**DIDDLEBURY PARISH COUNCIL**

**Chairman: Cllr D Hedgley**

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**MINUTES**

**Of the Extraordinary General Meeting of Diddlebury Parish Council**

**held on Wednesday 12th August 2020, 7.00pm via the remote viewing platform Zoom.**

**The purpose of the EGM was for the parish council to consider planning application 20/02519/OUT – an outline application (all matters reserved) for the erection of 12 dwellings and operational supporting development (revised scheme) at land at The Moors View, Diddlebury.**

**Joining instructions had been widely disseminated and options given for invitations to join the meeting via Zoom, for dial up attendance and for requests to speak at the meeting.**

**048/20 – Present via Zoom**

Cllr. D Hedgley - Chairman, Cllr. R Povall, Cllr. T O’Boyle, Cllr. S Povall, Cllr. A Watson, Cllr. Selina Thomas, Cllr. K Worthington and Cllr. M Woodhouse.

**Apologies for absence** were received and accepted from Cllr. M Thomas.

**In attendance** were the Clerk and Unitary Cllr. Motley. Members of the public had been invited to join the meeting and seven members of the public had requested invitations: only one member of the public wished to address the council – Mr Ian Davies of the Diddlebury Parish Plan Steering Group. The Flood Action Group rely on their statement on the planning portal. The Applicants had chosen not to join the meeting or to be represented.

**049/20 – Declarations of Interest.**

Members were requested to declare any Disclosable Personal or Pecuniary Interests they may have in matters to be considered at this meeting in accordance with the Localism Act 2011 s32 and The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012.

No declarations of interest were made.

**050/20.** The Chairman outlined the procedures and protocols to be adopted at this meeting.

**051/20 – The Chairman’s comments on the application**

**051/20/1 - Previous application 18/04563/OUT** for 17 houses was not supported by DPC and refused permission by SC as the development of 17 new dwellings cannot be considered to be appropriate in scale in relation to either the character and size of the settlement in relation to the need for the affordable element or the demand for the self-build element.

In the absence of evidence of need of public benefits that might have been balanced against the less than substantial harm to the Grade II listed building of Bache Mill house cannot be demonstrated to approve the application.

**051/20/2 - Planning officer’s comments to Cllr Motley on the current application:**

The affordable units are compliant with Policy CS5 , the self-build units are classed as open market housing and as such do not comply with CS5.The application is outline at present and whilst it might be preferable to know if a registered provider was interested at this stage we could still condition any approval to ensure the homes are affordable.

**051/20/3 - The Housing Needs Survey**

The survey did identify a needwith 13 respondents that wanted to move but remain in Diddlebury with most preferring a buy option over renting. The ratio between house prices and wages was 9:4 which would mean a discount of 60% to reflect local needs. The PPSG and some public comments question the aspirational nature of the survey as being truly representative of need but as it stands the survey is recognised by SC as evidence of need.

**051/20/4 - Craven Arms Place Plan**

State**s**: ”DPC identified the requirement for affordable housing within its settlements and will support the provision of affordable housing across the parish to meet the present demand.”

Within the countryside definition Exception sites are recognised in planning policy.

**051/20/5 - PPSG –** see latercomments of Mr Ian Davies

**051/20/6 – Flood Action Group.**

Comments placed on the portal (neutral). SW corner of the site not developed but if things change it is a zone 2 flood area. A query over the adequacy of the soak-away to deal with run off. The design statement needs to take into account urban creep re drainage. The future legal maintenance needs of the SUD systems need to be written into contracts. They support the proposal re rain water harvesting. Query over the sewage treatment plants capacity.

**051/20/7 - The Chairman commented on the Applicant’s’ views as expressed in the Design and Access statement namely:**.

Background - housing survey establishes need - scale of site complies.

Proposal - entry level/self build policy rationale

Site/surroundings - history, amenities,

Planning policy - rationale : they are of the view that SC’s SAMdev is behind with current planning policy. They accept the development is not in SC’s current development plan, but they list all the amenities which are available. They would be willing to enter into a S.106 Agreement with SC.

Consideration of the proposal - numbers, discount of 20%.

