

Charlbury Town Council engagement with Cottsway Housing Association

February 2021

Charlbury Town Council has agreed for a group comprising the chairman, vice-chairman and Cllr Morgan, supported by the Town Clerk, to meet with representatives of Cottsway and/or their agents (Oxford & Country Planning) *without prejudice*, to hear and discuss ideas for a possible housing development on land to the east of Jefferson's Piece, Charlbury on the clear understanding that the group's participation in such meetings will be subject to the following conditions:

- **Transparency.** Discussions must be held in an open and transparent manner. Approved minutes of meetings will be published into the public domain.
- **Without Prejudice.** The Town Council group will engage in these discussions "without prejudice" meaning that any comments made cannot and will not imply town council support, even in principle, to any housing scheme prior to formal submission of a planning application. (The town council will respond as consultee to any planning application in the normal way).
- **Neighbourhood Plan Compliance.** Any proposed development on this site must be fully compliant with all objectives and policies of the emerging Charlbury Neighbourhood Plan 2031, which has now completed the independent examination stage and has been recommended for referendum.
- **Rural Exception Site.** The Town Council group will only consider a possible development scheme on this site on the assumption that it is proposed as a Rural Exception Site with the aim of delivering affordable housing* to meet identified requirements for the parish of Charlbury. [* - the meaning of "Affordable Housing" is taken to be as defined in the NPPF (Feb 2019) – Annex 2: Glossary.]
- **Maintaining Affordability in Perpetuity.** Measures to ensure that homes are genuinely affordable to those with modest income, should not be restricted to initial occupiers but should remain available to future residents as far as possible.
- **Local Connection Test.** Allocation of affordable housing on this site should be subject to the "local connection" test, permitted by WODC for rural exception sites, and this test should remain in operation in perpetuity for subsequent occupiers.
- **Local Consultation.** Considering the significance of any proposed development on this site we expect Cottsway to conduct an open and meaningful consultation process with neighbours and with the community of Charlbury before any planning application is submitted.
- **Access Issues.** Access to this site will be problematic both during and after construction and this is a matter of considerable concern to local residents. Any development proposal must include measures to avoid or comprehensively mitigate issues arising from proposed access via existing narrow estate roads. Special attention must be given to addressing issues during the construction process.
- **Energy Efficiency and delivery of Zero Carbon living.** In recognition of the climate emergency (declared by central government, OCC, WODC and Charlbury Town Council), any development on this site should be an exemplar for lifetime energy performance and the delivery of zero carbon living.
- **Protection of Setting within the AONB and Conservation area.** Any proposed development should include appropriate green infrastructure and screening, and should seek to minimise light pollution to protect the setting of the site within the Cotswolds AONB and the Charlbury Conservation Area.

- **Helping to Deliver Charlbury's Aspirations.** Discussions should include a meaningful exploration of ways in which the delivery of a development here can assist with the provision of infrastructure and other measures to address priorities for the town including:
 - **Safe Walking and Cycling Routes.** To the town centre facilities, the school and public transport. Of particular significance in this respect is the provision of enhancements to the Enstone Road crossroads to improve pedestrian safety at this dangerous junction. Note that this junction will lie on the desire line pedestrian route to the town centre for residents of the new development.
 - **Recreation and Play Space.** Preferably on-site.
 - **Retaining Affordable Housing for Future Generations.** Suggestions for any measures available to avoid affordable housing stock from being lost to the community (e.g. through right to buy sales) would be most welcome.
 - **Protecting Wildlife and Improving Biodiversity.**

In the interests of transparency and avoidance of unwelcome speculation, the town council will issue a public statement following the first meeting with Cottsway explaining the situation and the Town Council's involvement.