**Community-led housing scheme at St Ann’s Chapel**

The Parish Council and Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group are pleased to be able to report that the planning application for the community-led housing scheme proposed on land at Holwell Farm, St Ann’s Chapel was approved, subject to the completion of a Section 106 Agreement, by the South Hams District Council Development Management Committee on 22nd May 2019 (Application Ref: 4214/18/FUL). This was given unanimous support by Members of the Committee who considered that the proposed development was an excellent example of a development designed specifically to meet the local housing needs of a rural parish and comprised a scheme of a very high standard of design and sustainability.

Cllr Beth Huntley, our new Chairwoman of the Parish Council, gave an excellent speech in support of the application emphasising that there had been much community support for providing a scheme of primarily affordable housing to meet the specific local housing needs of the parish, She said that this site had been carefully selected due to its being able to provide safe pedestrian access to the Holywell Stores, the Memorial Hall, children’s playground and school bus stops. The road access, being to the north of the village, also minimised the traffic through the village itself.

Rob Ellis who was at that time managing the development process on behalf of South Hams District Council also gave a very impressive and informative presentation. Some of the particularly interesting points that he made were as follows:

*‘Housing affordability is a significant challenge in the South Hams with average house prices ranging from 10-15 times average incomes, particularly acute in our attractive coastal villages such as Bigbury Parish. The inability of many people to afford to buy or rent at open market rates is having an adverse impact on the vitality of our communities (schools/community facilities).*

*South Hams has set up a model to assist communities wishing to address this challenge, where there is a known housing need from within the village. Hence is Housing delivered ‘****by the community for the community’.***

*We were approached by Bigbury Parish Council and Neighbourhood Plan Group to work with them to bring forward a suitable scheme within the Parish. The objectives are:*

* *Deliver genuinely affordable housing to buy at discount or rent*
* *Deliver high quality design of the houses both their vernacular and environmental credentials (Passive House Standard) – such that not just addressing the cost of buying or renting but also the running costs.*

*Housing mix*

*8 affordable units comprising a mixture of housing to purchase at a discount (3 units) and affordable rented (5 units).*

* *We are looking substantially reduced selling prices of the discount sale units to ensure these are truly affordable. This is achieved through significantly discounted land value (equivalent to £10K/plot) and the sale of 3 open market housing to cross subsidise the affordable units*
* *The discount of the discounted sale units referred to in the planning report includes a contingency and we will work hard to maximise the discount*
* *We are looking to target sales of the open market to people from within the parish to enable downsizing*
* *Rented units will be let at below the local housing allowance rate ie circa 60% market rates. This means that the rents will be within levels which are eligible for housing benefit.*

*Eligibility*

*Preservation of affordability in perpetuity and allocation policy*

* *Prospective buyers of discounted sale units and renters identified through registration through Devon Home Choice and Help to Buy South West.*
* *Restricted to people who live or work in the community or close local family connection. Open to Bands A – E. Local is the key.*
* *The affordability protection and local resident protections will be enshrined in a legal agreement to ensure this is maintained in perpetuity.*
* *Allocation of housing will be through the formation of an allocation committee (comprising representation of the Parish Council and South Hams District Council).*

The proposed development has been delayed due to unexpected problems in relation to drainage issues but the revised proposals are expected to be approved very soon allowing a start on site to commence in a few months time and be completed by the middle of next year.

Anyone wishing to apply for discount purchase should contact Help to Buy South West [www.helptobuysw.org.uk](http://www.helptobuysw.org.uk) and anyone wishing to apply for affordable rent should register their interest with Devon Home Choice [www.devonhomechoice.com/how-it-works](http://www.devonhomechoice.com/how-it-works).

Please register your interest as soon as possible.

If anyone has any questions regarding the proposals or needs a copy of the plans please contact Valerie Scott.

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