Design and appearance - possible designs to be reserved matters

Drainage – proposals

Sustainability - proposal

Ecology - safeguards

Access - proposal

Conclusion - plot control re allocation

Discrepancies in the application re house types/numbers

**052/20 - Chairman’s summary of the main 28 public comments on SC’s planning portal as at the 9th August. 24 object to application, 3 support application, 1 neutral. Ranked in order by frequency of comments made.**

**Objections:**

Increased risk of flooding via run off

Highway issues due to increased traffic at the junction with B4368

Ecology threat posed by the development

Goes against the Parish Plan and SAMDev re no housing development in Diddlebury Village

Inappropriate size/scale of development

Lack of amenities

Lack of public transport

Increased noise from The Moors

Mention was also made of the discrepancies in the application documentation form re number/type of houses planned. The Chairman had queried this with Mr Wilkes and pointed out the problems this caused regarding the accuracy of what is being applied for and the poor quality of the application in this matter: he also checked with Cllr Motley as to whether these discrepancies could disqualify the application. She advised that the planners would merely query any discrepancies with the applicant.

**053/20 - Consultees Comments**

**053/20/1 - SUDS**

No development shall take place until a scheme of surface and foul water drainage has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Waste Management

It is vital new homes have adequate storage space to contain wastes for a fortnightly collection (including separate storage space for compostable and source segregated recyclable material). Also crucial is that they have regard for the large vehicles utilised for collecting waste and that the highway specification is suitable to facilitate the safe and efficient collection of waste.

Heritage Statement

The current outlook from Bache Mill house is bounded by existing housing and the proposed development will cause some harm to its setting but this is not critical to its core historic interest and is judged to be insufficient to support refusal of the application on heritage grounds. With well specified planting along the western edge of the new development this impact may be mitigated and the waterside setting of the historic property would remain. As rural depopulation can threaten the social and cultural viability of villages careful infilling can help sustain village life without intrusion into the open countryside. Diddlebury is characterised by the intermix of historic and contemporary building and this has created a vibrant community attractive to many people.

**053/20/2 - Ecology**

A number of conditions would be imposed to safeguard the existing wild life both during and after construction.

**053/20/3 – SC Planning Policies**

The Chairman was advised by Mr. Mike Davies the planning officer responsible for the bid and Cllr Motley that DPC can make reference to policies and their criteria but must accept that how the application sits in regards to policy disqualification will be a judgement made by the planners initially, possibly the SC Planning Committee and possibly the Planning Inspectorate. This is further complicated by the delays to the Planning Review which is in progress and judgements that may be flexibly made on future principles coming into play. DPC is not therefore realistically in a position to disqualify the application solely on policy grounds but should concentrate on:

* affordable/self-build housing in Diddlebury village and the parish in general
* the scale of proposed developments
* the types of houses proposed
* their allocation
* points raised by interested parties
* the vehicle for delivery, bearing in mind our proposal to investigate a Community Led Scheme with registered providers

**054/20 – Comments from invited speakers and members of the public**

**054/20/1 - DIDDLEBURY PARISH PLAN STEERING GROUP**

Mr Ian Davies thanked the Chairman for allowing him to speak at this evening’s meeting. He regretted that the meeting has had to take this format. The usual public meeting system allows for much more inclusivity and debate on such a planning application which clearly is of huge concern to the local community. He felt the better and democratic process would have been to find a way where the public could attend a meeting and air their views without technology obstruction.

For the record my name is Ian Davies and I am the Chair of the Diddlebury Parish Plan Steering Group. On 5th August I wrote to the Parish Council with a number of comments on this application. I understand that this has been circulated to the councillors so you are well aware of reasons behind the group’s objection to this application.

To recap:

Our fundamental point is that the application conflicts with the Parish Plan and the Shropshire Council County Planning Strategy. This has also been noted by many of the 24 respondents who have objected.

The Parish Plan, which was refreshed in 2013, confirmed the findings of the original plan that those living in the parish valued greatly their rural surroundings and were worried about overdevelopment. Indeed, following the survey in 2012 the residents of Diddlebury village specifically responded that they did not wish any housing development in Diddlebury.

Nothing has emerged from either the public meetings that followed the 2018 application or comments on the current proposal to suggest that that view may have changed.

Can I remind all that it was the Parish Council who commissioned the Parish Plan and accepted its conclusions and recommendations.

The Plan was incorporated into the Craven Arms Place Plan and then into the overarching Shropshire Council Plan – the so called SAMDEV. Diddlebury village was allocated as ‘Open Countryside’ which specifically precluded housing development unless there was an exceptional and evidenced need for an affordable house.

I stress exceptional and evidenced need - the clear implication was that this was aimed at a single property application.

The 2019 Housing Needs Survey has attracted many adverse comments for its poor design and obtuse conclusions. The Parish Plan of 2013 involved explanatory events, a detailed peer reviewed survey, further consultation events, feedback and independent analysis of the data. It was a far more robust process than the 2019 Housing Needs Survey.

