

Development in Broadhembury

The Parish Council responds to Questions

What's this all about?

For the last few years the Parish Council has worked on the basis that residents of the Parish wanted 'affordable' housing in Broadhembury. However at the PC meeting on 17th November 2015 that view was challenged by those at the meeting and through correspondence in the Parish magazine.

Why did you think 'affordable' housing was required?

Over the last three years we have surveyed people in the Parish. The first survey, designed and analysed by the PC went to each household in July 2013. The result was the first indication that affordable housing was needed. Until then we had operated on the basis of the old Parish Plan dated 2009 which did not favour housing at all. The 2013 survey changed our view. In response to question 11: 'are you in support of affordable housing within the parish?' , 74% said yes and 12% said no. In response to Q13: 'how many houses should be built?', 24% of people said 5 to 10 and 31% said over 10. We held a public meeting about the results on 1st December 2013. The results were published on our web site. This survey had an overall response rate of 46%

In November 2014 the Community Council of Devon designed and analysed a second survey on our behalf. This survey was created for all the Parishes in the Blackdown Hills Parish network, and, unlike the first went to all people on the Electoral Roll. It was about our Neighbourhood planning process. Q13 asked: 'how many homes over the next 15 years do you think should be created in our parish to meet our housing needs?' Most people said more than 11. In response to the question; 'where do you think these should be?' Most said Broadhembury, closely followed by 'spread around the Parish', then Dulford followed by Luton and Kerswell. The results were published on the PC web site. This survey had an overall response rate of almost 40%.

Finally at the same time, The Community Council of Devon carried out their own survey to establish how many families met EDDC's criteria for affordable housing. The PC had no influence over this survey nor did we see the detailed results because of sensitive personal information. We only know that 5 families definitely and probably more meet the criteria for affordable housing. The summary report is published on our website

That's fine but this is a need for the whole Parish. Why Broadhembury?

Before all this, in 2012 EDDC called for sites to be put forward for housing. They called this the SHLAA (strategic housing land availability assessment) process. The PC was asked to judge these sites using EDDC criteria. We considered five sites .Only one met the criteria. We held a public meeting about this on 1st October 2013. All landowners were invited and EDDC Planning officers were

also present. Since all development requires an element of affordable housing, and it was our belief that EDDC would not approve other sites it became clear that if the Parish wanted affordable housing then this was the best chance.

So what else is relevant to all this?

Initially EDDC's Local plan (the statutory document which determines Planning decisions for the District) proposed 20 new homes for the Parish. That was then reduced to 5. When the Planning Inspector scrutinised the Local plan he rejected the allocation of 5, along with other Local plan proposals. The result was that the Local plan had to be redrafted. Development boundaries were removed from most villages, (the boundary within which housing can be built) and development was concentrated in larger towns close to services. This means that the whole Parish is deemed to be 'open countryside' in which it is assumed there will be no building whatsoever. This version of the Local plan is currently under discussion and is likely to secure approval. It was the PC's letter of objection to EDDC on the Villages Development Plan which prompted initial correspondence in the Parish magazine of October 2015.

So what? Isn't this a good thing?

If you think that everyone wants to live close to services and facilities and in large clusters of settlement (Axminster, Honiton, Exmouth and Cranbrook for example) and our local contribution to climate change will be reduced as a result due to fewer journeys ,then you would think that it's a good thing.

On the other hand if you think that local people want to stay close to where they have been brought up and that services like shops, schools, pubs and churches depend on people to sustain them, you might support a small amount of additional housing in rural locations.

You might also take the view that both approaches would be the best way to proceed in East Devon

What does the PC think?

We think that a small amount of additional housing in rural communities will contribute to the vitality of those communities. We believe that young people and the old want to stay in the Parish in housing which they can afford. We think that local services depend on people. We believe that Broadhembury Primary School is vulnerable to closure without more pupils, in the event that Dunkeswell proceeds with the development of a school or if the federated schools start to disintegrate. We also think that large-scale development to meet government building aims should take place in large-scale places not in small rural developments.

So our view is that a mix of development approaches would be best.

What discussions have taken place with the developer?

A representative of the family whose Trust owns the land opposite the Memorial Hall has attended three meetings of the PC (open to public discussion) to state the family's hope to build on the site. Two members of the PC plus one member of the Neighbourhood planning group and the Clerk have met with him and his adviser on 16th June 2015. The minutes of this meeting are on the web site. The PC has told the Estate that we could not support more than 12 houses, if a Planning application comes forward and that support would depend on circumstances at the time.

If you only need 5 affordable houses why support 12?

The cost of affordable housing is usually offset by some commercial element for landowners. In other words the profits from commercial sales of usually larger homes subsidise the affordability of other homes. EDDC will require 50% to 60% of the houses to be affordable . Alternatively a landowner could donate land for affordable housing to the Parish at preferable rates and forgo any commercial build . This would be a much better solution.

