

Minutes of Public Meeting held on Tuesday 15th November 2011

Following the publication by Tendring District Council (TDC) of a list of Possible Housing Sites in the District ahead of their new Local Development Plan for the next 15 – 20 years, the Parish Council arranged a Public Meeting to give residents the opportunity to understand the process and express their views on the proposed sites in our Parish.

84 Parishioners were present and the meeting began at 19:00 with Steve Huk, Parish Council Chairman, introducing Gary Guiver (GG), a planning officer from TDC.

GG began by explaining why a plan is needed and how people can express their views. The current Local Plan was designed to last until 2011 so a new one is now needed. Without an updated local plan, TDC would be in a vulnerable position as the presumption would be that any application received would be approved.

An initial draft had been produced last year with the majority of development being proposed for Clacton as new housing is needed to sustain the area with schools, shops, jobs etc with only selected development in other areas. Clacton residents have not been happy so Neil Stock, Leader of TDC, agreed to further consultation.

GG acknowledged that many residents did not receive a leaflet advising them of the Local Development Plan consultations and this is being taken up with the Royal Mail. Because of this, TDC have extended the deadline for comments until the end of November 2011.

When considering what developments were to be included in the new Local Development Plan, a number of questions had to be addressed.

- How many new homes will be required in the District in the next 15 – 20 years
- Where should these homes be located
- Within those locations, which specific sites should be developed
- What type of homes (size, cost, likely residents) should be built

GG explained that the consultation document included areas put forward by developers and landowners and were merely proposals at this stage and that the proposals for Great Oakley were relatively modest. He went on to outline the three individual proposed sites in our Parish.

Site 74 – Stones Green Road, Stones Green – The proposal would reinstate the village envelope and consists of four homes on the north side of Stones Green Road, effectively continuing the existing row. Proposal submitted by Robinson Hall (Land Agents) on behalf of the landowner; no major detail provided at this stage.

Site 75 – Land west of Beaumont Road, Gt. Oakley – Consisting of 20 homes, a new Village Hall and car park. Only half the total site would be developed under the proposed scheme, the remainder staying as agricultural land; the existing allotments are to stay where they are. Proposal submitted by Edward Gitting (Planning Agent) on behalf of the landowner; some layouts and detail provided.

Site 76 – Land north of Harwich Road, Gt. Oakley – Proposal divided into two sections, (A) consisting of 2 homes on the left of the existing farm access, (B) a further 15 to the right of the access. Proposal submitted by Robinson Hall (Land Agents) on behalf of the landowner; no major detail provided at this stage.

GG stated that his feeling was that he doesn't envisage Great Oakley taking a lot of development but there was a good case for small scale developments to sustain those facilities and amenities that we have.

Having outlined the background to the consultation and the specific proposals for our Parish, GG invited questions from those present.

A representative from the village Primary School Governor's stated they do not oppose development. They are concerned about future expansion of the school but commented that 40% of the schools pupils currently come from outside the Parish. They would be supportive of additional housing as long as it was affordable and appropriate. Consideration must also be given to any traffic implications.

A question was asked relating to the total number of homes needed in the District. GG said that based on technical evidence and consultation, somewhere between 6,000 and 8,000 homes over the next 15 - 20 years might be a sensible and justifiable level of growth. When questioned on how this figure had been arrived at, GG acknowledged that it was not an exact science and there was no scientific method for determining future demand for new housing, but that there was a need to provide a choice of developments across the district based on some educated assumptions about the future housing market. He has received responses from members of the public suggesting that the Colchester area would be a suitable location, whilst others said Clacton and there were also some positive comments for more development in rural areas. He envisaged that, in reality, the greatest pressure for growth would still be in the Clacton area.

Asked what the criteria was for selecting sites, GG said there were three things that TDC considered when looking at the proposals,

- Suitability – landscaping, wildlife, highway access, schools
- Availability – access to the site
- Deliverability – market demand

The lack of job opportunities in the area was raised and in light of this, was there any demand for new houses? GG said that as this is a 15 – 20 year plan one had to assume the economy would pick up at some time and then the plan would then guide development.

A Parishioner informed GG that she understood the train service to Liverpool Street was being reduced. GG stated that he was unaware of this so he will look into it.

A number of those present expressed support for a new Village Hall near to the school which would also help to alleviate the parking issues on the corner of School Road; it would also be closer to the Recreation Field providing convenient changing facilities for the village football club. Further comments were made to say that if there was going to be development in Gt. Oakley, then there needs to be something given back to the village. GG confirmed that TDC would work with the Parish Council to ensure the best for the village.

The issue of a lack of employment in the area was raised again and GG reiterated that the demand for homes must be job driven, however he pointed out that in Clacton the influx of retired people from outside the area drives the housing market and in turn this supports the local service economy. GG went on to highlight a potential risk to rural communities like ours; without new development, demand from people moving into the area with relatively high purchasing budgets could easily out price the children born in the village when they try to enter the housing market.

GG reminded those present that if residents have any views on proposed developments, either for or against, they need to be received by TDC by the end of November; furthermore, even if someone disagrees with one proposal, it is still not too late to propose or suggest a different area.

A Parishioner expressed the view that residents need to be kept up to date. In response, GG outlined the programme from here on. When all comments have been received, a revised plan will be produced and will be discussed and agreed by all 60 members of TDC. It is anticipated this will be published for further consultation in spring 2012, giving another opportunity for residents to express objection or support for individual sites. Once finalised, the plan will be presented to Central Government to determine if it is fit for purpose, probably towards the end of 2012 or early 2013. This will be followed by a formal Public Enquiry with the Inspectors decision expected towards the end of 2013 and the plan finally being approved in late 2013 or early 2014 to run for the following 15 years or so.

Asked how many homes had been built in the Parish in the past ten years, GG confirmed that there had been 26 built.

A specific question was raised regarding the density of the proposed houses on part B of Site 76 (Harwich Road). The proposal is for 15 homes whilst the existing development opposite (Partridge Close) has a density of 30 + in a similar area. Does this mean the houses proposed will be larger? GG responded to say that the area in question has no formal protection and the impact on the general landscape would need to be looked at. He also confirmed that there is no formal "Green Belt" in the Tendring District.

A question was raised regarding the location of any new Village Hall. There was a suggestion that if there was going to be a new hall, it should be built on the same side of the road as the football pitch. GG confirmed that as the agricultural land behind the Recreation Field is part of the Coastal Protection Zone, an alternative location would be better; there are no proposals to significantly revise the Coastal Protection Zone in this area.

At the close of the meeting GG reiterated that all proposed sites will be assessed on their individual merits and directed people towards the response forms, should they need one.

The Parish Council Chairman thanked Mr Guiver and all present for their attendance and closed the meeting at 20:20.