

WARHAM PARISH COUNCIL MEETING – 16 JULY 2020 – BY EMAIL

REPORT FROM HOMES FOR WELLS RE PROPOSED HOUSING SITE

Due to the pandemic, Homes for Wells had to put the project, to develop at Stiffkey Road, Warham, on hold. At this time, it was also becoming evident that the high cost of the project (as per the original specifications) could never be covered by the grant we were awarded, and it was necessary to carry out a complete review.

As we emerge from lockdown, many things have become much clearer and we have used the time to make important progress.

Michael Martin had been leading the project and sought different ways to finance the whole cost. The lenders were very keen to create a 'proof of concept' development for modular construction, here in north Norfolk. Unfortunately, the lender's conditions were incompatible with the terms of NNDC's planning consent and the terms of our grant from 'Homes England'. Within ten years, we estimated that Homes for Wells wouldn't have been able to afford the payments and the development would have fallen into the ownership of the lenders. This would have breached the terms of the grant from 'Homes England' and the Planning conditions - these both require the plot to be owned exclusively by a Registered Housing Provider.

Michael resigned from Homes for Wells three months ago. Nevertheless, the other members of our Warham Project Steering Group, Johanna Tennant (Housing Committee), Rod Day (Treasurer) and myself have been continuing to find ways to make the project viable. I am very pleased to advise that the likelihood of a solution is now much closer.

We have held a "Zoom" meeting with Mark Burghall, Development Director of Flagship Housing, also attended by Anna Clarke of NNDC, and are about to start to negotiate Heads of Terms with Flagship. We aim to put these to our full Board on 22nd July. Senior Directors of Flagship are supportive of Homes for Wells and recognise that the most difficult part of the project has already been dealt with, namely securing the plot, gaining Planning Consent and winning the support of the local community.

The new proposal would entail Flagship obtaining a new grant from 'Homes England', arranging the additional financing, then carrying out the development work, using their own design criteria and conventional build methods. **Homes for Wells would have full rights to nominate all the local applicants on our Allocations list, just as if we owned the entire development and on the same basis that we originally proposed to Warham Parish Council.**

We very much hope that this meets with Councillors' approval. It is the only solution that will satisfy both the planning and grant criteria, that the project has to be exclusively for affordable housing - all allocated to applicants on the Homes for Wells list, and remain in the ownership of a Registered Provider of Social Housing, which (like us) Flagship is.

I have updated the landowner, Stephen Floate, and he is fully supportive of our position. I trust this information will be hugely encouraging to Warham Parish Council, after the uncertainties of the last few months.

If I can be of any further assistance, please don't hesitate to e mail me during the meeting, as I will be in attendance on line.

David Fennell
Chair
Homes for Wells.

NB Anna Clark is a colleague of Graham Connelly KL