

Notes of a meeting of the working party on the possibility of affordable housing in the parish.
31 October 2023 at 15:00 to 16:00 by Zoom

Present

Cllr M Griffiths (Chair)

Cllr G Furness

Cllr P Knatchbull-Hugessen (Notes)

Tom Warder (Community Led Housing Manager & Interim CEO, Action in rural Sussex)

The Fairview site, owned by Rother District Council (RDC), was identified in a Strategic Housing and Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) as having some potential for development. A SHLAA is a periodic high-level exercise to inform the Local Plan making process. Options could be: development by RDC, sale of land to third party to gain capital receipt, local community affordable housing. RDC has policy to support affordable housing. Action in rural Sussex (AirS) supports community-led groups to develop affordable housing.

RDC Cabinet meeting on 2nd September 2019 identified Fairview as a possible community led rural scheme. and recommended that SCHH engage with the local community to explore the potential for this.

AirS had meetings with Guestling Parish Council (GPC) and Pett Parish Council (PPC). All agreed that a housing Needs Survey should be conducted. This was circulated in both parishes in 2020. The results showed a predictable level of housing need. The survey results are regarded as valid for five years.

The results were shared with GPC and PPC. GPC decided that they would support the provision of affordable housing to meet that need. PPC voiced scepticism over the results of the survey.

Included in the survey was an option for local people interested in taking forward a scheme to provide community housing to meet to discuss further involvement. A meeting was held in mid-December 2020 with speakers from existing Community Land Trusts (CLT) and RDC. From this a group of people undertook to explore the possibility of forming a CLT.

This group, now called Marsham Community Land Trust (MCLT) is soon to be incorporated and ~~will then take~~ are taking forward various surveys before the winter sets in, funded by a grant from RDC. The surveys are precursor surveys to establish the viability of the site for development.

AirS will be carrying out work with RDC planners to investigate other possible sites in GPC, PPC and Fairlight Parish Council (FPC) that are both suitable and available for development. This must be done before a decision is made about Fairview.

MCLT has as its beneficial area the three parishes. If they progress the scheme, it will house local people with local connections in perpetuity. This is protected by it being a CLT and the land being designated a rural exception site. The mix of housing has yet to be determined by the MCLT. Other schemes supported by AirS have had a mix of homes for sale, homes for rent and homes for shared ownership. Allocation of the properties would be managed under a Local Lettings Plan which would be agreed between the CLT, Rother DC Housing and any Housing Association that may be involved. This would ensure the affordable homes are occupied by those with a local connection to the three parishes.

There has been no survey of housing need undertaken in FPC.

It is AirS view that it is unlikely that MCLT will be in a position to apply for planning permission until the third quarter of 2024.