

## **Frequently Asked Questions – proposed housing off Newberry Road (South side)**

### **1. Who is responsible for the access road and its maintenance?**

The access road will be built to adoptable standards so that Devon Highways can adopt it. However, it will not be known whether Devon Highways will adopt the road, until the latter stages of the project build.

If the access road is not adopted, it is intended that Aster (the Community Land Trust's housing association partner who will be building the affordable houses) will maintain the road using fair and reasonable contributions from users based on level and extent of use.

### **2. Will the access be safe for cars and pedestrians?**

The proposals provide a vehicle access from Newberry Road (opposite the entrance to Georgeham Playing Fields) and a separate pedestrian route along the lane that runs between Newberry Cottages opposite the New Rectory which will be provided to adoptable standards. There also exists a permissive footpath to the west side of the field that exits close to the bus stop on David's Hill.

Anyone familiar with Georgeham Parish will know that there exist a number of single-track sections of roads where there are no pavements. Large tractors with trailers and other large vehicles use these roads. Therefore a single track access road with passing place is not out of the norm.

Vehicular access is a challenging aspect of any proposed development in this area. Accordingly, lot of time and energy has been spent with surveyors, Transport Planning and Highways consultants who have liaised with Devon Highways on this issue, designers, landscape and ecology specialists.

The report of the Transport Planning and Highways Consultants and a Road Safety Audit has been submitted with the planning application for public consultation.

The proposed scheme does involve the widening of Newberry Road on the northern side of the road on the approaches to the vehicle access route and involves safety improvements to the access to Georgeham Playing Fields and the vehicle access route itself. These involve the removal of the existing hedge of the playing field and its replacement with a new hedge planted alongside the widened road. Further, additional new hedging is to be created in connection with the housing development itself. These plans have been submitted to the Planning Authority for comment together with the planning application for the proposed housing. The re-design creates improved turning circles and lines of sight both into and out of the access road and also the playing fields car park.

The vehicular movements generated by the proposed new housing has been assessed in accordance with applicable standards and has a low level of vehicle movements, generating 8 movements an hour at the busiest times.

Rural communities like ours face a number of challenges such as how to support and retain a core resident community of sufficient size to support (via workforce and/or use/custom) local businesses, schools, shops, bus services, eateries, community based institutions and organisations etc.

Ultimately it will be for the planning authority to look at the benefits of the proposed scheme and weigh these against any adverse impacts, taking into account advice from consultees such as Highways, the AONB partnership and the Council's sustainability officer and other views expressed.

### **3. Is there sufficient parking?**

The design of the development includes 1 parking space for each of the one bed dwellings and 2 parking spaces for each of the 2 and 3 bed houses. There is also the provision of additional parking spaces for visitors. At the request of three households in Newberry Cottages (who do not currently have parking), the revised site plan has 3 allocated car parking spaces in the main parking area: one space will be available for the use of the residents of each of these properties subject to a license agreement and payment of a fee. This provision, will reduce existing pressure on parking in the village.

### **4. Community play/garden space – is it needed when there is a play park nearby?**

Not all of the one bed dwellings have their own garden space. It is important to provide community green space that enhances the housing development for both residents and people visiting there, including other members of the community.

The walkways through the development create a new set of pathways for the community to walk through and enjoy with a new green space for them to use. This helps to embed the new housing within the village and the community.

It creates new public green space in and for the Parish and the play equipment will be different from and complement the provision in Georgeham Playing Fields.

It is intended that with the landscaping the play area will have a natural rustic rural feel that also supports biodiversity and natural habitats.

### **5. How will drainage be dealt with – it looks like there is a pond – how will this be maintained?**

There has been a geological assessment of the field and drainage specialists have been engaged to design a sustainable drainage scheme to support the development that meets requisite standards. The field has been assessed as being suitable for a sustainable drainage system involving soakaways that collect in a shallow basin that at some times of the year may be dry and at other times muddy or have shallow water. It will be Aster, the housing association, who will be responsible for the build and future maintenance of the development, including the drainage system. They are a professional organisation who are experienced in creating and maintaining such schemes.

Details of the drainage scheme and related reports have been submitted with the planning application for public consultation.

This will include a period of assessment of surface water on the site which is currently underway.

## **6. What about the wildlife in the field and the 10m bat zone – can this be reduced to create more garden or reposition houses?**

There are a number of constraints to the development of the field: landscape impact on the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB); ecology; biodiversity; drainage and the CLT has received significant grant monies to engage specialists advise on this, which it has done. The design and siting of the houses and gardens therefore reflects the findings of these professional reports.

This wide range of professional consultants have reported on impact on wildlife, landscape, biodiversity, drainage, trees and hedges etc and advised on appropriate mitigation, including a lighting plan for the development and buffer zones for the existing hedges and their habitats. This has also involved keeping buildings away from the top end of the field which would be more visible in the wider landscape.

The advice is that a 10m bat zone is required for the southern hedgerow. This, when combined with other constraints, has led to the current plan which places dwellings in an optimal position given these constraints and also for constructing buildings that are capable of achieving a passiv haus equivalent energy efficiency standard.

With the additional replanting and creation of new hedges proposed, the development is showing a significant biodiversity net gain overall. Increase of 41.67% habitat units and 27.7% hedgerow units.

