



**Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting
20th March 2020 at 3.00 pm
Appledore Methodist Church altered to Appledore Village Hall
being held outside in the car park attendees standing apart**

Present

Councillors: James Perkins (Chair), Helen Hennig, Lyndsey Jenkins, Chris Vane and Derek Winter.

In Attendance: Clerk Mary Philo.

Members of the Public: 2

1. Formalities

I) The council was quorate (LGA Act 1972 schedule 12, 12/28/45).

II) Apologies: Councillors Hiskey and Wilkinson (LGA Act 1972 schedule 12, 12).

III) Declarations of interest and dispensations: None (Code of Conduct).

Public Session (the meeting was adjourned at 3.05pm)

Following a request for a copy of the council's resilience plan, this was handed to the member of public. It was suggested that the resilience plan should include support for coronavirus.

A further member of the public commented that the council should withdraw from the contract to develop the council field because the current building market is unstable.

The meeting was reconvened at 3.07 pm.

2. RR/00997/AS: Land between Doctors Surgery and 80 The Street: Proposed development of 12 new two storey dwellings consisting of 6x3 bed properties and 6x4 bed properties with associated parking gardens and landscaping works including a proposed village planted linear park and pedestrian crossing. To agree a letter in support of planning application RR/00977/AS specifically with regard to the Planning Authority's requirement for affordable housing numbers.

The new planning officer had completed his review of the application and responded on various issues mainly regarding the affordable housing element of the proposed development. If the planning application goes ahead without any compromise or alternatives to the officer's comments, it was likely that the planning officer would recommend refusing approval. A report is attached outlining the various options available to resolve the officer's objections. Councillor Hennig thanked councillors for meeting to discuss the proposed parish council letter in response but queried the delay in advising councillors. The council had been advised of the options once they had been

investigated. It was expected that the application would be put to the Planning Committee in April and so a quicker response would have allowed the planning officer to respond and further discussion prior to the deadline for paperwork for the meeting. The proposed letter from the parish council would put forward the council's case which remained unchanged. A copy of the letter was attached. **It was resolved to agree that the proposed letter be sent to the Planning Officer.** Proposed by Councillor Winter and seconded Councillor Perkins. Councillor Hennig voted against as she only supported taking cash for the sale of the field.

4. Date of Next Meeting

Monday 6th April 2020, at 7.30pm, village hall. The meeting closed at 3.40pm

Report for letter to Planning Officer regarding the development of the council field and the planning authority's affordable housing requirements

There have been ongoing discussions since, principally around the social housing provision. The discussions have included Mick Burgess who has been very helpful and supports the proposed way forward.

In summary this is the primary issue:

The national percentage for affordable/social housing on new developments is 30%. However, within the new Ashford Local Plan that percentage is now 40% (if you recall the plan was adopted while the council's project was in development). Using 40% there should be 4.8 houses within the development classed as social/affordable. Our proposal has 4 houses owned by a social housing provider, with a 5th owned by the council.

There is a secondary issue:

After consideration of our Housing Needs Survey the Housing Officer has accepted our position that there is no requirement for any of the 4-bedroom houses to be within the Social Housing sector. However, he has not accepted our preferred position for all of the 3-bedroom properties to be affordable rent and instead wants 4 shared ownership properties and 1 affordable rent.

There are a number of potential solutions to the primary issue:

1. Martello pays Ashford a contribution covering the cost of building the 0.8 of a house at another location

Ashford have refused this option, stating that they want the full housing allowance to be built on this site. They have no legal basis for saying this and Martello believe that Ashford would ultimately lose if we were to fight them, however the process could result in a delay of over six months.

2. We add an additional house to the site

Ashford have refused this option as they say the site would then be over-developed. They would ultimately lose on this as the Ashford Local Plan specifies 16 houses on the site, so we would still be below that number. However, it is not a route the council

wants to pursue as the site would look more congested and the process would delay action by about a year as the council would have to go back to the start of the planning process again.