It is interesting to note that the 2012 Parish Plan survey resulted in a number of similar aspirational responses which never translated into actual demand. I also note that there are no responses to this application specifying an individual demand.

However, despite the shortcomings of the 2019 Housing Needs Survey the group accepted that there may exist some limited hidden demand for affordable or entry level housing within the parish (and not just Diddlebury).

Shropshire Council suggested that the Parish Council follow the route of a Community Led Housing Scheme which could be run in conjunction with a housing association. This would ensure that any scheme would be truly affordable – Shropshire Council suggested a 40% discount to market rents and house prices.

A housing association would conduct research and, with their checks and balances, ensure that any scheme would be properly targeted at young local people who could not afford current housing prices. It would keep any housing affordable over the long term.

The parish plan group recommended that any such scheme should be spread across the parish rather than just in Diddlebury village.

The Parish Council did resolve to investigate such a scheme and indeed I understand has made contact with a prospective housing association partner. I assume that remains official Parish Council policy.

This application, apart from being in conflict with the local housing plan, cuts completely across the decision to address parish affordable housing through a carefully managed Community Led Scheme.

The application does not wear the badges of affordable housing – of the 8 affordable homes – 4 are detached 3 bedroom properties. These surely cannot qualify as entry level housing.

The self build element is in our opinion a cynical attempt to circumvent the current restrictions on market housing. The worry here is that a self build could be adopted by a builder who would self build, live in the property for a year or so to exploit tax avoidance through private residence capital gains tax relief and then sell on as market housing.

Apart from all of this, the sheer size and scale of the proposal is inappropriate and out of character – one of the reasons why the previous 2018 application (which is almost identical in structure) was turned down.

Many respondents have commented on likely problems with flooding, road safety, lack of infrastructure, issues of green space, conservation. Errors and inconsistencies in the application documentation have also been alerted.

You are of course aware of the problems of excess approvals in Corfton which has led to so much local disquiet. This exposed serious fault lines in the planning process.

The Parish Council is here to listen to and support its parishioners. This development is clearly not wanted by the community. It conflicts with the Parish and Local Plans. There is a better system for addressing affordable housing which the Council has resolved to follow.

I urge councillors not to support this application.

**054/20/2** – Mr Anil Rattu enquired whether DPC had asked the applicant what price the affordable homes would be. The Chairman responded the houses would be £200,0000 with a 20% discount.

**055/20 – Comments from Councillors on the application**

055/20/1 – Cllr. M Woodhouse

At government policy level there are big changes coming in planning policy. This application comes from a local developer with a track record of building quality houses in the village. Many of the objections received were from residents of Mill Lane who live in properties built by the applicant. In short, he felt it was better to “go with the devil you know”.

055/20/2 – Cllr. A Watson

Cllr. Watson spoke on behalf of the parishioners: she believes there is a majority view which should be taken into account, and she was speaking up for parishioners, not merely presenting her own views as a resident of The Moors. She noted of the 28 public comments on the planning portal, two non-residents supported the development but 24 residents did not: she outlined numerically and commented upon the range and nature of their objections. She noted the applicant’s references to the Housing Needs Survey in his Design and Access Statement: she disputed his statement that the Survey was conducted by DPC – it was not, it was an initiative of Shropshire Council. Further she noted the applicant referred to local residents’ aspirations in the Survey. She pointed out it was widely agreed the Survey was flawed, the predominant criticism being it sought aspirational rather than factual responses. Cllr. Watson commented on all the errors in and amendments to the application and Design and Access Statement, one amendment coming as late as 5th August. The result of the errors and amendments mean it is difficult to know whether the application is for 12 or 14 houses: this gives scope for later loop holes and enlargement of the proposed scheme. In her view the application itself contradicts the refreshed Parish Plan, which we as DPC councillors accepted and endorsed. Taking everything into consideration, especially the views of parishioners, she urged her fellow councillors to strongly object to this application.

055/20/3 – Cllr. Stephen Povall

Cllr. Stephen Povall was of the opinion there is a need for starter homes in the parish and countryside generally: more homes need to be built for youngsters so they can stay in their communities. SAMDev and the Parish Plan are out of date. Diddlebury is a community with a church, village hall and school. This land lends itself to development. All houses which come on the market are sold, there is a need for more housing. He is not dead against this application but does have reservations, as he feels it is affordable starter houses that are needed and that affordable homes should be administered by a Housing Association.