Will this lead to street lights, pavements and more cars?

We would oppose street lights and pavements, but the decision is ultimately made by EDDC. We believe that if we establish a good working relationship with the developer then we can have more influence. A development will certainly produce more cars. We already get complaints about cars parked in the village so we would press for sufficient parking places for the number of houses. EDDC would require this too.

What has the Memorial Hall car park got to do with all this?

Nothing directly. However the land which surrounds the new Memorial Hall is owned by the same family and during the course of public presentations they have said that they would like to provide land to the PC to increase the size of the car park. The PC did not request this nor have we initiated any conversations about it. The land on which the Hall stands was gifted to the PC in the 1920's by the family and later the car park was sold to the PC. Currently there is space for about 15 cars. The land proposed will add approx. a further 30 cars. It could also provide a separate entrance or exit to the car park..

We have pressed them to transfer the land particularly during the building of the new Memorial Hall because the sewage outfall crosses this land and the Big Lottery (who provided funding for the Hall) required legal undertakings about access. Quite apart from this the Hall clearly needs more car parking because it is the Hall for the whole Parish not just Broadhembury so not everyone can walk to it.

Isn't this all a bit compromising?

We don't think so .However we accept that there is a danger without care and openness. We sought advice from EDDC Democratic Services, meetings have been minuted and the same offers have been made at public meetings.

So what has Neighbourhood Planning got to do with all this?

Neighbourhood planning is a new process. The PC believes that by doing a neighbourhood plan we will have more control over the future of our Parish, secure better access to funding and represent the views of people more effectively. The plan is about a lot more than housing but understandably people tend to be more interested in this than in any other feature. We too are apprehensive about the stated government intention to build more housing in rural communities and without a plan would have little chance to control this.

The Neighbourhood plan is about lots of things which could affect our neighbourhood. How the neighbourhood develops matters to the PC. If a Neighbourhood Plan supports the development of housing based on evidence and the plan passes all stages of consultation, then the housing stands more of a chance.

The current draft of our Neighbourhood Plan supports the development of housing opposite the Memorial Hall because we think this is the best chance to get affordable housing. And we believe it is what the Parish wants. This also prevents another less desirable site being submitted. Since our plan is all about enhancing the unique character of our settlements we stand more chance of achieving that if we pre-empt possible threats.

Why haven't we seen this? Why are the meetings not public?

In the December 2014/ January 2015 edition of the Parish magazine we published a four page article setting out the aims of our neighbourhood plan. In January 2015 we held a public meeting which approx. 60 people attended to discuss this.

The meetings of the Neighbourhood planning group are technically a 'working group' of the Parish Council. We are not required to make these meetings open to the public. However all documents are published on the web and the meetings are minuted. The group consists of four Parish councilors and four members of the public. We are advised by a Planning consultant and by the Neighbourhood Planning Officer of EDDC. Each meeting of the group is reported back to the PC in open meeting.

The draft plan will be published for discussion this month and we will hold another public meeting on 2nd February. After that we still need to consult on the next version of the plan (called pre-submission) then submit that version to

EDDC for consideration by an independent Inspector. The whole plan then goes to public referendum if he/she considers it acceptable

This debate is portrayed as: 'row divides village'. What is the PC's view?

The Western Morning News (WMN web post 4th Dec/News Dec 5th)) depicts this as : ' a row divides the idyllic village....a small group of locals is pitted against the council....village split...'

There is no 'row' and the village is not 'split' ! This is an exaggeration.

The PC welcomes and accepts the right of parishioners to question us and hold a different point of view. Of course we would have preferred this discussion earlier in the process but the fact that it is happening now does not make it any less valid. We will listen to views, answer questions straightforwardly and then decide .

What happens next?

We have arranged an extraordinary meeting of the PC on **FRIDAY 11th December at 1900 in the MEMORIAL HALL** The aim is to give more time for people to ask questions. These answers have been published to facilitate supplementary questions which were asked for.

After that meeting the PC will decide what action to take and will then agree at the PC meeting in January whether to support affordable housing in Broadhembury or oppose it. If the decision is to withdraw support then the neighbourhood planning group will be asked to amend the draft.

How can you follow what is going on?

Come to Parish Council meetings and ask us a question or speak in favour of something you think we should do. Censure us for things which we have left undone. We meet on the third Tuesday of every other month starting with January. You don't have to stay for the whole meeting. Join our E mail subscribers. Go to the web site to do this. Fill in any surveys we send you. Speak with your Parish Councillor . You can find a list in the Parish magazine. Write to the Clerk. Please help us to stay in touch with you and to represent your view.

