

# PARISH MEETING OF THE PARISH OF CARLTON

**Minutes of a meeting held in St Andrew's Church, Main Street, Carlton  
at 19:00 hrs on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2012**

The meeting had been convened by N Axelrad, E Goold, D Frazer, J Llewellyn,  
A Knight & M Dixon who were all registered electors.

**Present:** S G Tupling (Chairman), 81 registered electors, 7 members of the public,  
R Windley (Rural Housing Enabler), C J Peat (Clerk).

**Apologies:** P & R Barker, J & B Hardman, J Hawksworth, J Knappett, K O'Higgins,  
M Pointon, J Winward.

## **1. Minutes of the Parish Meeting of 9th May 2012**

**It was resolved** that the minutes be confirmed and signed by the Chairman.

## **2. Discussion of the Carlton Affordable Housing Project**

The Chairman opened the meeting with a report that Carlton Parish Council (PC) had been awarded first prize in the Community Category of the Rural Community Council Village Achievement Awards 2012, comprising a framed certificate with a cheque for £250. There had been 11 entrants in this category, and five had been highly commended. This award belonged to the community and reflected the efforts of the many volunteers who worked for the benefit of Carlton.

The Chairman was asked why the PC did not want this meeting. He explained that the PC is happy with the Affordable Housing Project and considered there was no reason to call the meeting. So 6 concerned residents had called the meeting instead. Because the Chairman had elected to attend, it was his duty to chair the meeting.

The Chairman did not consider it necessary to go back over all the history of the Affordable Housing Project. He told the meeting that following the Government pulling out of funding last year, Nottingham Community Housing Association (NCHA) had sought alternative financing. All funding was now approved and NCHA was in the process of submitting plans.

The decision to go ahead followed a 2-day public meeting where details of the project had been exhibited. 85 people attended, 40 response forms were filled in, and 37 of these were considered positive in response. The Parish Plan Group also reported in August 2012 with data collected from autumn 2011. At a meeting to discuss the Parish Plan some opposition was raised. Carlton PC had considered these objections at the September 2012 meeting and unanimously agreed that the development was right, proper and good for the future of the village.

The Chairman explained the Project would provide 11 affordable homes – seven 2-bed houses and four 2-bed bungalows – on a rural exception site at the eastern end of the settlement with an access onto Nailstone Road. Two homes would be available for shared ownership and nine for rent; rents would be set at 80% of the local market rate. The two for purchase are allowed stair casing so owners can end up owning 100% of the property. If the owners wish to sell, the houses have to be offered back to NCHA and cannot be sold on the open market. There would be a management group which would include residents of the scheme, Parish Councillors and representatives from NCHA.

The rural exception site will have a ranking for access, dependent on where people live, and this will be set out in a legal agreement. At present the policy is that anyone who wants a house must go on the Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council (HBBC) housing list where they are given a ranking depending on need – Priority, High, Medium or Low. A person with a low ranking (i.e. not much need) but from a higher ranked Parish (Carlton) will take precedence over one with a greater need (higher ranked) but from a lower ranked Parish. The hierarchy was (1) Carlton; (2) Shackerstone; (3) Cadeby, Market Bosworth, Nailstone or Osbaston; (4) the Borough of Hinckley & Bosworth. HBBC categorise the priorities and then NCHA have the final say.

The Chair then told the meeting this development was NOT social housing or council housing. This was debated with much incredulity by many parishioners who pointed out amongst other things, that the remit of NCHA was to provide social housing for people in need.

One parishioner asked about eligibility for a house, having tried to get one for his son. He said that when the scheme was first mooted the Parish Clerk approached him and asked him if he would be interested in buying a house in Carlton which is affordable. He said yes and put his son's name on the list. But now it seemed the project had shifted away from this original premise and you had to be on the HBBC Housing list. The Parish Clerk shook his head. There were many other headshakes at the meeting but these were not minuted. The Parish Clerk replied that anyone can put their name on the housing list, but this project was for those in housing need such as young people who cannot afford to buy a house in Carlton.

It was then asked how the scheme was arrived at to build 11 houses when the housing needs survey of 2006 showed only 1 person in Carlton had a housing need. It was explained that the Housing Needs survey was jointly carried out with Shackerstone, and that housing needs varied in small rural villages. Having a larger scheme was suggested as beneficial to Carlton residents who would have a greater chance of getting a house if they had a need. The Parish Clerk reported the latest information from the Rural Housing Enabler, which was that 14 home seekers were interested (10 rent 4 to buy), all of whom had a close connection to Carlton. One resident pointed out that he had put his father's name on the list when he thought it was housing that was affordable to buy, but now that it was clear it was social housing his name would be removed. Continued discussions revealed that some home owners who had supported the plans had only done so because they thought they would be able to downsize into the new homes on retirement.

The Chairman was asked why the PC was promoting the scheme when the over-riding objective of the villagers was to maintain the peace, quiet and small size of the village. The Chairman replied that the Parish Plan was independent of the PC. The PC thinks that for the future of the village it needs to grow so as to provide houses for the young people to maintain the community. The Parish Clerk added we needed to support the young and needy and keep families together to maintain the community spirit.

