

Briefing Note for Ward Councillors and Chair of South Wonston Parish Council

Affordability

- Housing in South Wonston both to buy and privately rent is expensive when compared to average incomes. Average house prices in South Wonston are in the region of 12 times average incomes. (Source: ONS / WCC) Many people will be unable to ever buy a property, or rent without assistance.
- The insinuation that all should see eventually buying a home in the village as a possibility shows a mis-understanding of the scale of the affordability problem.
- Right Move on 23 October 2018 stated from Land Registry Sold Homes information that the average price to buy a home in South Wonston was in the region of £412,429 (ONS 2018 Average District price £365,000).
- Across Winchester District:
 - Individual Lower Quartile/Average incomes £26k/£36k (Source ONS 2018)
 - Lower Quartile Household £39k/ £46k (ONS/OECD Modelled for 2 adults/2 adults + child 2018)
 - With Lower Quartile prices across District @ £290k (ONS 2018) homes are unaffordable
 - In the last 10 years across the District house prices are up 40%; incomes 18%; affordability ratio worsened from over 9% to over 11% (England 7.25%).

Improving Affordability

- City Council objective to see more affordable housing provided both in urban and rural areas.
- Embraced by many parishes. E.g. Scheme close to completion in Wonston. Completed scheme in Micheldever. Both are interested in additional provision
- 40 rural schemes in Winchester and 50 villages assisted across HARAH (2000

people housed)

- 99% of new homes go to local people
- Important to provide homes in rural areas – A rural exception site is very different from a site like Kings Barton, in Winchester. It is to meet the affordable housing needs of households who have strong local connections with the village and want to live in South Wonston. It enables families to stay in the village they grew up in, or to return to it if they still have immediate family there. It allows people to create and benefit from informal support networks and continue to contribute to the success of the village and its facilities, e.g. through volunteering, spending at or using facilities.
- Types of affordable housing include discounted rented, discounted sale and shared ownership. The need predominantly is for discounted rent and shared ownership, but schemes are shaped by local circumstances.

The need for affordable housing in South Wonston

- Winchester City Council's housing register has identified 17 households on WCC Housing Register with a local connection to South Wonston needing rented accommodation. There are an additional 12 on the Help to Buy South register wanting shared ownership
- In addition to those households already registered on Housing Registers as described above, the Parish Council Amenity and Affordable Housing Survey completed by 71% of the residents indicated 14 households with a need and 74 people returning the survey stated that they had family members with a housing need. (Figures from South Wonston Parish Council Amenity Survey)
- The consultation event report findings noted that 11 people attending the drop in event stating they needed affordable housing. Of which 10 gave their connection to South Wonston. 4 of these indicated they were already on the WCC Housing Register.
- This evidence clearly demonstrates evidence of people living in or connected to South Wonston that have a need for affordable housing.
- South Wonston existing housing stock has very little affordable and social housing. Only 4.4% (Approx 47 homes). In comparison owner occupation is 73%, Private rented is 22%. In comparison nearby villages such as Wonston have 16% and Micheldever 7%.

- The numbers of affordable homes in a South Wonston Rural Exception Scheme do not count towards the District housing requirement but are specifically to provide a resource for South Wonston. The specification in the National Planning Policy Framework published in July 2018 by central government that 10% of the housing requirement for an area should be deliverable on sites of less than 1 hectare is therefore not applicable

Quality and Design

- No set design. All schemes are high quality & bespoke taking account of local needs and context.
- High environmental standards e.g. Passivhaus
- Local communities get a say in the design

Examples:

Hastoe are members of the Association for Environment Conscious Buildings (AECB) and examples of recently completed schemes are as follows:



SHARNBROOK (BEDFORDSHIRE): 9 homes for affordable rent or shared ownership and 4 open market homes. All built to Passivhaus standard. Opened in July 2018. Highly Commended at 24 Housing Awards October 2018



Little Halingbury, Essex. 13 homes for affordable rent and three for shared ownership. All built to AECB Building Standard. Opened in 2018

