

Parish Council of Langton Matravers

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Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting of the Council held in St George's Church on Thursday 1st November 2017 at 7.00pm to respond to the Government's 'The Right Homes in the Right Places' Consultation.

Present: Cllr W Knight in the Chair, Cllrs P Loudoun, C Drayson, P Christie, R Sheppard.

There were 7 members of the public present.

1. Apologies: Cllrs P White, M Turner, M Lovell.

2. Declarations of interest. There were none.

3. Context. Cllr Knight opened the meeting by giving a brief introduction to the topic, noting that the Govt. was aware that the NPPF was not delivering the housing that was either wanted or needed; the consultation represents an attempt to improve the situation. Council may choose to agree, disagree or comment on other matters not mentioned in the consultation questions.

The meeting was adjourned for comments from the public.

4. Public Discussion.

a) Mr Ian Vaughan-Arbuckle asked what this enormous and complex document is contributing to sorting out housing problems? He is not convinced of the value of responding to yet another Government consultation. The Govt needs to listen to local communities: few of the questions seem to relate to the important issues.

b) Mrs Maggie Sutton noted that there didn't seem to be any questions addressing the Second Homes and the need for more Social housing. There is no apparent mention of CLTs – is the Secretary of State aware of them? The document does not address maintaining the sustainability of local communities.

c) Mrs Pat Wright said that there seemed to have been no progress since the last consultation (except more paper): we are effectively going round in circles, when we could be building houses.

Cllr Drayson pointed out that the last consultation had resulted in the 'Pause' on the PDC Local Plan, with housing numbers going down for the revised version.

Cllr Knight pointed out that the Govt is trying to streamline, simplify and speed up the process of getting housing built.

The meeting was reconvened.

5. Council Responses to Public Discussion comments.

Cllr Drayson and others agreed with points made by speakers. Cllr Christie noted that, having advised District Council to hire expensive consultants to do SHMAs, Govt is now suggesting use of Office of National Statistics data to arrive at realistic housing projections. Cllr Sheppard noted that the document was written with 'deliberate obfuscation'. Cllr Knight said that, despite Govts' assertion that the problem was with the approach to establishing housing needs, it might actually be about working to developers' agendas, which are generally related to maximising profit. Cllr Christie reported that at all PDC Housing Forum meetings, participants asked for the return of Council Housing, and that we need real 'homes', not more 'property'.

Responses to questions in the consultation were taken in order of perceived importance. **Responses as below were all approved by Resolution of the Council, on a question-by-question basis.**

Question 1:

- a) **do you agree with the proposed standard approach to assessing local housing need?
If not, what alternative approach or other factors should be considered?**

*While the desire to adopt a standard and simple method for establishing housing need is to be welcomed, the proposed adjustment, based on economic supply and demand, is seriously flawed. It gives equal weight to those who wish to buy a second home on the one hand and those with an immediate and essential housing need on the other. It ignores the fact that just a slight decrease in price will encourage greater **external** demand without addressing **local** need. It would be better for the adjustment factor to be based on the local housing register as a proportion of the total Local Planning Authority population. It is also critical that any approach recognises the constraints to development posed by established Settlement Boundaries, AONBs, SSSIs and Conservation Areas.*

Question 10

- a) do you have suggestions on how to streamline the process for identifying the housing need for individual groups and what evidence could be used to help plan to meet the needs of particular groups?**

We welcome the proposal that LPAs should establish the sizes and tenure required for the different types of housing need, especially as there is a chronic shortage of affordable housing for elderly couples, childless couples and singletons. We believe information which is held on the Local Authority Housing Register, together with the average waiting time for each housing type and size, will help the process of identifying housing need.

Question 19: having regard to the measures already identified, are there other actions that could increase build out rates ?

While many of the suggested improvements to the Planning Framework are to be welcomed, a number of other aspects of ‘the Right Homes in the Right Places’ need to be addressed;

- 1. The term ‘affordable’ needs to be redefined to mean truly affordable to all those in housing need, and as such should be based on average local **incomes** rather than market prices.*
- 2. The housing development market is currently broken. The Competition and Markets Authority needs to review the market with a view to recommending how it can be made to work properly.*
- 3. The NPPF needs to encourage appropriately-sized developments. Too often developments are oversized and unacceptable to local communities.*
- 4. Local Planning authorities need to be given greater powers to directly develop affordable and Social housing.*
- 5. The lack of affordable housing is not going to be solved while housing which is so designated can be sold on at full market rent. All affordable housing must become affordable in perpetuity.*
- 6. LPAs (and Neighbourhood Planning Groups) where second home ownership is significantly above the national average should be encouraged to prioritise the sale of new builds to local residents, as at St Ives.*
- 7. Government and LPAs should concentrate on the provision of Council/Social housing and housing for local needs. All other housing types should be held back until the local needs housing situation improves.*

8. *The SHLAA process is creating artificial inflation of land values. This also needs to be addressed by the CMA.*

Question 11:

- a) **should a local plan set out the housing need for designated neighbourhood planning areas and parished areas within the area?**

*At the very least, Neighbourhood Plans should identify needs according to affordability, housing tenure and type and size so as to establish the needs of **local** people within the parish/ neighbourhood planning area.*

- b) **do you agree with the proposal for a formula-based approach to apportion housing need to neighbourhood plan bodies in circumstances where the local plan cannot be relied on as a basis for calculating housing need?**

As 11a.

Question 15: how can Government ensure that infrastructure providers, including housing associations, are engaged throughout the process, including in circumstances where a viability assessment may be required?

Transparency between all relevant parties must be improved and maintained throughout the whole planning and development process.

Question 18:

- a) **do you think there are more appropriate circumstances when a local planning authority should be able to charge the further 20 per cent? If so, do you have views on how these circumstances could work in practice?**

While increased fees are to be welcomed where an LPA has become more efficient, there would be benefits if this increase were only to apply to larger developments, as self-builds, small housing associations and CLT developments need to be encouraged.

RESOLVED: To send copies of all these responses to MP. Mr Richard Drax, NALC via DAPTC as well as central Govt.

Thanks were recorded to St George's Church for allowing the Council to hold its meeting there.

Best wishes were extended to Cllr White for a speedy recovery.

The meeting closed at 9pm.

Signed.....(Chair) Date: