cox and Justin Witcombe with the potential developer Mr Bridgeman and his agent Mr Wright to discuss issues raised at the last Parish Council meeting. The Chairman read a prepared statement noting that they had discussed details of the proposed development with Mr Bridgeman and Mr Wright. Various suggestions were made by the councillors present and reassurances were given by Mr Bridgeman that they would be given significant consideration. Mr Bridgeman renewed his commitment to Section 106 conditions being applied to the development. Further commitments were made in relation to the production of drainage and noise technical reports.

In response to Mr Glaisher's question at the previous meeting about the order of events, the Chairman noted that in April 2015 he had produced a four-year plan for the Parish Council - which included examining the feasibility of providing of additional affordable housing – and that this plan had been considered by the Parish Council on 3rd June 2015 (Minute 3928). It was subsequent to this meeting that the Parish Council were made aware of an offer of land for affordable housing.

The Chairman then read a statement produced by John Sommer to clarify his arrangements with Mr Bridgeman. He had offered the site on Westcombe Stables Lane to Mr Bridgeman as a developer for the provision of affordable housing. If Mr Bridgeman submitted a scheme and planning permission was granted the benefit to John Sommer would be a building plot for one freehold dwelling. The plot for this open market dwelling would be included in the overall design of the scheme, so in the case of the draft plan for six homes planning permission would be sought for five affordable homes and one freehold home. If planning permission were obtained the freehold of the affordable rented homes and the shared areas would be transferred to Mr Bridgeman for use as affordable housing in perpetuity secured through the District Council by a section 106 agreement. This was in accordance with the District Council Local Plan Policy DP12 for the provision of affordable housing at rural exception sites.

The Chairman informed Mr Glaisher that all the documents referred to above would be forwarded to him.