Site Selection

- Suncroft Ox Drove, South Wonston - No Planning support due to access issues - Tree Preservation Orders would also be of concern
- Christmas Hill Land off Main Road, South Wonston No Planning Support as breaks settlement boundary
- North of Alresford Drove Field 2 owned by the Wright family No Planning Support Too far from settlement boundary
- West Hill Road north Site divided into 2 fields. The smaller field is owned by the Gregory family and the larger field by the Stainer family. No Planning Support. Neither site available, also access issues need to be overcome for whole site
- Wright plots Field 3 owned by Wright family No Planning Support Site physically separated from settlement
- Wright Plot Field 4 owned by the Wright family No Planning Support Site physically separated and in Countryside
- Wright Plot Field 1 owned by the Wright family No Planning Support Site physically separated from settlement
- Persimmon plot Off Goldfinch Way, South Wonston Planning Support - Yes with caveats (access / visual intrusion / archeology) Site Available

The Parish Council Amenity Survey did ask for sites to be suggested and of those expressing a view, the Persimmon Site was preferred as the Alresford Drove sites were not supported by the Planning Team and were not available for sale

In the absence of planning support for the other sites, the Persimmon plot was identified as the preferred site.

- Opportunities exist to create new homes with a mix of tenures, types and sizes, which will form part of a wider neighbourhood. The land not used for housing will be available for broader community use and its presence will help create the possibility of informal social interaction and ensure that the housing development itself is not seen as an exclusive social housing enclave.

Suitability of Goldfinch Way as access to the proposed site

- Early discussion has taken place with Winchester CC planners, including a site visit to assess the potential access options from either Goldfinch Way or Alresford Drove either to serve as the primary access or form an emergency access link. This initial review included an assessment of the suitability of each access in terms of achieving visibility. Alresford Drove is single track in parts and not favoured by the planning team.
- It will be necessary to engage a highway engineer to further analyse which is the best route into the site and to undertake a review of the different internal layout.

Why is there a need to build outside of the village boundary? Why might the Parish Council support building on a Rural Exception site? Why do we not build within the settlement?

- Planning policies allow affordable rural housing to be built outside settlement boundaries in appropriate circumstances
- In villages, often this is the only land which is of a suitable nature and that is available and that can be bought and built out at an economic price.
- Important to remember that affordable homes are worth less than equivalent open market homes because of a built in discount. Where there are competing uses for the land e.g. open market housing within a settlement the land will be too expensive for affordable homes to be built on. Even when land is acquired it is often necessary to inject significant capital subsidy into a scheme, for instance Government grants, to ensure the scheme can be built.
- One further advantage of building homes outside boundaries is that they can then be restricted for use by local people.
- South Wonston has currently only 1 rural exception site in the village. It is the affordable housing scheme in Le Frenaye Place, built in 2006 which consists of 10 homes which prioritises local people with a local connection to South Wonston for the homes. Only 2 rented homes have become vacant in this scheme since 2010. 2 homes have become vacant in the shared ownership homes since 2016. The homes for these all went to people who met the residency local connection criteria.
- Affordability has worsened in recent years (see above). A new generation of residents in South Wonston have emerged that need affordable housing. Both HARA and the Parish Council want to address this need and have proposed a new Rural Exception Site at the Persimmon field off Goldfinch Way to provide for this need. Like Le Frenaye, all the homes will be prioritised for people with a local connection.

How do we decide the number of homes to build on rural exception sites

This is what makes rural exceptions sites different. The number of homes which are built on Rural Exception Sites are determined by need. For Hastoe this has been as small as 4 and as large as 28.

At South Wonston the Persimmon field could accommodate more than the proposed 16 affordable homes, but it is not Hastoe's intention to do this. 16 homes is about half of the affordable housing need which allows for households choices and ensures that local households can be assisted. The use of the remainder of the site will be agreed with the Parish and community

Note – potential for 4 additional homes – see below (tenure of homes)

Cascade example provided previously – this is set via consultation with the Parish Council at the Planning Application stage

- We work closely with the parishes to agree a S106 Agreement and cascade. Parishes are, in general, most interested in ensuring the parishes to which the cascade extends are the right ones. Below is an example from a recent agreement from a rural exception site in Wonston (soon to be finished and occupied). Here both the local connection parishes and length of time households had to have a local connection for were determined by the parish.
- In order to maximise the opportunity for those households with the strongest connection to be successful in securing a property we hold pre-allocation events before homes are finished. This is a drop in event to which we invite all those on our registers with a local connection (currently 17 for rent and 10 for shared ownership in South Wonston) as well publicising the event to the rest of the community to ensure anyone who may be eligible has the opportunity to secure a home. We work closely with the parish on organising these events.

