

During a considerable period of silence since our last Newsletter in May we have been distracted by a number of other things – but mainly the Neighbourhood Plan. However we have been amassing quite a few matters that we think might be of interest to members. Admittedly the number of planning applications lodged with SHDC has gone into its usual summer decline. However we have described one or two of the more contentious below. In addition we are raising some issues relating to longer term planning policy that should be of concern to all who hold our community dear. But first the Neighbourhood Plan

N3P

We hope that by now members will have visited the very excellent website (www.n3p.co.uk) that has been up and running for the last month. More importantly we hope that you have registered for access to those areas of the website that may only be visited by qualifying parishioners. If you do not do this you will not be able to contribute your views and opinions on line in the months ahead.

The website is very much a work in progress, more material having been added, even since it first opened. At present the Team are still looking for people to come forward and help. In particular they are recruiting for the all-important Housing Working Group and by going to the housing/background page of the website you will see that the way the Team intend to approach this task is now described in some detail. If you think that you may be able to contribute to one of the 4 teams being set up within the Working Group then do please get in touch through the N3P contact page.

Parish Assets

There have been a number of new acquisitions since the beginning of the year, not by the RYDA, but by you, the people of the village, as represented by the Parish Council.

You may remember that some time ago there was public discussion about accepting ownership and responsibility for the maintenance of certain attractive assets from South Hams District Council. You, the community, thought this a good idea, and transfer, in the form of a sale for the sum of £1, took place last May. These assets now belong to all of us!

They are:

In Noss Mayo. Noss Green, Noss tennis courts, the car park between them, the community orchard beyond the tennis courts, and the play park further up the Coombe.

In Newton Ferrers.

Butts Park Pavilion and the playing field, the play park. Dillons Green (which is by the small car park), however, not Newton Green outside the WIC Hall – it is covered by separate regulations. Finally, the raised bed opposite the Hall by the telephone box.

There can't be many villages that have such a collection of facilities. And they're all ours! So this demands a change in attitude on our part. No longer can we regard them as the responsibility of some shadowy, distant District Council; they're ours! So, if you see something 'wrong', please put it right, or tell the Parish Council if you can't do it yourself.

Noss Steps

We must congratulate and thank John Allen for all his work on the bank above Noss Steps. He tells us that the stone wall, built from local materials creates a platform some 8 ft wide which is going to be paved with granite setts. On this he plans to place 2 benches with another wall behind and then shrubs above that up to the road. At present this area is unadopted land, along with the stretch of riverside bank just before (to the east of) Point View. We are of the view that these 2 plots of land would make fitting additions to the list of Parish assets. Perhaps, the Parish Council might consider taking them on so they can be maintained along with the other new Parish assets?

Noss Earthworks

You may have noticed the considerable earthworks on the sloping field between Revelstoke Road and up to Stoke Road. We understand that the owner of the Barn is creating a driveway from his property on Revelstoke Road up and on to Stoke Road where there is already access to the highway.

Yealm Hotel

The River Yealm Hotel Co went into voluntary receivership on 15th June this year. The last published company accounts do not make it clear whether the hotel building is on the books or not and we are currently trying to ascertain whether it might be held in a separate trust. If not, then it must be assumed that the Receivers will shortly be putting it up for sale – probably by auction as is usually the case with distressed sales.

We are therefore very concerned about what the future may hold for this absolutely prime site in the life of the community. We believe that in the fairly distant past an attempt was made to gain planning permission to build 6 detached houses in the grounds of the hotel. This failed but of course conditions in the planning world have changed out of all recognition in the last 2 years. There is an opposing view that the hotel is not a building of any distinction and might be better if it were pulled down and the site redeveloped. Whatever the case, we are quite clear that the future of this site needs to be planned with extreme care and not just allowed to be driven by market forces. If necessary your Association is stood by to mount a campaign to safeguard the future interests of the community in this respect. We therefore badly need your views on the matter. Please let us know what you think should happen on the hillside immediately above and behind the harbour steps.

