

Notes of a meeting of the working party on the possibility of affordable housing in the parish.
21 November 2023 at 09:45 to 10:45 by MSTeams
Present

Cllr M Griffiths (Chair)
Cllr G Furness
Cllr P Knatchbull-Hugessen (Notes)
Graeme Quinnell, RDC

Land at Fairview: owned by RDC and for decades let on short grazing licences to ensure no security of tenure established.

Land was assessed for housing provision in Strategic Housing and Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) prior to the current Local Plan. It was not included in the Development and Site Allocation (DaSA) in the Local Plan as there were contra indications to development: not sustainable, lack of public footway to local services, lack of public transport, difficulty gaining access to the highway from the site.

2019 resolved by RDC Cabinet to explore feasibility of it being an Exception site. Policy being to try to bring land into use for local affordable housing. (See policy below) Local stakeholders were sounded out and it was judged a possibility.

2021 resolved by RDC Cabinet to pursue the possibility by giving authority to carry out survey work and by delegating authority to lead officers to dispose of the land for local affordable housing. Using Community Housing Fund (CHF) money and with support from Guestling and Pett Parish Councils to explore the possibility, a housing needs survey was undertaken in Guestling and Pett. (CHF is ring fenced money provided in 2016 by central government to housing authorities with a high level of holiday rentals and second homes in their area to develop affordable housing for local people). The housing needs survey gave confidence to RDC to support Action in Rural Sussex (AiRS) to work with local people to take forward the possibility of developing affordable housing in Guestling with Pett. A proto Community Land Trust, Marsham CLT has now been supported to undertake various surveys and to seek pre-application advice from ESCC Highways over the access question. Should the project progress further sums would be available from the CHF amounting to tens of thousands of pounds for each of the putative 12 units. This was the case in the development of affordable homes in Icklesham and will be in a Bexhill project.

The planning position for the development of affordable housing at the land at Fairview is separate from the corporate and policy initiative position for which RDC Cabinet have given support. Policy DHG2 is central to this although the project would also have to meet all the usual AONB and RDC policy requirements for a housing development.

Policy DHG2: Rural Exception Sites

In exceptional circumstances, planning permission may be granted for small scale residential development outside development boundaries in order to meet a local need for affordable housing in rural areas. Such development will be permitted where the following requirements are met:

- (i) it helps to meet a proven local housing need for affordable housing in the village/parish, as demonstrated in an up-to-date assessment of local housing need;*
- (ii) it is of a size, tenure, mix and cost appropriate to the assessed local housing need;*
- (iii) it is well related to an existing settlement and its services, including access to public transport;*
- (iv) the development is supported or initiated by the Parish Council;*
- (v) The local planning authority is satisfied that the identified local housing need cannot be met within the settlement development boundary; and*

(vi) The development does not significantly harm the character of the rural area, settlement or the landscape, and meets other normal local planning and highway authority criteria, in line with other Council policies.

In all cases, planning permission will be subject to a legal agreement to ensure that the affordable housing accommodation remains available to meet local housing needs in perpetuity, and that people with the greatest local connection are given highest priority in both initial and future occupancy.

A modest amount of enabling open market housing will be acceptable where it is demonstrated, with viability evidence, that it is the minimum necessary for the delivery of a suitable scheme, having regard to the criteria above

It was noted that a study of other possible sites for affordable housing on Exception sites in Guestling and Pett was yet to be completed. It was also noted that this exercise would not be undertaken in Fairlight PC as there were already DaSA sites in the parish and thus did not qualify for Exception sites. It was further noted that any housing needs survey or other survey could not be funded in Fairlight as this would not fit within CHF rules.

The addition of Fairlight to the proposed CLT had yet to be justified in policy terms. (HG2 (i) above. The requirement for Guestling Parish Council support would be required. There is a feeling in RDC that, although not required, Pett PC support would also be needed.

The new Local Plan is soon to be open to consultation and another option that could be considered if the site were to be allocated for housing in the new local plan would be for an allocation as a wholly or largely affordable housing scheme, this is different to it being a rural exception site. This is dealt with currently under Core Strategy policy LHN4, form paragraph 15.33 on p.129 Rother Local Plan (windows.net) . RDC have not allocated any site under this policy currently but it is possible that some such allocations could be made in the new local plan that is due for its first round of consultation in spring 2024

RDC has met some local residents for informal discussion at the Two Sawyers in Pett. We have had no sight of any notes and have no knowledge of any discussion that took place.

Annex 1.

For information. As this is a minute of a meeting it cannot be altered to reflect the correct position which is that Guestling PC was not and is not taking the lead to progress any affordable housing scheme.

Minutes: Meeting of Cabinet, Monday 6th September 2021 6.30 pm (Item CB21/31.)

Housing Development; Community Led Housing Programme

Consideration was given to the report of the Housing Development Manager, which updated Members on the Community Led Housing (CLH) Programme including project progress.

Land at Fairview, Guestling: Identified for a rural exception CLH scheme. The SCHH had commissioned a Housing Needs Survey; distributed to 1,129 households (24% response rate). The results indicated strong support for a CLH scheme. Guestling Parish Council would be taking the lead to progress a scheme. It was proposed that the land be sold and to progress the sale delegated authority be granted to the Director of Place and Climate Change.