1.3 preference shall be given to applicants who are able to establish and prove a strong local connection with the Parish. For the purposes of this Agreement a person shall be taken to have a strong local connection if he or she satisfies any one or more of the following criteria:

- (i) he or she is ordinarily resident in the Parish at the date of allocation
- (ii) he or she was previously ordinarily resident in the Parish prior to the date of allocation and has family who ordinarily reside there
- (iii) he or she has a demonstrable need to live in the Parish by reason of his or her current employment in the Parish

1.4 The Council shall have the discretion if necessary to permit applicants to under-occupy the Affordable Housing Dwellings by one bedroom to ensure sustainability of the Development and its occupation by persons with a strong local connection

1.5 Eligible Persons shall be selected in the following order of priority:

- (i) applicants who meet and have met the strong local connection criteria set out above with the parish of Wonston which includes the villages of Sutton Scotney and Wonston. First priority will be given to applicants with at least 10 years connection; second priority for at least 5 years connection; third priority for at least 3 years; and fourth priority for at least 1 year connection
- (ii) applicants who meet and have met the strong local connection criteria set out above with the parishes of Bullington, Barton Stacey, Micheldever or South Wonston. Fifth priority will be given to applicants with at least 10 years connection; sixth priority for at least 5 years connection; seventh priority for at least 3 years connection; and eighth priority for at least 1 year connection
- (iii) anyone with a strong local connection with any Rural Village in Winchester District
- (iv) anyone with a strong local connection within the administrative area of Winchester District Council

How do we decide tenure of the homes?

- The tenure of the affordable homes is also decided by need. Typically 70% of the homes are rented, and 30% shared ownership. A final decision on the number of affordable rent, and shared ownership homes is yet to be finally agreed.
- We often find that once people with a local housing need realise new affordable homes will be built in their community, they come forward and register their need with the council for rent, and the help to buy agent for shared ownership.
- A final decision of the tenure split between rent and shared ownership will be made before any planning application is submitted – the decision will be needs based.

- There may be the opportunity for an additional 4 homes, responding to the need identified within the Parish Affordable Housing Survey for entry level properties and properties for downsizing. These could be bungalows or houses; starter homes at a discounted market value, restricted by age and local connection. This is a matter that can be discussed further.

Affordability of shared ownership

- Shared ownership is very popular with first time buyers. It offers affordable access to home ownership for those who can't afford to purchase 100% on the open market.
- Typically the share initially bought is between 25% and 40% of the home's value. Shared owners pay rent on the remaining share. As the shared owners financial position improves they can purchase a larger share of their home (the rent payable is adjusted down as the shared owned increases).
- At South Wonston the maximum share that can be purchased will be capped at 80%. This is to ensure that the home remains affordable in perpetuity and not lost through the sale of a 100% share to the open market.
- Typical household incomes of purchasers are £32,000
- For many shared owners, the cost of shared ownership is less than the rent they were paying their private landlord.

Sustainability; Infrastructure and Amenities

- South Wonston is a popular place to live and does not suffer from significant numbers of empty properties. Additional development will help sustain local services, businesses and amenity/recreation/sporting groups.
- School - The Published Admission Numbers have not been reached for many years and children are admitted from out of catchment. There is capacity for extra pupils
- Nursery – Hampshire County Council Early Years Team have said there is sufficient capacity to meet the needs. There are spaces available in places other than the nursery and parents often choose childcare close to their place of employment rather than home as this can be a more convenient and economic option.
- Public Transport – There is a service available - 1 bus picking up from the

centrally located South Wonston Primary School Villages frequently have only 1 stop for a bus

- GP Surgery - The practice is accepting applications for registration - living in catchment (including South Wonston) is required..
- Social Club – encourages people to attend, especially as there is no pub The social club is open 7 days per week with a range of events / activities being organised
- Shop – There is 1 shop combining village stores and post office. A residential development for local households is more likely to provide customers for the stores as opposed to households commuting elsewhere

Suitability of drainage and utilities

- Desk top studies have been carried out. A full ground investigation survey will be undertaken before a decision on whether to proceed with a development is taken.
- The ground investigation results are shared with drainage engineers who will be appointed to establish sustainable surface water and foul arrangements.

