

# **Bullet Point Minutes from Bergh Apton Affordable Housing Public Meeting 15<sup>th</sup> December 2004, 7.30pm Bergh Apton Village Hall**

Present

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Chair	Robert J Kerry, Oak Villa, Hellington Corner, Bergh Apton, Norwich, NR15 1BE,
Clerk	Philippa C Fuller, The Old Hall Coach House, The Street, Brooke, Norwich, NR15 1LB, 34 residents of the village
Apologies	Carrie Kerry; Maria Philips; Sheila Tomlinson

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## **1.1 Background**

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A Parish Council meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2004 had **resolved** to hold a public meeting at which residents of Bergh Apton and other interested individuals could debate the issue of affordable housing and recommend to the Parish Council whether an affordable housing survey should be undertaken in Bergh Apton.

The issue had arisen as a result of a letter to the Parish Council from the District Council asking for permission to undertake an affordable housing survey as a result of the willingness of the County Council to donate land for the construction of social housing in the village..

Bob Kerry, a former Parish Council Chairman would chair the meeting with Philippa Fuller, Clerk, taking notes.

## **1.2 Notes from the Meeting**

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Affordable Housing is housing operated by a Registered Social Landlord [Housing Association] that can be rented or part-sold in a shared-ownership arrangement. It can never be sold on the open market and thus it can be reserved for local families 'in perpetuity'.

Affordable Housing could be reserved purely for residents of Bergh Apton & Alington, to those people with a bone-fide association to the village jumping-the-housing-queue when vacancies occurred. A Section106 agreement would limit occupancy of the houses to those with an association with local villages.

A recent development of affordable housing in South Walsham had the full co-operation of the Parish Council and other village improvements were included as part of the scheme.

The County Council had offered land at Bergh Apton alongside other parishes in Norfolk. The land was offered to a housing association at very low values. The stock of 'affordable homes' had diminished as a result of right-to-buy legislation and they had not been replaced by new ones.

The District Council operated the Affordable Housing Waiting list [about 2500 people] on behalf of the various housing associations in the district. Residents wishing to be considered for affordable housing should apply to the District Council.

Affordable Housing would only be built if a need for it was demonstrated as a result of a housing survey. A survey could be undertaken by the District Council, A Housing Charity, a developer or a Parish Council. A recent survey at Seething by a developer had identified a need for at least five houses for local people.

The neighbouring village of Alington had given its consent for an affordable housing survey to be conducted in their village.

A resident of Bergh Apton was in straightened financial circumstances meaning that she would not necessarily be able to stay as a resident. She wished to put her name down for the first affordable house.

Affordable Housing gave the opportunity for those of limited means to live and raise a family in the village where they have been brought up.

Where a need is established for affordable housing amongst residents of a village, the number of houses that are likely to be considered for planning permission is divided by half under 'exception policy' HOU13. Extra houses could only be built in future following completion of a further affordable housing survey.

The provision of 2-bed housing could allow residents of larger properties to 'downgrade' their own homes and release larger family-properties, where there was a shortage, to other families. Villages have 'life cycles' so the balance of housing need today may be different in future... just because the school is full now doesn't mean that it will be full in future.

There are three different types of housing survey varying from 10 to 60 questions. The District Council would supply an approved survey questionnaire together with sticky address labels. The distribution and collation of the survey could be undertaken by the Parish Council, which would choose the approved questionnaire to use.

The housing needs survey could be distributed to a small number of villages or expanded to a larger part of the district. Limiting to a small number of village[s] would favour residents of those villages but limit the number of houses built.

The area of land proposed by the County Council at Threadneedle Street amounted to half-an acre... enough for about six semi-detached dwellings [three houses]. Alternative sites in Alington or within Bergh Apton could be considered but they should be 'sustainable', that is close to village amenities, bus routes, schools and within the existing built-up area.

Part of the funding for the construction of affordable houses would be from the additional council tax levy on owners of second homes.

Any detailed proposal for affordable housing would have to follow a housing survey and would be subject to normal planning permission constraints. John Fuller and Derek Blake sat on the planning committee alongside five other Councillors. Neither John Fuller nor Derek Blake were able to express an opinion on the merits or otherwise of individual sites in case it prejudiced their ability to determine a planning application on a later date.

Adrian Gunson felt that the land at Threadneedle Street was not as suitable as other parts of the villages of Bergh Apton, Alington or Yelverton. This view was widely held by other residents.

Questions relating to the provision of affordable housing had not formed part of the recent parish plan questionnaire.

Kevin Parfitt proposed that a Village Affordable Housing Survey should be undertaken by the Parish Council so that all village residents could participate confidentially in the issue.

### **1.3 Resolution**

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At 8.55pm, the Chairman asked residents of the village present at the meeting for a show of hands to recommend to the Parish Council whether it should undertake an affordable housing survey. **All residents present voted in favour of the proposal to undertake an affordable housing survey. There were no votes against. The proposal was carried unanimously.**

Alison Freeman, Parish Council Chair, confirmed that the matter would be discussed at the next parish council meeting.

Philippa Fuller  
Monday, 03 January 2005