

COMBERTON PARISH COUNCIL
The minutes of the Parish Meeting held on 6 February 2008
in the Village Hall at 7.30pm

In attendance:

Nigel Blazeby –Planning Officer - SCDC	Simon Drummond-Hay - Northern
Martin Williams –Development Officer – SCDC	Affordable Homes(NAH)
John Finney – Development Control Engineer – CCC	89 Parishioners including Parish Council members
Clr Steve Harangozo – District Councillor	Mrs G Stoehr (Clerk)

Miss Chris Westgarth presided.

1. Apologies for absence

Anglian Water and also Clr Nick Wright, Planning Portfolio Holder SCDC who had mentioned a prejudicial interest as a relative is one of the land owners.

2. Introduction and format of meeting (Chairman)

The Chairman introduced all invited speakers and explained meeting procedure to all present.

3. Presentations

3.1 Housing Needs generally in Comberton –Martin Williams

Martin Williams – Development Officer outlined:

- What is the need?
The need is 57
- How is it assessed?
 1. It is assessed by a housing needs survey which Cambridgeshire Acre who are independent carried out.
 2. The District Council keeps records of housing applicants. There is 1170 for Comberton who have a housing desire and 57 that have a proven need.

A short questions and answers section followed in which the residents repeatedly challenged and questioned the District Council's assessment of 'need' and how it had been assessed to reach the figure given. The majority were obviously not persuaded by the explanation given by Mr Williams or that the need in Comberton was either this high or if could be demonstrated at all.

3.2 Planning Legislation – Nigel Blazeby

Nigel Blazeby, Planning Officer outlined:

- Comberton Planning Policies e.g. Group Villages – Development of 8 dwellings exceptionally 15 if it's a good use of Brownfield land
- Village Envelope, Village Framework & Greenbelt policies as defined in LDF plan.
- Exception Site – The District Council doesn't build housing; it is housing enabler. 50% of any development within the village envelope is affordable housing. Outside the village envelope will allow 100% affordable housing as an exception site to meet Comberton need.
- HG5 Policy

As an exception to the normal operation of the policies of this plan, planning permission may be granted for schemes of 100% affordable housing designed to meet identified local housing needs on small sites within or adjoining villages – Small site, what does this mean? 6-8 expected as part of mixed housing. Exception site policy is not referred to size of

development its subjective judgement. It's appropriate to the size and scale of the village.

- **The development proposal includes secure arrangements for ensuring that all the dwellings within the scheme provide affordable housing in perpetuity of those in housing needs** – Policy allows for development by private developer.
- **The number, size, design, mix and tenure of the dwellings are all confined to, and appropriate to, the strict extent of the identified local need** – As demonstrated by the housing needs survey
- **The site of the proposal is well related to the built up area of the settlement and the scale of the scheme is appropriate to the size and character of the village** – A more denser development would be most appropriate adjacent to a built up area of village such as that at The Valley where as a smaller less dense development would be suitable closer to say a rural lane.
- **The site is well related to facilities and services within the village** – Comberton meets this criteria.
- **The development does not damage the character of the village or the rural landscapes** – Subjective
- **In the case of sites within the Cambridge Green belt, before planning permission is granted for such development, the District Council will have to be assured that no alternative appropriate sites can be found for the scale and type of development proposed and that the scheme fulfils all the criteria set out in the Councils policies, including those relating to the impact of new development on local surroundings** – The District Council will have to be satisfied there is no other appropriate site. The Parish Council have put forward alternative sites.

A short questions and answers section followed in which residents requested further information on the meaning and application of the exceptions site policy and challenged the suitability of the proposed site off The Valley against the exception site criteria. The majority of residents did not agree that up to 20 dwellings was 'a small site.

3.3 County Council Perspective– John Finney

Access, traffic and parking requirements from the County Council's perspective were all discussed in the presentation. The parking problems were acknowledged and it was said to be self generated by the residents, there is no way of controlling this as they are not allowed to use yellow lines as this would make the problem worse. A shared-use surface was suggested. It has been successful in Cambridge where no vehicles have priority it is the pedestrian has the priority.

The parking reduces speed and accidents.

It was noted that the site will increase traffic by an estimated 2 per household.

A short questions and answers session followed in which residents expressed concern at the safety and speed reduction capabilities of the proposed shared-use surface and that this would not solve The Valley's parking problems.

3.4 What's in the pipeline and happening generally?

Mr Blazeby indicated that he was unable to discuss but that he was able to say that there is one site in the pipeline but is confidential, otherwise there is very little in surrounding villages.

Residents referred to rumours about a site opposite the village college.

3.5 Land off The Valley, Northern Affordable Homes' proposals – Simon Drummond-Hay

Mr Drummond-Hay outlined that a planning application consultation was held last year with mixed results, some supportive and others not. On the results of this a planning application was submitted and as NAH did not have the support of South Cambridgeshire District Council the application was withdrawn. Now they would like a questionnaire filled in so all information can go to South Cambridgeshire District Council and these will all be taken into account.

The new scheme is for houses to buy and to rent with rent being capped to between £60 and £70 per month. The houses for sale will be at 55% of the market value to make these affordable to those whose income is less than £25,000.

Houses attained dishonestly the person would lose their house for ever and receive no compensation.

The impact of the new houses has been made to a minimal in the new scheme.

4. Open Discussion & questions and answers (a brief summary)

Cllr Harangozo Steve Harangozo, District Councillor outlined that it was not as straightforward as it has been in the past. There was a need for the village to understand planning policy and the need in the past they had been a presumption that the Parish Council would have strong weight that is no longer the case. The Parish Council Chairman had put a question to the Scrutiny Committee and the planning spokespersons said "unlikely", when pressed the response was a "highly unlikely". David Rush at the District Council has made a statement about the change of policy now housing needs panel which includes planning officers' housing officers and Parish Council reps meets to consider application and need. This now does not exist.

Concern was expressed that the five out of seven houses in Barton Road on the Leach Homes development had been allocated to people without proven need because Comberton residents had not met the criteria.

Concern was also expressed that if the need was indeed 57 then this proposal off The Valley would only satisfy a part and further housing would be required and therefore this might be the first in a series of meetings to discuss other sites.

Concerns were expressed that the proposed development would bring additional traffic which would only exacerbate the situation. Concerns were expressed that emergency vehicles would not be able to access a dwelling in The Valley due to the parking problems. Mr Finney explained that fire vehicles require 2.75 metres which and travel at 3.1 speed and will push cars out-of-the-way access the fire.

The developer would have to make a financial contribution if planning permission was granted which would be secured via S106 Agreement to cover public open space and play equipment, education contribution, highway provision, as sight of this size would bring forward approximately 60 to £80,000 for the Parish Council for public open space and play equipment provision.

5. The Comberton residents' view

The Chairman put the following questions to the meeting to judge the feeling of the meeting:

- Question 1– In principle is this site suitable for the proposed 19 affordable houses?
Vote – 3 in favour, 2 abstentions, 84 against
- Question 2 – Is a phased development of initially 10 then an extra 5 dwellings being phased in after full evaluation acceptable?
Vote – 0 in favour, 6 abstentions, 83 against

6. What happens next?

Residents were urged by Mr Drummond-Hay's to fill out and return his forms so he could consider what to do next. The Parish Council will then respond to South Cambridgeshire District Council if and when the next application is submitted.

7. **Closure of meeting**

There was no further business and the meeting closed at 9.45 pm.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending.

SignedChairmandate
