

Dolton Parish Council

Minutes of the meeting held 13th September 2006 6pm in the Village Hall

Present: Cllr.Kendrew in the chair, Cllrs.Giles, Chivers, Grigg, Berkley-Sage
Jury, Silltow. Sue Southwell and colleague, Moira Constable and colleague
22 members of the public

Apologies: Cllr.Lock, the Clerk.

The Chair asked permission to change agenda putting public session between items 2 and 3. All agreed. The meeting opened at 6.15pm.

Talk by Moira Constable and colleague from Rural Housing Trust:-

RHT was set up in 1976 with Moira and Paul involved from the outset. Moira, Chief Executive, Paul Trustee. RHT was involved mainly in agricultural tied property but by 1983 the affordable housing problem in rural areas was across the board so focus was changed. RHT lobbied Government on subject of exception sites for affordable homes as development land became too expensive as a result. Local Authorities wrote in clauses in local plans for affordable only housing on land not usually earmarked for development. RHT schemes are for local people but allow for people who have moved away to come back.

Moira felt her housing survey to be better than the one that has just gone out. This one will be a snap shot and only a starting point not the last word. Moira asked Sue Southwell when results would be ready, middle of October was the answer.

Moira's first step would be to talk to TDC then choose site with all parties. She outlined a pure exception site – means only affordable housing with RHT 106 agreement tying to affordability and local occupancy can be built.

Moira spoke of culture of ownership being a problem so they build housing for rent and shared ownership. Where a mortgage is needed for shared ownership RHT use 3.50 – 4.00 times income to select people for this scheme. RHT never gets involved in open market schemes. Developers can do affordable open market shares but do not always do a good job in writing S106 agreements that work.

RHT develops sites (they are the developer) then uses local builders to build to a very high standard. They then find a housing trust to take on the housing. The trusts gain grants to buy from RHT. RHT has built on 350 exception sites to date. They are non-profit making. Some years the trust loses money with this year having a £15 million turnover. It is expected that there might be 12K left which is good enough to continue with.

Paul started speaking and said they would never go forward without backing of Parish Councils. He also said he had met with planners in TDC and they are keen for surrounding villages to establish needs of their own and maybe fan out? He said no scheme had failed to date and had lots of confidence in what they do as a trust.

Chair opened to councillors to ask questions.

Cllr.Jury: can people buy then sublet.

MC: no people would always be vetted with help from PC and TDC. The lease means that you cannot sublet.

In this question the subject of staircasing came up. RHT does not allow this. Staircasing is usually a government run thing. If you share own a house say 50% you can increase your stake, so one year buy 10% more to go to 60% ownership although in rural areas this stops at 80%.

Cllr.Silltow: could PC own a property.

MC: do not know. It would be a lot of hassle, best not get involved in being a landlord. RHT control by choosing the right housing association. PC should be involved in planning agreement and nominating people in need.

PUBLIC SESSION

C.Beedles: can you outline what is affordable housing.

MC: housing for people who cannot get on property ladder.

D.Weston: would you cater for disabled.

MC: yes all housing meet building regulations. 20 units have been purpose built but once person moves on there is a problem with finding someone with same needs.

R.Boyes: is this a one shot chance for local housing.

MC: we never over develop in the first phase. Exception policy is for small development but phase 2 is always nice to have. Must always be needs driven. Start new process on each phase.

Ms Pym: who sets prices.

MC: rents are set by TDC. Common ground is met between housing association and district council. Stay away from grant aided properties.

Sue Southwell: what do you offer after housing survey.

MC: once site is found get time table drawn up. Identify people by having open day in village and see if scheme is viable. This is used as planning evidence by TDC. Names given will be take forward to district council.

Moirra could then file her planning support document. She had sent Cllr.Berkley-Sage one of these and asked if she could share with other councillors and Sue Southwell but not general release.

J.Cotter: has anyone been successful in enforcing a 106 agreement.

MC: never had a need too. 106s have always worked for us.

Mrs.J.Genge: outlined 106s difference between open market, affordable mix and exception sites. These are completely different, exception sites being easier to tie up.

C.Burnage: are you the only body that does his.

MC: there is no one like us that builds, finds housing associations with no Government targets for RHT.

G.Genge: where is your funding from.

MC: Banks, Building Societies.

R.Boyes: do you have advantages with district councils.

MC : Like to think so, the exception site means a lot. But not with Highways, still have to comply to ever other planning requirement and highways give us problems with the position of some of our sites.

Mrs.T.Riley: if mother and family have house but all split up would one person be able to stay.

MC: it would be hard to rehouse that person. So yes, how do you get them out.

C.Beedles: how do your standards compare with open market afford mix.

MC: standards should apply to all development but RHT are proud to take you to any of their developments.

S.Southwell: staircasing – some people would have to move on.

MC: life is not perfect. We ask the question do you want a roof over your head in your village or not. You cannot have staircasing on exception sites. S.Southwell made the point of 80% staircasing in rural areas.

R.Partridge: do you look at infrastructure of villages.

MC: yes.

R.Partridge: can you go back to old sites that have had planning history.

MC: yes, in some ways these are the best – all the old reasons can be got over.

R.Curry: what is the percentage of agricultural land used.

MC: 95-100% is agricultural land in our developments.

N.Woods: is the housing association key.

MC: the Government is putting pressure on housing associations to join up to deliver greater number of housing. Well paid accountants and big business people without the ideals of the old days. RHT choose to stay as they are and stick to what they were formed for.

Meeting closed at 7.35pm.

signed.....chair.....dated