

WAAF History

In 2017 Cornwall Council offered the previously developed land to the parish council under devolvement and it was subsequently acquired for the nominal sum of £1. The intention at that time was to develop the site into a form of Ecological Education Area for children attending the local school. For a variety of reasons, but mostly financial, this never came to fruition and in August 2018 the parish council formally decided to abandon the project.

In 2021, following earlier discussions within the council instigated by former councillor Kessell, we contacted Cornwall Housing to discuss feasibility of the site for affordable housing. Unfortunately, due to the collapse of their main contractors they were unable to proceed. It was then considered that our council did it on our own, but this was rejected due to the lack of experience and the financial outlay that would be required. We were then approached by a land & property consultant with the proposal that we sell the land to a developer to provide 100% affordable housing in a similar way to its previous use post second world war and up until the 1970s.

In the public consultation process of the NDP that took place throughout 2018-2021 it was identified that whilst the minimum target for housebuilding by 2030 set by Cornwall Council had been met, but it was also apparent that there was still a need for affordable housing in the parish.

This is all specified in the Housing Needs Assessment appendix, the Housing objectives in section 3 and the Housing needs section 7 of the final NDP which was made in 2022 provided the delivery of such housing was provided by a genuine social housing provider, This is specified in Policy 2 of the NDP. Its worth noting that this area was not designated as a green space within the NDP.

Therefore, the parish council believed that these consultations & subsequent objectives provided the mandate for the proposal to be investigated further. It was Resolved to do this in February 2022. Eight months of negotiation followed between our solicitors and that of the developer with an option agreement finally being signed in October 2022. This legally binding contract gave the developer exclusive rights to carry out what surveys and other investigations were necessary to determine the feasibility of building on this land and ensuring that any subsequent planning application met the national laws and also the requirements of the Cornwall Council local plan. The unwritten, but mutually agreed, proviso to this was that any investigations on the site were to be carried out with the approval of and under the supervision of a qualified ecologist to ensure no harm to the environment was made in the process.

If the developers were subsequently to offer a plan that met with the approval of the parish council, then it would then be formally submitted to the planning authorities complete with all results of all survey work. Part of the legal agreement signed by the council is that should planning permission be granted by Cornwall Council then the developers have the option to buy the land.

After various discussions with the council and a public consultation event the draft plan was presented and approved by the parish council in July this year, as we could see no reasonable reason to reject it.

We now await the formal application to be submitted to CC and that is expected no later than Sept 29th.

Finally, I want to say that progress on this matter has been discussed in public council meetings every month since the Summer of 2021 and the minutes published on the parish website. In January 2022 we publicised the need to be on the CC housing register for anyone to be eligible to bid for an affordable home – either on the WAAF site if built upon or anywhere else in Cornwall. At that time there were 24 people registered. That number has now grown to 60 households presently registered in this parish who are looking for an affordable home. The parish council believes that this demonstrates the present local housing need.

That concludes the parish report but I do need to add one extra thing. We had invited representatives from both Classic Builders and Coastline Housing so that they would be available to answer any specific questions everyone may raise. Regrettably a member of the group that is opposed to this project went to the Classic offices last Thursday and told the representative that he was not to attend. Consequently, both organisations have stayed away to respect this demand. Personally, I find this disappointing as the person did not have the right or authority to do this, but more importantly we have now all missed an opportunity. They could have given us all the up to date and accurate factual information on their plans and we would have been able to question them fully prior to their application being submitted. This could have included how they propose to achieve the bio diversity net gain that is required by law. We all must now wait until the planning application is submitted for this information.

I would like to express some safety concerns. At 2:30 this afternoon I was contacted by the developers representative saying that members of the public were on the site and were getting in the way of the clearance work. They were asked to stay clear as they were putting themselves and the operative in danger. Their response was that they could stand wherever they like. Eventually, they did leave and the contractors continued with their work. I would like to emphasise that this area is not open to the public generally and even less so when hazardous activities are taking place.

The council were informed last Thursday that two presentations have been prepared and so I suggest we start our discussions by listening to these. Due to the time restraints, I would ask that the presentations are kept to no more than 10 minutes.