It was suggested that the whole development would change the nature of the village and the siting of it was proving divisive, particularly as one overriding objective of the Parish Plan was to maintain the small size of Carlton. It was also pointed out that Carlton was an inappropriate village for needy people as there were no facilities accessible without the use of a car.

It was asked why the affordable housing couldn't be shared around the different villages that would benefit, but this was dismissed as too expensive, and it was sensible to site any affordable homes on a bus route.

Another discussion centred on the land that is being purchased for the Affordable Housing Project. This land is outside the village building line and is owned by two private individuals, one of whom lives in Carlton. One landowner is the widow of a former Parish Councillor who wished to do something practical for the community. The potential value of the land was discussed, in the event that the Affordable Housing Project was not built. It was suggested that the land would only be of value as a small pony paddock and therefore worth a maximum of £20,000 per acre.

One long standing villager said he had not realised that anyone who lived in the village all their lives could not, as he previously thought, move into a smaller house late in life on the Affordable Housing Project. The Chairman said it was not for people who owned houses in Carlton - it was about affordable housing for those who could not afford to buy. Owning a house in Carlton would mean there was no housing need. The current HBBC Housing Allocations Policy would exclude a household if it had an income of more than £45k, equity of more than £29k or savings of more than £17k.

One parishioner asked why the PC was spending £5,000 on the site landscaping. It was explained that the PC planned to buy a strip of land across the northern part of the site to create a Diamond Jubilee Orchard which would be a new public open space at this end of the village.

It was suggested that the village had had enough of building sites, and discussions followed as to the problems of traffic, inconsiderate parking, noise etc that have become a part of life in Carlton.

Another resident asked if this meeting was actually a waste of time – i.e. was the PC going ahead with the Project anyway. The Parish Clerk reported that the project was going ahead, subject to planning permission and contracts. He said that if the scheme failed due to external factors then all parties would meet their own costs. If the scheme failed due to the PC

backing out the PC would leave itself open to an action on costs which could be considerable. He was asked why the PC had opened the village to litigation without informing the residents of such agreements. When pressed he accepted this was just his opinion. He said the PC had discussed this thoroughly and agreed to continue for the benefit of the future of the village to create a nice place for people to live.

It was suggested that saying the PC would carry on regardless of any vote showed a lack of respect for the people of Carlton who had only been told about the project, but never asked. Much discussion followed with supporters of the scheme saying they had been asked, but other residents saying they were not asked.

One resident said she was disappointed that we were not going to welcome all the newcomers into the village in the way she had been welcomed when she moved in. Another supporter of the scheme suggested that residents should look forward to meeting more new friends and neighbours; that the community had a social responsibility to help those who were less well-off; that not everyone wanted to be a home owner; and that everyone deserved their chance.

More discussion centred on the experiences, good and bad, of similar affordable and social housing schemes throughout the area. The Parish Clerk detailed schemes on Rural Exception Sites in Sheepy Magna, Congerstone, Appleby Magna and Heather where he said there were no known problems with bad behaviour. Others detailed negative experiences relating to council housing in Wales and Stoney Stanton.

There was a difference of opinion on the interpretation of the statistics reported in the Carlton Parish Plan 2011. With regard to question 4.2, (Do you think there is a need in Carlton for the following kinds of housing?) objectors to the Project pointed out that only 9% of respondents thought there was a need for rented accommodation, while only 39% thought there was a need for affordable homes. The Parish Clerk pointed out that it was not correct to interpret the latter figure as indicating that 61% of respondents were opposed to affordable housing.

With regard to question 4.4, 59% of respondents (126) said they would be in favour of a small affordable housing scheme in Carlton for local people, with 36% (77) against the idea.

It was suggested that these figures showed a confusion regarding support for the Affordable housing scheme with this being confirmed by the numbers of parishioners present who said they only voted yes to question 4.4 when they thought this was a scheme for buying cheaper houses. In addition the figures showed almost no support for rented accommodation, which the Affordable Housing Project mainly comprises of.

Other residents agreed with the Parish Clerk who said the figures confirmed the support for the Affordable Housing Project in the village. Concerns were expressed that the objectors had failed to engage with the public consultation process over the previous five years, and were trying to stop the Project at a very late stage. Concerns were also raised at the poor communication by the PC as to the exact nature of the Affordable Housing Project. There was also dismay that the campaign against the Affordable Housing Project had divided the community, although others said that the community was divided because of the attitude of the PC towards the scheme and the disregard of their opinions. The Chairman said he thought the objections were too much about the haves and have-nots.

### **3. Secret ballot**

A ballot was held on the question:

“Do you support the Affordable Housing Project as proposed by Carlton Parish Council?”

One ballot paper was issued to each registered elector present; the papers were collected in a box, and then counted and checked.

The Chairman announced the result: Yes 29 votes; No 46 votes; therefore the scheme was opposed by 61% with 39% in favour.

The Chairman asked whether there was any other business. There was none.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 20:45 hrs.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

These minutes have been prepared by N G Axelrad and C J Peat.

#### **Abbreviations used in these minutes**

HBBC	Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council
NCHA	Nottingham Community Housing Association
PC	Parish Council