

Bodmin Town Council



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Date: 30 November 2018

Our Ref: SMF/Cons/2018

Your Ref: HousingSPD

Dear Sir / Madam

Housing Supplementary Planning Document – Consultation Draft (October 2018)

Bodmin Town Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the '*Housing Supplementary Planning Document*' which was considered by Bodmin Town Council's Planning Committee when it met on 7 November and again on 21 November 2018 and I have been instructed to write making the following response:

These comments are made from the perspective that Bodmin Town Council is one of the largest and most proactive town councils in Cornwall. The Town Council provides a range of high quality services and facilities throughout the town and has a budgeted operational expenditure of £1.5 Million in the financial year 2018/19.

Bodmin Town Council welcomed this paper and the overarching strategy to outline the bedrock by which an appropriate mix and ratio of housing is to be provided to be able to address current needs and to cater for Cornish communities into the future.

Bodmin Town Council is supportive of new methods to address local housing need whilst looking at in perpetuity measures to ensure that people can access homes that are affordable to them. Bodmin Town Council is therefore supportive of the move by Cornwall Council to look at local purchasing power to bring open market purchase within the reach of a typical household based on local incomes and up-to-date house price data. This should go hand-in-hand with other policy to ensure that discounted homes for sale are applied with the local connection test / requirement to ensure that

homes are being provided to address local housing need and / or to assist local residents to support close relatives with a network of care and support (it is noted that family members with a network of care and support can significantly assist with health and wellbeing of that individual(s) and reduce the burden upon the health system).

Extra Care

A further observation with the document would be on Extra Care – section of the paper commencing from paragraph 106 on page 26. It is noted that there is reference to Cornwall Council supporting the development of extra care and specialist housing in Cornwall for people with dementia, physical disabilities, learning disabilities and older people, which Bodmin Town Council would strongly support as independent living can strengthen communities.

However, Bodmin Town Council noted the absence of a direct comment in relation to people who may be suffering with mental health issues who could benefit from extra care and the facilities outlined in this section of the paper. As a matter of completeness and inclusivity, it is considered that this section should be appropriately re-worded to reflect the opportunity to include people with mental health issues, as not all mental health problems require intervention or residential care support (it is noted that a number of mental health issues may preclude an ability for some people to lead independent lifestyles and an assessment on a case-by-case basis will be required). An extra care option would, for a large majority of people, provide them with the community support and independence that would be most beneficial to them and their relatives.

Older people's accommodation

The Town Council considers that there needs to be appropriate schemes coming forward to assist people in later life with downsizing which helps release family properties (3 and 4 bed) onto the market. Without this life cycle and without new properties being built to cater for later living, the sustainable community model falters. Bodmin Town Council would therefore welcome a wider policy being considered around community housing to provide opportunities beyond simply affordable homes.

Specialist residential care housing, similar to Bederkesa Court in Bodmin, is much needed and ensures that older people can live in a safe, warm and close support network environment (offering a close knit, social community) which can assist with mitigating the impact to decreasing health and social care budgets. It is noted that the Prince Charles house in St. Austell underwent recent refurbishment (around 5 years ago) and would be another good model for best practice.

For older people looking to downsize, as and when their current home becomes too large to maintain and upkeep, there needs to be an option to support them and their later living needs whilst opening up larger properties for families who may have outgrown their current property. Later living property options can greatly assist with more appropriate accommodation, which includes appropriate home adaptations, which can support people to live independently for longer and stave off earlier access to NHS services.

This model of housing also ensures that elderly or more vulnerable people live within the community and close to relatives or family carers to remain in employment and reduces their journey times to visit their loved ones. This can significantly reduce worry, anxiety and stress for all parties concerned.

A viable option for any new scheme being considered could be the former Athelstan House site in Bodmin as that has become vacant following recent demolition work by Cornwall Care. This would present an excellent town centre site with relatively level access via Priory Road and through Priory Park to a range of local shops and services and would be an exciting option for any shovel ready projects.

Second Homes

Whilst considering this paper Members discussed the concerns they have with regards second home ownership across the County and the inevitable impact that this has on access to housing for local people. In particular, there was significant concern for policy to better address the impact of second home ownership on Cornish Communities as the cumulative impact can have long standing and devastating impacts on schools and businesses (such as post offices, shops and pubs) as many retire to an area and / or only occupy a property during the summer months. Members were also very concerned with the exploitation of the system by second home owners given rate exemptions that can be applied and navigated to their benefit, whilst putting increased pressure on local services and continuing the trend to out-price local people from the housing market.

Members were cognisant of the fact that Cornwall's tourism contributes significantly to the Cornish economy and that a number of properties offer holiday rental opportunities for visitors which need servicing by local people / firms. However, the general consensus was for some better control mechanisms to be in place to strike an acceptable balance between second home ownership and retaining a community's spirit and sense of place.

Further policy work should be robustly considered, constructed and implemented to safeguard communities from the social erosion that is being experienced in a number of villages and towns reflected in the out of season 'closed for winter' effect that has and is occurring in some villages. If the rate of this effect continues, the very reason for people wanting to 'buy-into' the Cornish way of life will be lost and restricted to summer trade – assuming of course that that business model can support the local pub, shops and the remaining local people feel able to continue to live in that type of flux and transience (and assuming that there are local jobs to continue to support them and their families). This latter point is of particular concern for smaller communities where second home ownership has been at a higher rate of uptake.