055/20/4 – Cllr. Selina Thomas

Cllr. Thomas endorsed the views of the PPSG. She feels affordable housing should be spread around the parish, not concentrated in Diddlebury village. Diddlebury Village does not need more houses.

055/20/5 – Cllr. Robert Povall

Cllr. Povall is aware of the need for housing in the parish. He is letting a 2 bedroom property and has had seven applicants wishing to rent it: some would have preferred to buy. Diddlebury needs to meet local aspirations. He is not saying this is the right application but affordable houses are needed and the village does have both infrastructure and amenities - a village hall, school and church.

055/20/6 – Cllr. T O’Boyle

Cllr. O’Boyle felt the very strong opposition to this application is clearly shown in the large number of comments on the portal objecting. Most are strongly argued and have clear and valid objections.

This application is very similar to the previous one in 2018 with only a small numerical reduction - DPC voted against the previous application.

The number in this application is still excessive, there being no real evidence of such a need as the Housing Needs Survey, although clearly flawed and aspirational, only indicated a need for four affordable in the whole parish.

Other problems in the application have been well documented on the planning portal - flooding further down river, extra traffic on the dangerous B4368, noise pollution, design and size certainly not suggesting affordable housing.

Diddlebury Parish Council last September voted unanimously to support a Community Led Scheme (Minute ref. 097/19) which would meet the needs of and guarantee affordable housing across the parish for the foreseeable future. This commitment of course needs landowners to provide suitable land for small pockets of affordable houses to meet that need.

Our Parish Plan does support exceptional sites in Diddlebury - Cllr S Povall called it a "pepperpot arrangement" last September.

If the council can support the local community in Corfton to control excessive building there we should also listen to the opinions of the Diddlebury community and oppose this application.

We need to continue to support the Community Led Scheme and strongly object to this application.

055/20/7 – Cllr. K Worthington

Cllr. Worthington has lived in Diddlebury for 40 years and seen many changes: much of the Mill Lane housing and The Moors have been developed subsequent to her arrival, so she is used to change. As the population grows, so does the need for housing. The government is changing planning law and we may not have a say in developments in the future. She agrees with Cllr. Woodhouse that it is better to work with a developer we know.

055/20/8 - Chairman, Cllr. Hedgley

The Chairman stated this is an outline application only and DPC should agree to it in principle. The current application is 2/3rds of the size of the previous application. Many of the objections raised can be satisfied or covered later in the planning process. There is a need for affordable housing in this parish, which should be supported. However, there is a question mark over what kind of scheme is needed. He felt it is a question of when and not if houses will be built on this plot of land. DPC has spoken to a Community Led Housing Scheme provider and ascertained that land for at least five houses is needed and £10,000 per plot is available. This applicant is not interested in being part of a Community Led Housing Scheme.

**056/20.** Following each councillor’s presentation, robust debate followed. At this point the Chairman’s Broadband connection was lost: Cllr. Robert Povall as Vice-Chairman, took over conduct of the meeting during the absence of the Chairman.

**057/20 – Proposal and vote**

After discussion about the precise wording Cllr. Stephen Povall **proposed** **a Resolution** that DPC objects to this application and does not support it. It is DPC’s wish to promote a Community Led Housing Scheme working with a willing landowner and a Registered Provider, to provide truly affordable houses in Diddlebury Parish.

The **proposal was** **seconded by** Cllr. T O’Boyle.

**Vote: Six councillors voted to support the proposed resolution, one voted against.**

At this point the Chairman and the Clerk were able to rejoin the meeting via a mobile phone.

The Chairman voted against the Resolution making the vote six in favour and two against. The Chairman requested that the resolution be augmented by the addition of the words “DPC welcomes the opportunity to work with any local landowner on a Community Led Housing Scheme” and the councillors agreed to this addition.

Unitary Cllr. Motley then joined the meeting and commented that she thought it was a sensible proposal to work with a developer and a housing association. She felt that the Housing Needs Survey was not satisfactory. It is the extant Local Plan that is in force at the moment, as the new Local Plan is still 6 – 8 months from completion. In response to the concerns over the flooding issue, she said that a plan needs to be agreed with SUDS before any work could start of the development. She also commented that the planning officer had been unable to speak to the applicant.

There being no further business to conduct, the Chairman thanked everyone for their participation and closed the meeting at 8.10pm.

**Date of next Parish Council Meeting**

**Wednesday 23rd September 2020 at 7.30pm**

**A venue is to be fixed nearer the meeting date.**

**MINUES SIGNED BY: David Hedgley**

**DATED: 23rd September 2020**