What will happen to the rest of the field?

- Hastoe will buy the rest of the field and work with the parish council and the local community, seeking ideas, exploring all options and collaboratively work to achieve an outcome that all parties are happy with. This could be – allotments, meadow, farm field etc.

Criticism of the independence of the report and its findings. Suggests that concerns are not being addressed by HARAHA.

- There has been criticism of the HARAHA consultation report findings . HARAHA disputes that the report is not reflective of the comments received. The report went into a great deal of detail on all comments received both positive and negative. The group themselves acknowledge 13 pages of the report details the comments made.
- Choice of site – see above
- HARAHA believes that many of the concerns can be addressed by amendments to the proposal or through the necessary survey information which will need to be carried out before a decision is taken on whether to progress with the

development

- HARAH would welcome ongoing discussions with the parish and community to help improve and shape the proposal.

Do Hastoe benefit financially?

- Hastoe Housing Association is a charitable organization and a non – profit making business regulated by the Government. There are no shareholder dividends to pay. All trading surpluses are retained within the business and used to provide new affordable homes, management and tenancy services for Hastoes customers and maintenance of their stock .

Role of HARAH

- The groups report is critical of the role of HARAH and the reports conclusions. The groups report appears to suggest that HARAH members have acted dishonestly, misrepresented information and are benefitting financially from the scheme.
- HARAH is a not for profit partnership made up of local authorities, Action Hampshire and the Government. Hastoe are one of its development partners. The partnership stated aim is to increase the supply of affordable housing in the rural villages of Hampshire; to ensure local people are able to afford to live in the places where they were brought up, work, or have family connections; and in doing so to help strengthen rural communities.
- It is driven by desires to improve the housing circumstances of those unable to afford a home of their own and to sustain rural communities.
- HARAH has been recognised as an example of best practice by the Affordable Rural Housing Commission, the Commission for Rural Communities and the Audit Commission
- Over £70 million has been invested in affordable housing in Hampshire through HARAH. The homes are financed through a combination of Homes England grant (over £10M to date) and private finance secured by the Registered Provider. In the case of the South Wonston scheme this would be HASTOE Housing Association.

Role of WCC

- WCC is the strategic housing authority for the South Wonston area and the highest priority adopted in the council's Strategic plan until 2023 is to accelerate and maximise the supply of high quality housing across the District
- WCC also has a role as local planning authority. This is a separate function to the housing function and decision making is by professional planners and Planning Committee members.

The reasons why a Parish Council might want to support a scheme such as that proposed at Goldfinch Way are

- They recognize there is a need in the village for more affordable housing. Evidence from their own survey, the drop in event, meetings where parishioners have stated they or family members need this type of housing and evidence from the Council's Housing Register (rented) and Help to Buy Housing Registers (shared ownership)
- Rural Exception Sites such as that proposed at Goldfinch Way have controls on them, e.g. as to who is eligible etc and the Parish are involved throughout the whole process and can help make decisions on the project. This is not the same in a developer led scheme within the settlement boundary. (Such as Cloudbank)
- Rural Exception Site developments can give reassurance to the parish that the homes will be prioritized for local people, that the numbers will be controlled, so only homes that are needed are built and that the Parish Council and community can bring some influence on the project, for example the design and the numbers. The Parish Council want to ensure that the scheme will benefit its local people. This is why the Parish Council have carried out their own survey of residents in 2017 which indicated that a number of residents needed this form of housing and there was a scarcity of affordable homes in the parish.
- The Parish Council in its Village Design Statement also stated that it is prepared to consider a rural exception sites for the village.