

HUGHENDEN VALLEY RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Cllr Peggy Ewart
Hughenden Parish Council
Council Offices
The Common
Gt. Kingshill
Bucks HP15 6EN

16th March 2010

Dear Cllr Ewart,

Re: Affordable Rural Housing in Hughenden Valley

On behalf of Hughenden Valley Residents Association I wish to draw your attention to the following observations.

The veil of secrecy surrounding the proposed rural housing scheme, compounded by Hughenden Parish Council discussions on this issue being held 'in camera' over several months, if not years, has generated suspicion among residents who are quite rightly aggrieved. Moreover, the HVRA were completely unaware of this scheme and it only became known to us upon receipt of the Parish Council's leaflets advertising their Open Day on Rural Affordable Housing which we were asked to deliver on their behalf. The identity of the location of the site was described in the HPC leaflet as "*a small piece of land in Warrendene Road*" with no mention of the status of the land.

Consequently, the HVRA believed it was necessary to produce a leaflet that correctly identified the site as well as giving some important facts, and asking residents for feedback. The site is, in fact, a fairly large piece of land that lies in the Green Belt, outside the envelope of the development, on AONB arable farmland. It is on the periphery of the village in open countryside – a piece of Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty at its best. Feedback from the leaflet showed that **96%** of residents are **against** the proposal to build on this high status land. Furthermore, this view was reflected in the results of the HVRA exit poll that was carried out at the Open Day on 10th March which showed that 74% were also against this proposal.

The process of establishing a need for affordable rural housing should be completed before searching for and identifying a suitable site.

This is the established order of methodology as recognised by all affordable rural housing enablers/associations including the English Rural Housing Association.

The preliminary Housing Needs Survey questionnaire to all households in the parish carried out in July 2005, the results of which have never been made public, is by Hughenden Parish Council's own volition out of date, and the object of the Rural Affordable Housing Open Day was to establish a true reflection of need.

- identified a preferred site,
- identified the type and number of properties (10)
- showed a photographic example of the type of properties

At the Affordable Rural Housing Open Day exhibition boards showed:

- the identified preferred site with a layout plan for the ten dwellings, the alternative nine sites that had been considered and the reasons for rejection
- promotional colour photographs of other affordable rural housing schemes

The content of this exhibition was in total contradiction to the established order of methodology, i.e. where a need is established first. Instead, it served only to provide a distorted register of need which it could be argued actually showed a register of **want** in some cases.

The Site Survey

As previously mentioned the site survey findings have been announced prematurely because the site should fit the need not vice versa.

The proposed scheme is to provide affordable rural housing within **Hughenden Parish** yet it is apparent that all the site options are in or on the periphery of the village of Hughenden Valley. Furthermore, as residents from all the villages within the parish had been invited to register a need the HVRA believes that the site search should include all of the villages within the Parish excluding sites in Widmer End because the population is too great to comply with the criteria.

The Way Forward

Hughenden Valley Residents Association believes the mismanagement of this whole process discredits local government and casts a shadow over the worthiness of affordable rural housing schemes. The appropriate way forward would be to restart the process with greater transparency, extend the site search to include the wider parish and involve the local community at every stage.

Yours sincerely,

Dory Morgan
Chairman, HVRA Planning Sub-committee

Cc. James Taylor, Deputy Chief Exec., ERHA; District Cllrs Richard Pushman, David Carroll, John Gibbs; Colin White, Chiltern Conservation Board; Don Hide, Chiltern Society; Gt Kingshill, Naphill & Widmer End Residents Associations