And on a very similar subject

Village Development Boundaries

You may have noticed that recently there has been a sudden rush of planning applications to build outside the village development boundaries (Beacon Hill - 2 separate applications, Briar Hill Farm, Barnicott (see below) and now Archers Court. This is in addition to proposals supported by offers to build affordable housing as part of a larger development (Collaton, Hannaford Lane, The Fairway and Parsonage Farm). That's 9 proposals and over 100 houses – all outside the development boundaries - within the last year.

The size of our community has for some time been regulated by the village development boundaries. These have had a very significant effect on the way that the villages have developed over the years, both good and bad. On the plus side they have undoubtedly controlled the growth of urban sprawl and the indiscriminate spread of development in the countryside. On the negative side they have led to an increase in building density, in some parts to an unacceptable level, to an acute shortage of building land and an ensuing epidemic of over-large extensions and 'knock-down-and-rebuilds'.

In the future there is reason to suppose that we will be subject to the worst of all worlds. Thanks to the Localism Act 2012, village development boundaries may shortly become largely an irrelevance, providing very little, if any, influence on the planning process. Whilst you may not be against building outside these boundaries surely no one can support this being done in a totally haphazard manner, driven only by the wishes of developers? On the other hand the obvious attractions of waterside properties will ensure that over-development in our river valley continues. We may reasonably assume that Britain will continue to get richer; that the property market gap between here and the south east will continue to widen; that the wealthier will increasingly wish to seek early retirement or downsizing occupations in the south west; but that the coastline of Devon and Cornwall will remain resolutely the same length that it is today.

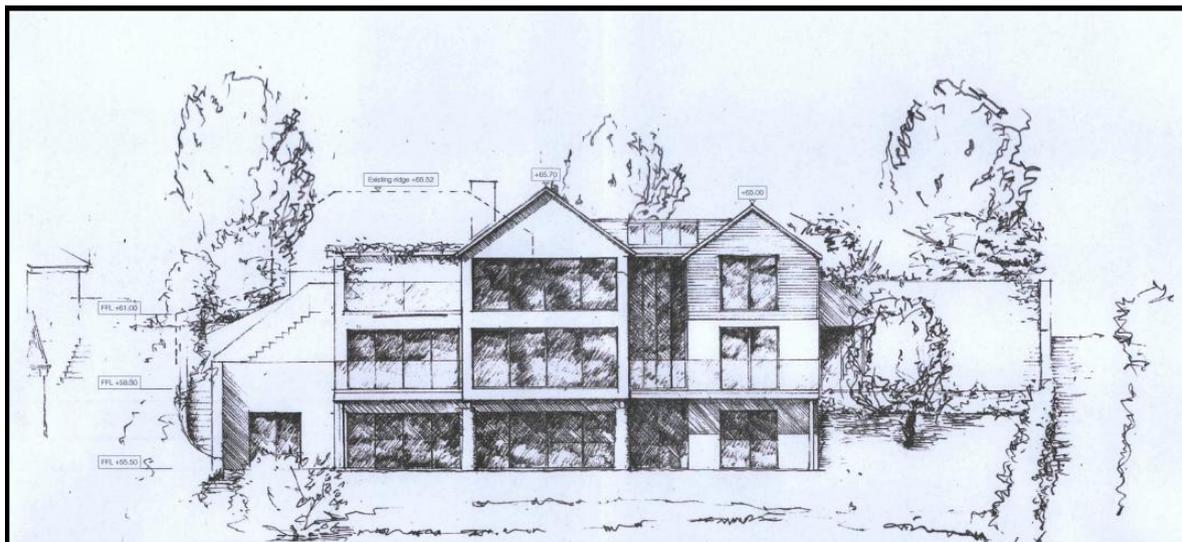
Surely now is the time, if ever, to take control of our own future and decide what we want to do with our village development boundaries. Please let us know what you think.

