

Parish Council	Brent Knoll Parish Council
Date	Wednesday 3rd February 2016
Subject	Brent Knoll Affordable Housing Project
Briefing Note Author	Esther Carter – Housing Project Development Officer Strategy and Development Service Tel: 01278 435599 Email - esther.carter@sedgemoor.gov.uk
Purpose of the Paper	This paper provides an update to the members of the Parish Council concerning the future provision of new affordable housing in Brent Knoll <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Update on the current site availability 2. Update on site selection exercise 3. The next step for the Parish Council to agree
Defining Affordable Housing	Affordable housing allows local people to access a suitable home, at a price they can afford, where they were born / grew up / have support and social networks in or work in. Affordable housing can be provided on a rental basis, home-ownership basis . Affordable housing is provided by the public sector, private sector or by the community .
Affordable Housing Project Plan	Stage 1: Understanding local housing need (December 2013) Stage 2: Finding and securing a suitable site Stage 3: Designing and agreeing a housing project Stage 4: Identifying a housing development partner Stage 5: Understanding funding options and planning permission Stage 6: Construction phase Stage 7: Occupation stage
Local Housing need in Brent Knoll	A housing need assessment was carried out in Brent Knoll in December 2013 which showed a need of 8 affordable homes required. It is important to note that this offers a snapshot of the housing situation in the parish at the time of the survey. The numbers of need will alter with increasing/decreasing housing values, mortgage lenders, economic climate and demographic changes in the community.
Finding and securing a site	There has been one site in Brent Knoll that the Housing Enabling team have been in discussions with over the past couple of years at the request of the Parish Council. This site has now fallen away, and it is time to look at other opportunities in the village. Given the apparent absence of any suitable, available and achievable parcels of land within the settlement boundary, the site search expanded to include parcels of land outside the settlement boundary.

Finding and securing a site (cont...)

Sedgemoor District Council Planning Policies (D7 & P4) allows for housing development outside the settlement boundary for affordable housing if there is a demonstrable local need and support from the community.

Other sites that have been identified for consideration are (see map below);

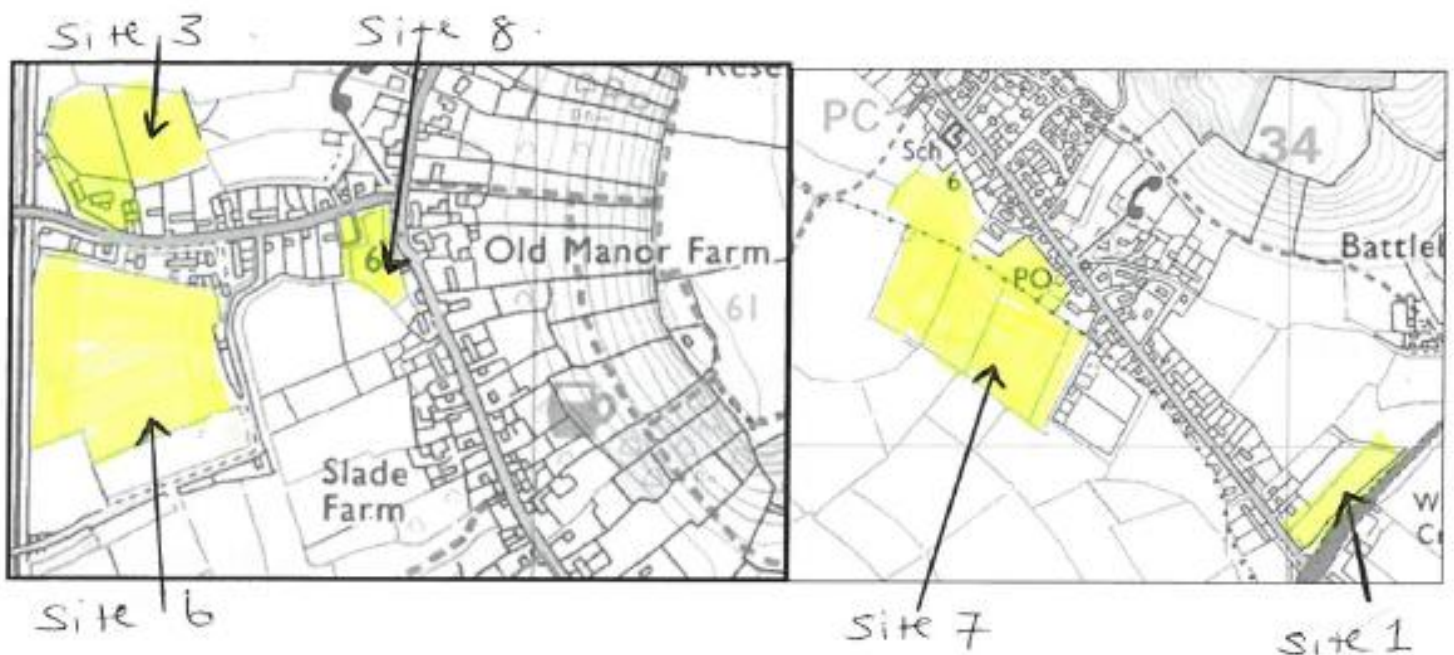
Site 3: Parish Council's 2nd choice site. The land owner has been approached but is not prepared to release the whole site for an affordable housing project. This means that the site would fall short of providing the housing need required.

