

To Development Management

Enmore Court

At last month's Planning & Highways Committee meeting, we discussed the basis on which Nylo Homes won their appeal to the Planning Inspector and the information they were given by Dorset Council, which they used in their appeal documents. As the entire validation of their appeal rested on the fact that they were proposing to build a development of affordable dwellings, the information they requested of Dorset Council regarding the level of affordable housing needed in Shaftesbury was clearly a key, if not *the*, main factor.

On page 91 of the Shaftesbury Neighbourhood Plan, 7.4 Appendix B - Housing & Employment, we printed the information supplied to us by Dorset Council which was that there were 205 people on the North Dorset Housing register with a connection to Shaftesbury requiring affordable accommodation. This information was accurate as of November 2019 when we finalised the content of the NP.

In May 2020, six months later, one of Nylo Homes' advisors, a director of Futurehousing.org, contacted Dorset Council to enquire what the housing register said was the affordable housing need in Shaftesbury. On page 16 of Spruce Town Planning's submission on behalf of Nylo Homes, item 8.16, they wrote:

"Prior to the submission of the application contact was made with the Council's Housing Enabling Team to establish the current levels of need for affordable housing in Shaftesbury. A copy of the response received is attached at appendix D, and it can be seen that the overall need was stated to be **660 units. Therefore, the need for affordable housing is acute, and the provision of 23 new affordable units will make an important contribution towards addressing that shortfall.** It can be seen from the submitted site plan that the indicative housing mix shown on the plans reflects the mix of housing need in Shaftesbury with the majority of units being smaller homes."

They then attached the email in question in their Appendices (page 44 Appendix D) sent to them by Dorset Council Community Led Housing and copied in to Dorset Council Housing Enabling Team Leader.

On the first of this month, Dorset Council responded to a request from Shaftesbury Town Council asking for the latest figures for the affordable housing register. This confirmed that there are 225 people on the housing register with a connection to Shaftesbury requiring affordable accommodation.

We are struggling to understand how we could have gone from 205 in November 2019, to 660 in May 2020 and then to 225 in November 2021. Even allowing for the pandemic, it is simply not credible for an additional 400-odd people within the space of six months to need affordable accommodation, all with connections to Shaftesbury - and now to no longer need it. And yet this information was held up by the applicants as clear proof that the need for affordable housing in Shaftesbury is "acute".

At this month's committee meeting, the P&H committee resolved to request a meeting with yourself, the Case Officer and Housing Enabling Team Leader to find out how this has happened, how the housing register works and how those needing affordable housing in Shaftesbury are assisted in finding the housing they need and want. Most of the affordable housing is sold to Housing Associations - are they obliged to contact Dorset Council and ask if there are any local people who need affordable housing before they allocate it? Do those people with connections to Shaftesbury have to then register with the Housing Association? Are they given preference? Given that the affordable housing allocations for the Redrow development at Wincombe, combined with that of the Barrett Homes

development on Wincombe Lane, together with the affordable housing allocation of Persimmon's proposed development on the Higher Blandford Road, amounts to 139 units (presuming a 30% quota of affordable housing for each development) we clearly have enough affordable accommodation in the pipeline to satisfy 61.9% of the affordable housing need and thus to render Nylo Homes's assertions at the very least inaccurate and possibly invalid.

We hold our Planning & Highways Committee meetings at 7pm on the first Tuesday of every month (there are no breaks in the year for this committee) so I would be grateful if you could let me know when you are all available to attend. Other significant concerns we have which we would wish to explore are in relation to the Lidl development and the unnecessary felling of three commemorative beach trees, the quantity of developer applications going to the Planning Inspectorate and the burden of housing development that Shaftesbury has been shouldering over the last 10+ years. It is true to say that we are extremely concerned that decisions made and gaps in process are leading to damaging outcomes for a historic town in a fragile setting, so I hope you appreciate our request and our urgent need for a face-to-face meeting.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

Virginia

Cllr Virginia Edwyn-Jones
Chair - Planning & Highways Committee
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