Planning Applications

Collaton Update

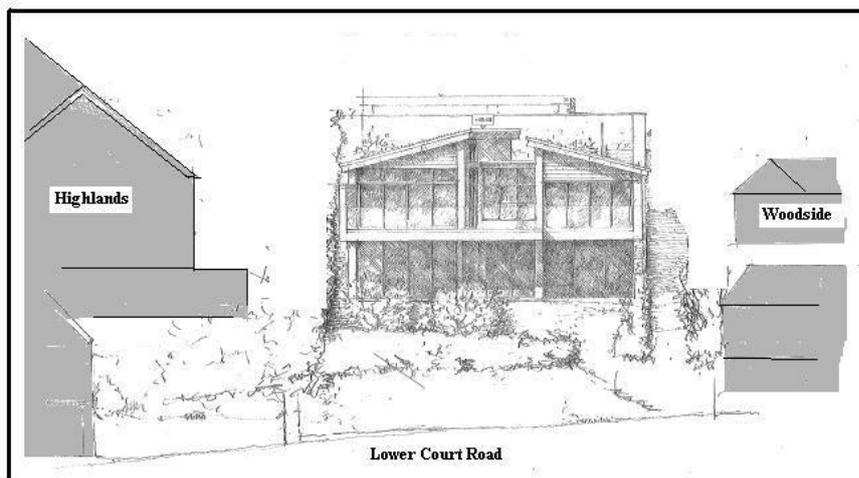
A decision by SHDC is still awaited on the proposal for 70 houses, including "up to" 40% affordable homes (note the inverted commas). Recently further submissions have been made by the owner concerning the Devon Highways' objections and the visual signature of the estate. We have responded to these on your behalf, pointing out where they are inaccurate or misleading. The Parish Council has also written to South Hams to support the objections we have made. Our spies tell us that Highways are still against the proposal and recently the South Hams AONB unit have come out strongly against it too. The application for the 4 industrial buildings appears to have been withdrawn and we are led to believe that the owners now intend to site them further off the skyline and try again.

The Sheilings Update



SHDC have given approval for the replacement of the existing building in Court Road by a

significantly larger house without even taking the decision to committee. This was in spite of 6 letters of objection from neighbours. We are told that the reason was that neither your Parish Council nor our recently elected District Councillors raised any objection to the application! Bearing in mind the strength of feeling amongst members



(we did object on your behalf), we think that there is a lesson for us all there.

The developers who are exploiting this site - they have already received permission for one other house in the garden – are now appealing the decision of SHDC to turn down the application for a third house fronting onto Lower Court Road. We will keep you informed.

Affordable Housing

Tor Homes have just submitted a fresh planning application for affordable housing the site in Parsonage Road. The previous application had expired – they only have a 3 year 'shelf life' – and in addition, further work was found to be required on the drainage system proposed, resulting in the need to increase the scope of the proposal. Contrary to concerns expressed to us, the new proposal is for the same number of houses with the same design and layout. This is 14 affordable homes, one open market home and one home for the land owner.

We regard this new move as a positive step, since it reduces concerns that Tor Homes might have lost interest in the whole project. Let us assure members that both we and the N3P Team will be doing what we can to ensure that the project now goes ahead with some speed.