Site 6: Parish Council's 3rd choice site. The land owner was contacted who confirmed that the site was no longer available as it had been sold.

Site 7: This site wasn't originally included in the Parish Council's choice. The land owners contacted the housing enabler confirming that they are keen to develop part of the site to fulfil the affordable housing need in Brent Knoll.

Site 1: This site has been brought to the housing enabler's attention which could deliver the number of affordable housing required. There is currently an option on the site from a land agent.

Site 8: This is a new site that has been offered to the housing enabler which could deliver the number of affordable housing required. A possibility for the Parish Council to consider.



Assessment criteria

Assessment Criteria 1: Site availability for housing

A site is considered available for development, when, on the best information available, there is confidence that there are no legal or ownership problems, such as multiple ownerships, ransom strips, tenancies or operational requirement of landowners.

Assessment Criteria 2: Site suitability for housing

Factors such as planning policy restrictions and limitations (designations, protected areas, existing planning policy and corporate or community strategy policy), any physical problems or limitations (access, infrastructure, ground conditions, flood risk, hazardous risks, pollutions or contamination), any potential impact (upon landscape features and conservation) and any environmental conditions.

**Assessment Criteria
(cont ...)**

Assessment Criteria 3: Site achievability for housing

A site is considered achievable for development where there is a reasonable prospect that housing will be developed on the site at a particular point in time. This is essentially a judgement about the economic viability of a site, and the financial capacity of the affordable housing provider to actually build the new homes.

Designing and agreeing a housing project

The Parish Council now have the task to look at the sites available as shown above, and a priority given to each site i.e. list of preference. The housing enabler will then check the sites as per the assessment criteria above and feedback to the Parish Council the findings.

Understanding funding Options available

SDC Core Strategy Policy D6 (for allocated parcels of land). This policy would allow SDC to secure a % of affordable homes from a qualifying TCPA application. There are no sites fitting this description in Brent Knoll.

Therefore this policy is not considered appropriate or helpful in bringing forward new affordable housing at this time.

SDC Core Strategy Policy D7 allows development by exception outside the settlement boundary. Any use of this policy would only facilitate the delivery of affordable housing. By its very nature, the building of affordable housing requires some form of subsidy support in order to make the homes affordable. Gap funding has in the past almost always been provided by the public sector (central or local government).

Securing sufficient levels of public investment in support of new affordable housing has become increasingly more difficult due to reductions in government expenditure. Since winning the May 2015 election, government has embarked on a radical alternative affordable housing policy focussed on home ownership. This has seen the government close grant bids to the 2015 – 2020 affordable housing programme to support projects such as the one required in Brent Knoll. It is impossible to say when (or if) another affordable housing programme will open. Therefore this policy is not considered appropriate or helpful in bringing forward new affordable housing at this time.

SDC Core Strategy Policy P4 allows development by exception outside the Settlement boundary. This policy would see the development of both affordable housing and market homes. Again, the building of the affordable housing will require some form of subsidy support but not usually from the public (central or local government) sector. Delivering the affordable homes is not reliant on the provision of public sector funds (central or local government). P4 policy allows the development of land outside the settlement boundary to provide a mix of affordable and open market homes. The open market homes would provide the necessary gap funding for the affordable homes. Sedgemoor District Council would typically expect to see 40% of the new homes to be affordable, with the remaining 60% being for market sale. The profit from the market sale homes would be recycled directly into the provision of the new affordable homes, with the developer being allowed to take a reasonable profit from the project.

In light of the above advice (relating to policies D7) policy P4 is considered appropriate and helpful in terms of bringing forward new affordable housing in Brent Knoll.

The next step for Brent Knoll Parish Council

Understanding the local housing need in Brent Knoll (complete) December 2013 – 5 x 2 bed homes & 3 x 3 bed homes.

The Parish Council to decide the sites in preference of order that they wish to pursue for the development of affordable housing. Some ground has been done already by the housing enabler, the next step would be to work through the assessment criteria to ensure the sites are available, suitable

and achievable. After which the site will need to be secured through an 'option agreement'. The developer will then design the housing project based on the housing need, and produce an initial indicative layout for comments from the Parish Council. (this will take some time and will probably be finalised by the end of 2016)

Once the layout has been agreed by the landowner, developer and Parish Council agree an affordable housing delivery partner, successful schemes almost always triumph where the Parish Council have had a strong say in this selection process.

The enabler will then work with the Parish Council to provide a community consultation showing the proposed development. The enabler would facilitate and organise this session in conjunction with the developer, housing provider and contractor. Members of the Parish Council could have an active role in the consultation.

Summing up

Now that the site on Brent Street (Sandy's site) has been disregarded it is important for the Parish Council to reconsider the alternative sites as well as those sites that have been brought forward to the enabling team. Once a decision has been made for the sites in preferred order the enabler will work with the land owner(s) and developer to secure the site. The enabler will then be able to put together a timetable to move the project forward keeping the Parish Council informed throughout the process.