Self-build

Bodmin Town Council considers self build to be an important and cost effective option which should be further encouraged through appropriate planning mechanisms with

emerging allocations / schemes, as this can be a route to assist local people to get onto and subsequently move up the housing ladder.

Bodmin Town Council is extremely concerned with the quality of the housing schemes being delivered in Bodmin by some of the national developers as they continue to push high density schemes that follow a standard style of design and utilise a minimalist approach to the use of local materials (if any), often citing the barrier being on the grounds of economic viability. The schemes coming forward are generic and lead to an erosion of house style in Cornish communities.

It is therefore considered that self-build would offer a more favourable approach when compared to purchase prices and build style / quality offered by housing companies / property developers. Self-build would also give scope for a more bespoke and personalised approach to be followed which would better cater the needs of owners, achieving space standards more in-keeping with their requirements and potentially affording more adaptability into the future (internal and external reconfigurations).

Landlords

Good responsible landlords make a valuable contribution to the social housing stock. It is imperative that reasonable and responsible landlords are retained and not disengaged through the system. Tenants who mistreat rented accommodation and cause damage whilst in situ or on vacating should not be entitled to a full deposit reimbursement or provided with a full grant towards their next tenancy / rent. People who are model and exemplary tenants should be encouraged and those who mistreat their home should be penalised through some form of appropriate and meaningful measures.

Bodmin Town Council considers that there should be greater emphasis on supporting landlords so that they can be part of an inclusive system that encourages their continuing role and function as part of the housing mix and solution for communities.

Sustainable communities

Linked with the above paragraph regarding self-build plots, the Town Council would be strongly supportive of lower density developments where higher value properties could be built, either by a developer or through self-build as this would offer a range and mix of properties within the town and reduce the trend for managers and executives etc to buy property in the rural hinterland for the commute into towns such as Bodmin for employment purposes. This would in turn assist with the local economy as money earned from local employment is put back into the local shops, cafes etc. This would also assist with reducing vehicular movements on the local highway network and ameliorate issues with air quality and traffic congestion along the A389 corridor.

Given Bodmin's unique central geographical location and strong transport links adjacent the conflux of the A30 and A38, the town needs to be able to provide the right mix of housing to not only assist first time buyers access the housing market, but also to retain higher wage earners in the town to stimulate the local economy and

redress any imbalance with a range of property options for purchasers to assess against their own personal circumstances.

Bodmin Town Council is therefore supportive of a system which looks to achieve a true affordable model taking into account local purchasing power to access the housing market. There should also be the right kind of mix so that as many local people as possible feel able to access the housing market in their community, which includes higher spec developments to stimulate growth and underpin a range of shops and an evening economy. It is only right that as many local people as possible have an option to access housing in their village / town, rather than contemplating moving to other areas of the County in order to access a home.

Whilst writing this consultation response, Bodmin Town Council considered that the planning system should be cognisant of some issues created by high density housing schemes which can lead to local frustration and conflict. It is not uncommon for there to be disagreement between local residents on any allocated parking spaces and the limited availability of parking generally. This can lead to congested on-street parking and in turn create restricted access for emergency services. It has been known for issues such as this to escalate to neighbour disputes as inconsiderate parking can result in obstructions to property and / or footpaths and pedestrian areas. It is not uncommon to see vehicles parking extremely close together in new and existing developments given space constraints. Some drivers also choose to park on communal (public) areas restricting access and use with a resulting impact upon the visual amenity of the area. The use of these areas as additional parking space can also cause harm through wheel damage to sites and inevitable erosion of grassed areas which has ongoing maintenance implications to any management company and / or local councils. Bodmin Town Council considers that this should be addressed through developers being encouraged to adopt good design principles with appropriate provision of parking spaces given the county's reliance on private forms of transport.

There is a correlation between the increased number of new homes being built and community infrastructure not being able to keep pace with demand. The issues commonly being reported back to the Council relate to the need for further provision of schools, dentists, doctors and fairly basic improvements and enhancements and to community infrastructure such as parks and open spaces, increased cemetery capacity and facilities for young children and teenagers. There needs to be a joined-up approach through any site allocation process to provide more parks and open spaces and cemetery space for a growing town. Without these areas of publicly accessible areas for informal play, together with more formal sports pitch provision, the future health and wellbeing of our communities is at risk of harm.

There is a growing concern that given the ongoing austerity measures being experienced across the public sector, which is compounded by the uncertainty around any UK Brexit deal (which may well add to the trend for ongoing budgetary constraints), the Town Council is concerned that public services such as Fire and Police will not be able to match growing populations and spikes in the demand on their services. Bodmin Town Council would therefore urge a multi-agency approach to a review and re-evaluation on the county's emergency services so that these vital

services have a concomitant growth model to keep pace with the estimated population increases over the coming plan period to 2030 as a minimum.

Bodmin Town Council is hopeful that these views can be taken into account, as these are the very real issues being reported by local residents to their elected representatives.

Your kind assistance in this matter is much appreciated.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S.M. Facer', with a small dot at the end.

S M Facer
Town Clerk