

Rural Housing Enablement

Questions for the Village Assembly

1. Do you think Litton Cheney needs affordable housing?
2. What is your perception of “affordable”?
3. What are the realistic prospects of a Community Land Trust being created in Litton Cheney?
4. If affordable, where?
5. Status Quo?

A Cross Section of Responses Received

Need for affordable housing?

Such a need can only arise if either there is local employment requiring local accommodation or as an adjunct to the creation of a mixed community which without affordable housing risks becoming unbalanced. The PC carried out a survey a while ago and may or may not have the necessary evidence showing such need and if not then a further survey might be required.

It would seem to me that the need for rural housing in Litton is probably met by the block of housing (Bride Place) under construction at Charity Farm.

This sounds like a good idea but whether it could be put into practice in Litton is questionable. The idea has been suggested before with no result - only new and mostly expensive houses being built (an example being two at present in Barges Close).

We do not feel that there is a need here for further rural development in our village. The school is full, there is no bus service, and the ethos of a small village is extremely attractive to those wishing to live here. Enhancing the number of residents would lead to increased traffic, which in itself would do nothing to improve the already atrocious road conditions in several parts of the village. And while it would be nice to think that the church might be the beneficiary of such development, experience suggests that this is unlikely.

Affordable housing for “households who are residents or have an existing family or employment connection” is a worthy aim. Achieving it in a rural setting has been elusive and, in my view, the RHE initiative will not solve the problem for Litton Cheney.

Yes, more houses in suitable areas, i.e. affordable homes/ shared ownership etc but NO more big expensive houses to buy or rent out as second homes.

If there are to be many more houses, local services need improving, bus services, access to doctors and dentists etc.

What sort?

Presumably either provided and controlled by a Housing Association or more “in house” via a Community Land Trust. I imagine the latter would be preferable as the village should be able to retain control over who resides there although inevitably a Trust would involve considerable and continuing input from the village community

In our opinion the best way for Litton would be to involve the Community Land Trust which deals with various aspects within a community including affordable housing. It would seem most logical to have limited truly affordable housing to rent by qualifying residents and further provision in Bridport where there is likely to be work/facilities without the need to commute.

Affordability. The 80% of market value criteria does not assist in this area where prices are higher than they are in other places in Dorset due to the proximity of the coast and pressure from tourist lets and second home buyers. The initiative does not itself provide funding beyond facilitation and if the %age was further reduced to make more accessible this would need to be sought from other parties.

While I would welcome any proposals to develop affordable housing, one of the initial problems is actually in defining ‘affordable’. Unfortunately, I think the term has become a bit of a sound bite for politicians of all parties and at all levels without much meaningful thought put in to what this really means and how we can realistically make housing affordable for young people and those on a low income. Many of those who affordable housing is supposed to be targeted at would still not be able to purchase such housing as it would still remain out of their price bracket. This is also not just a rural issue but is similarly important in many areas, particularly in the South-East of England.

There is also an additional concern which has happened to most similar schemes in the past is that once the first owner wants to sell their property it then becomes ‘market value’ once again, so even if it was affordable initially this will frequently be lost.

Affordable housing does not have to be ‘for sale’ but can equally apply to properties to rent as well.

Much employment within the area is also of a more seasonal nature.

Having lived in the village for almost 6 years I can only recall a few people say they would like to live here ‘..if only there was affordable housing’. The reverse is of course true in that if there were realistically affordable housing more people may well want to live here!

Affordable housing possibly means housing for people, usually single or young families on lower incomes, who struggle to afford to rent or buy properties within the current market.

Until further research is completed I'm not entirely sure what the local need is, however I think all areas benefit from having mixed populations and that more such housing would encourage a more diverse social and economic blend of residents. Any such development should be small and in harmony with housing currently within the village and local area.

Where?

Two sites which would perhaps have a minimal negative effect on existing development and would have the advantage of effectively linking the village more with the White Horse and White Cross are either side of Main Street between the pub and Court Farm/Whitethorne Cottage. Both would require the cooperation and willingness of private landowners which in both cases is likely to be a formidable problem unless any proposed development is mixed open market/affordable.

So far no developer seems to be keen on building low cost units as it is not profitable hence the larger houses being built in the village.

There is no public transport, therefore each unit will attract 2 cars and the lanes around here are somewhat narrow.

The land around the village is wet land and the 2 houses being built in Barges Close on wet land have not helped during the last few months.

Can the necessary utilities cope?

To preserve the village as a village and not turn it into an urban conurbation would suggest that in my opinion it's far from a great idea.

So to be a complete Nimby, not in this village. In any case there really is nowhere suitable in order to preserve the village appearance. Which is why visitors like West Dorset, together with the income stream they bring.

Suitability. Litton Cheney has no shops or public transport or public services or adequate roads. At least one car per household is vital as opportunities for employment in the village are very limited, and for access to facilities.

Environmental. Sites using the planning exception are considered inappropriate for development for good reasons. The area is predominantly agricultural covered by an AONB and the village a conservation area.

Practicality. A mechanism will be needed to decide on who qualifies for the housing, and establish priorities. That will be needed in perpetuity both for sales and new tenants. If local candidates cannot be found at the appropriate time it may then be opened to the wider Dorset Council area and therefore no longer "local".

My thoughts about Rural Housing Enablement in Litton Cheney are that there is a need for some affordable housing within the parish, the questions is where should they be built and how many are required? I would suggest that there is a need for

between six and ten dwellings, not all in one place perhaps, though I might be wide of the mark. As to where they might be built I do remember the idea being mooted of building on land between Fry's Yard and White Cross. I am not able to think of any suitable plots within the existing built up area of the village.

Overview – The majority of these responses are fairly representative of many village residents across a fairly wide age range. They are generally sympathetic to the plight of young families having to rent at market rates, but several anxious to retain what they see as the reason why they chose to live in LC and anxious to do their bit as guardians of a typical Dorset village which will be enjoyed by future generations.

Perhaps the only potential to advance this would be on the basis of a Community Land Trust where a public spirited owner virtually gifts land “attached” and the village manages, to various degrees, the construction and management of the houses built, and these would be let or subject to shared ownership. This certainly limits the sites available, unless land owners wish to strike a quid pro quo deal with the planners.

You may well have an opinion of your own which may be at variance to those expressed above. Come to the Village Assembly on 14th May at 7.15pm at LATCH and contribute.