3. Martello sell us the 3-bedroom house they were planning to sell on the open market and add the house we were going to buy to the social housing group

Martello have said that this would make the development uneconomic and would not consider it. They would be able to walk away from the contract if we insisted on this option. Given current market uncertainty it would not be wise to test them on this.

4. The council stays with our current proposal and argue our case with the Planning Officer and the Planning Committee

The council's current proposal will deliver the fifth house in its ownership rather than that of a social housing provider. The Council would choose to let at an affordable rent with the income to be spent for the benefit of the village and wider community.

Although not secured within the Social Housing/affordable sector in the conventional sense the council house will provide much wider and ongoing social benefit for the whole community of Appledore than it would if owned by a social housing provider.

After discussions with Martello, Martello's Planning Consultant and Mick their view is that option 4 is the best way to proceed. It will deliver the best result for Appledore and is a position the council has come to over 4 years of discussion amongst ourselves and in consultation with residents.

The Planning Officer does not appear to be inclined to support the application on this basis and unless we can give him reason to change his position the application will go to the Planning Committee with the recommendation that it is refused.

Attached is a copy of a proposed letter to send to the Planning Officer. It has been drafted in consultation with Martello and their Planning Consultant. The aim of the letter is to give the Planning Officer the council's perspective on the proposal in the hope that the wider community benefit intended to be achieved through ownership of the house will convince him to recommend the application for approval. Whether or not it is successful, the letter will be published on the planning website and will publicly state the council's position. When the application goes before the Planning Committee, the council will refer to the letter to argue that the housing and community investment benefits our proposal will deliver for Appledore are substantially greater than those that would be delivered through a conventional housing allocation.

The secondary issue mentioned above is dealt with in paragraph 7 of the letter. The council is offering to accept the Housing Officer's proposal. It is not ideal, but winning on this point will be difficult and offering to compromise puts the council into a better position overall.

Proposed Letter to Planning Authority

Planning Application 19/00997/AS

Dear Mr. Davies

We are writing regarding the recent correspondence you have exchanged with our agent and architect, Rob Pollard of RX Architects relating to application 19/00997/AS. We would like to clarify our position and intent with regards to the social housing allocation and offering being proposed on the site.

It is our intention to offer 4 of the properties to an approved social housing provider, with a 5th property being retained by the Parish Council for the benefit of the village and local community. This approach has been discussed and presented to the village as a way to take the land, which is a village asset, and provide social housing for the community whilst retaining a single property within the ownership of the Parish Council and for the benefit of the village.

The social and economic benefits of this house will have a wide impact, as by retaining the property the Parish can select a local family in housing need to benefit from a local asset, owned by the village. It will allow us the freedom and flexibility to set an affordable rent but retain ownership of the property. This structure will provide a constant revenue stream for the Parish to contribute towards much needed improvements and projects within the village for years to come. It should be emphasised that the revenue will not be used to support the day-to-day functions of the Parish Council, these are covered by the precept, and will be solely directed to projects of benefit to the community.

The position outlined above is part of a package we have developed over a number of years in full consultation with our local community. In our opinion it fulfils the criteria of the planning policy in providing 40% affordable housing to this site, albeit with one of the properties not being secured in the conventional sense. Ashford policy requires the equivalent of 4.8 affordable houses to be provided, whereas we would effectively be providing 5 affordable houses within the site.

We hope that both you and Ashford Borough Council will support our position of providing affordable housing and additional ongoing investment in Appledore through this approach. As a Parish Council we cannot move from our commitment to deliver maximum benefit for our community from this site.

At this late stage in our application our only alternative for the scheme to remain viable would be to add an additional property to the site. However, our preference is for Ashford Borough Council to determine the application on the basis outlined above.

As a compromise position we could reconsider the council's preferred mix of affordable rent and affordable purchase on the 4 proposed properties. We would also be prepared to consider leasing the retained Parish Council house to the selected social housing provider, initially on a short-term basis.

We are disappointed with the delays and issues that the application has faced to date. We hope the above clarifies our position and that we can move forward with your support for a solution that genuinely fulfills the needs of the village and the wider community.

We look forward to hearing from you with a view to determining this application.

Kind regards