## **7. Single track vehicle access route– how will that work?**

The proposals for the entrance to the access road from Newberry Road involve the widening of Newberry Road itself so that there is room for vehicles to pass in both directions on Newberry Road on the approaches to the access road. This will reduce pressure to turn into the access road from Newberry Road and wait and look up the access road to see if it is clear instead. The widening of Newberry Road will make it easier for vehicles to exit from the new access road to free the access road up. The modelling of the anticipated vehicle movements from the proposed new housing is minimal with 8 movements in the hour at the busiest times. There is a waiting space for cars exiting the development further up the access road and there will be markings for people to wait in that space and to give priority to any vehicles about to enter the access road.

Our Highways consultant has informed us that the site will have a travel plan and residents will be advised of the pedestrian routes. There will also be signs to direct the routes to be used and not used by pedestrians. In practice the proposed pedestrian routes will be more direct routes to the village centre/school and playing field so residents will not need to walk along the vehicle access.

The CLT also intend to request a 10 mph speed limit for the access and new housing development.

### **8. What sort of street lighting will there be?**

A lighting plan has been submitted with the planning application. The lighting plan is relatively low key on lighting and light emissions given the existence of a bat foraging area.

### **9. How can you ensure that the homes will actually be affordable? Past experience in the Parish is that homes that residents have been told will be affordable are not and many are now holiday lets.**

All 21 of the new build properties will have a restriction that they are for principal residence only. This means that they cannot be a second home or holiday let. The 19 social rent homes cannot be bought under “the right to buy”. The social rents are calculated using a formula set by the government taking into account local average wages and the valuation of the property.

Based on current information, Aster have provided the following indicative rents for the homes when they are anticipated to become available (currently 2026):

One bed - £120 - £125 per week

Two bed - £142- £145 per week

Three bed £164 - £166 per week

Please note that these figures are indicative only, and maybe subject to change.

The planning application shows homes that are designed to be energy efficient and so this should have a beneficial impact on the overall costs of energy to run the homes.

### **10. Can the private plots be sold on?**

The CLT has been told that the two private plots that will be retained by the owners of the field, will be for family members. The homes built on these plots can be bought and sold. Having said that, the Georgeham Parish Neighbourhood Plan, policy H1 requires a restriction to be placed on the homes that they be for principal residence only and not for holiday lets. These homes will be for residents and not for second homes or holiday lets and will therefore contribute to the sustainability of the community.

### **12. What will the Community Land Trust get out of the development?**

The Community Land Trust is a community benefit society created for the benefit of the Georgeham Parish Community. It is run by volunteers and any monies it

receives must be applied for the benefit of the community. It is not a commercial business.

Most importantly the CLT will have enabled the provision of high quality, genuinely affordable, secure homes for people with a strong connection to the Parish community. The social rent homes will generate a ground rent of £4 per property per week (inflation linked) payable by Aster after the homes are occupied. This sum can be used towards operational running costs of the CLT and other projects such as the allotments that will be retained by the CLT.

### **13. How will the CLT ensure the affordable homes go to local people?**

There will be a lettings agreement (known as an LLP – Lease Lettings Plan) between the CLT, Aster and North Devon Council that will give priority to people with a local connection to the Parish who have a registered housing need on the Devon Homes Choice system.

### **14. Who will have the allotments**

The allotments will be available for license by residents and then other residents of the Parish.

### **15. Views of new housing development for neighbouring properties**

The new houses have been situated a good distance from neighbouring properties. Housing is situated in different broken up sections of the field interspersed by grass trees and shrubs with off road parking to provide a more open rural feel. Different materials and colours are used to break up the buildings and the larger houses have valleyed roofs to break up the expanse of roofs and provide longer range views to the countryside and sky beyond.

It is appreciated that there will not be a view of a field anymore, which some neighbouring properties currently enjoy, but the landscaping and design should work to provide a rustic rural feel that transitions well to the fields beyond.

### **16. How will the project be paid for ?**

In the initial stages and build stages, for the most part by grants from various sources, including Homes England

#### **a. Feasibility stage and planning stage**

This has been funded by grants provided to the CLT by North Devon Council, Homes England and some funding from Aster towards costs up to this stage.

#### **b. Building stage**

If planning is granted the social rent homes will be constructed by Aster. Aster as a housing association with a solid reputation with the government, has received grant funding for projects like this.

Aster funds new developments from a combination of loan and bond finance by securing its lending against the 36,000 homes the group owns and manages, and reinvesting profits from the sales programme. In addition, Aster is able to secure funding from Homes England to help deliver a strong pipeline of affordable housing, which together with local authority grant funding from North Devon Council will contribute towards the delivery of these social rented homes.

You may find this website link of interest regarding how income is spent:

<https://omni.aster.co.uk/investing-in-our-homes/>

### **c. Maintenance**

Aster is responsible for the maintenance of the development (other than the allotments which will be the responsibility of the CLT). The homes will attract a service charge where tenants and other uses (such as the 2 private homes) make an annual contribution to a sinking fund to cover the maintenance of the development's infrastructure.

The rental payment from tenants includes provision for monies towards the revenue and capital repairs to the properties the tenants will be living in.