

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE SAUGHALL PARISH RURAL HOUSING WORKING GROUP held on 24 June 2002 in the Parish Room, Fiddlers Lane, Saughall

In attendance: Councillor A Bailey (in the Chair)  
Councillor Mrs JE Storrar  
Councillor Mrs J Young

Mr S Lewis, Forward Planning, Chester City Council  
Mr B Holmes, Rural Housing Enabler, Cheshire Community Council

1 CODE OF CONDUCT – DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations of Interest were received.

2 PROPOSED TERMS OF REFERENCE

RECOMMENDED: That

(1) the following Terms of Reference be agreed for the Saughall Parish Rural Housing Working Group:

- ?? To consider the extent of the need for Affordable Housing in Saughall.
- ?? To consider how identified need can be met, exploring possible options and looking at the various types of housing provision required.
- ?? To identify possible sites/locations where Affordable Housing could be built in Saughall.
- ?? To draw up an appropriate Action Plan.
- ?? To gather information by engaging, communicating and consulting with the local community, appropriate organisations, authorities and interested parties.
- ?? To consider the availability of funding for Affordable Housing.
- ?? To make recommendations to the Parish Council.

and

(2) the Working Group's Terms of Reference be kept under review and amendments be made as appropriate as its work progresses and evolves.

3 ESTABLISHING THE NEED FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN SAUGHALL

As part of Chester City Council's statutory housing duties a Rural Housing Needs Survey had been undertaken in 2000 to enable and facilitate the consideration of housing conditions and needs in its District.

Data analysis had been completed and the results of the Survey had been produced at rural ward and (where possible) parish level. A copy of the main report from the Rural Housing Needs Survey had been made available to Members together with the appropriate Ward Appendices for Saughall and Shotwick Park.

The documents were designed to be used together with the main report highlighting the methodology approach used and setting out information for the rural area as a whole. The Ward Appendices showed more localised detail.

The Rural Housing Needs Survey identified an overall demand for 66 new homes in the Saughall Ward over the next 5 years, of which 21% (14 units) were for Affordable Housing.

Officers of Chester City Council along with Cheshire Community Council's Rural Housing Enabler had attended a Special Meeting of the Parish Council on 3 December 2001 and made a specific presentation. Information on Affordable Housing had been made available and Members had discussed how this could be best achieved to meet the requirements of Saughall's residents. Young people brought up in Saughall often had to move away from the village because they were unable to afford the properties which became available. The Parish Council had been keen, therefore, to see more Affordable Housing to specifically meet local need being made available in the village. Consequently, it had resolved to establish this Working Group to consider Saughall in detail and to identify possible sites that may be suitable for housing development.

#### 4 INFORMATION GATHERING

It was noted that housing need could be identified from the City Council's Rural Housing Needs Survey. Information was also available from Housing Associations/Trusts. Waiting lists provided an insight into housing need and there was an abundance of local knowledge which could be exploited.

The Parish Council as part of its Parish Plan initiative had, subject to obtaining the necessary funding from the Countryside Agency, commissioned the Cheshire Community Council to carry out a survey to establish what should be included in a Parish Plan which would project forward over the next ten years or so. It was suggested that two or three questions could be included specifically in relation to housing and Affordable Housing to meet local need.

#### 5 CHESTER DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN

It was noted that a Strategic Local Plan had been drawn up by Chester City Council to make sufficient provision to meet needs up to 2011. The main emphasis in the rural area was upon meeting locally generated needs, and in particular, seeking to provide homes for those local people who would not otherwise be able to meet their housing needs on the open market.

The Chester District Local Plan did not make any specific allocations for housing development in the village for the period up to 2011.

However, units had (or were likely to) come forward on sites which were not specifically identified in the Local Plan, but which were nevertheless considered acceptable in planning terms. These sites may take the form of conversions and subdivision of existing buildings, the redevelopment of previously used land, or modest infill developments within the settlement. Since the survey had been carried out eight of these had been completed in Saughall and a further twelve had current planning permission.

## 6 AFFORDABLE HOUSING TO MEET LOCAL NEED – THE PARISH COUNCIL’S POSITION

The Chairman told the meeting that the Parish Council would not be willing to progress further without clarification that any Affordable Housing provision in Saughall in the future would be specifically for local village people.

It was imperative that Affordable Housing was provided in the village as a means by which young people could get a foot on the housing ladder. Many had to move out of Saughall because they could not afford to buy housing in the village. Although the Housing Authority awarded extra points to stay in the locality, young people still missed out. There were issues around how existing properties were managed and these needed to be discussed.

Mr Holmes reported that as Saughall’s population was approximately 3,200 it was more difficult to apply terms and conditions to restrict housing to local people. If the population had been under 3,000 restrictions could have been put in place.

## 7 PUBLIC INQUIRY – CHESTER DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN

A Public Inquiry had been carried on the Chester District Local Plan and the Inspector’s report had not yet been made public although publication was imminent.

Mr Lewis reported that opinion would be offered by the Inspector on several issues. It was expected that reference may be made to the need for a specific Housing Allocations Policy.

Once the findings following the Public Inquiry were made available consideration would be given as to whether local controls could be exercised to ensure that Affordable Housing was allocated to local people. It was noted that the Parish Council would require specific guarantees in this regard.

Consequently, it was **AGREED** that the Working Group would go on to explore new housing options, range of tenures, inclusive communities, mix of housing types and identify possible sites without commitment in the absence of the Inspector’s findings.

It was also **AGREED** that a report on the Inspector’s opinion would be presented, if available, to the next meeting of the Working Group. Whether the Working Group’s work continued would be dependent on agreement to a specific Housing Allocations Policy with the City Council.

## 8 POSSIBLE SITES FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

It was noted that it was difficult to find sites and owners wishing to sell at such a price as to finance affordable housing.

Chester City Council had resolved to grant planning permissions for the construction of 12 affordable houses as an “exceptions” site at Lodge Lane. However, this had not been progressed to date due to site constraints and the land sale being unresolved.

If this scheme was progressed, then the remaining two units could be met on another site within the village if an appropriate location could be found.

If the Lodge Lane scheme did not progress, than an alternative “exceptions” site could be identified on the edge of the village to be released solely for Affordable Housing and managed through a Housing Association to ensure that it remained as such in perpetuity.

Clearly the options for suitable sites were limited by environmental and other constraints. Therefore, before proceeding further, the Development Services Department of the City Council was keen to ascertain the views of the Parish Council.

Chester City Council’s preferred option was the site on Lodge Lane which currently had planning permission for twelve units. The Chairman made it clear that the Parish Council would only be willing to sanction the development if Cheshire County Council, the landowner, ensured that an agreed proportion of any profit made from the sale of its land for affordable housing was used to assist the provision of further recreational facilities in the village.

The meeting went on to identify a number of sites in the village as possible locations for a modest Affordable Housing Schemes. These sites would be considered further and a report would be made by Messers Holmes and Lewis to the next meeting of the Working Group on their rankings, possibilities, etc.

9 DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was **AGREED** that the next meeting of the Working Group would be at 7:30pm on Wednesday, 25 September 2002 in the Parish Room, Fiddlers Lane, Saughall.