Newton Down Farm

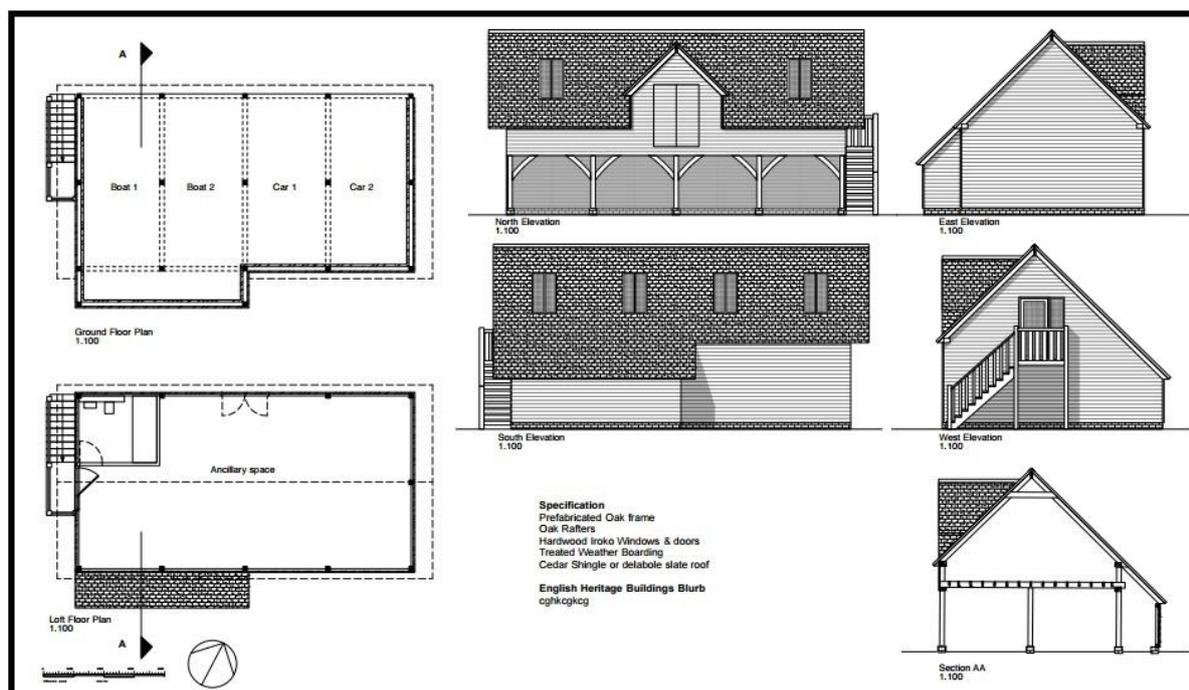
Members may be aware that there is a planning application for a 5MW solar farm at Newton Downs Farm. The deadline for comment has passed although your Committee has responded on your behalf. We supported the application. The site is well-protected from view, and cannot be seen from the River, from Butts Park (the nearest houses) or from any public footpath. However, the highest part of the site will just be visible from the leading edge of Dartmoor, but obviously far in the distance. Our view is that the solar farm will be about as unobtrusive visually as one could reasonably expect. The land is currently classified as Grade 3a agricultural land and used for sheep grazing. This will continue so there will be no loss of agricultural land. (It is interesting to note that the fields cannot be used for cattle because of the presence of TB, particularly where the fields meet the adjoining woods.)

Some of you may be thinking: "What's in it for us?" The answer is that an annual contribution of £10,000 for the next 30 years is presently being negotiated. These negotiations are being conducted on the community's behalf by Yealm Community Energy Ltd, a not-for-profit community energy company. If you want to know more about YCE, go to www.yealmcommunityenergy.org or speak to Peter Brown (872328). Whatever figure is negotiated, we understand that it will be ring-fenced for local projects to help tackle fuel poverty, support other community energy generation initiatives and promote greater sustainability and environmental benefits for the local community.

Barnicott

This is early notification that we are probably shortly to see a planning application for a 4-bedroomed house in the garden of Barnicott, close by The Green at the top of Bridgend Hill. As has already been mentioned above, this is one of the developments which would be outside the village development boundary. Of equal concern will be the access, as the outline plans show a drive that cuts through the Devon bank onto Bridgend Hill between the existing vehicle entrance to Barnicott and the junction with Church Park Road. There is no planning application yet and so there is nothing on which to comment, but we are keeping our eye out for this one and will bring it to your attention as soon as we can.

Beacon Hill



This is an application (37/1621/15/F) to build a four bay garage with accommodation, including a bathroom, on the floor above in the grounds of Beacon Hill House. The reason given to justify this is to house cars and boats. Whilst the building is located in the woods and is to be built out of sympathetic materials it is located outside the village development boundary and within the AONB. At approximately 1400 sq ft this is the size of an average 3 – 4 bedroom house. We therefore believe it to be over large. We think it will lead to over development and is an unreasonable imposition on the other owners living on the site. An application for a 2 bay garage without upstairs accommodation would have been much more reasonable, there being very adequate boat storage accommodation elsewhere in the village. The proposal is also contrary to extant policy contained in South Hams Local Development Framework (2006) concerning building on green field sites outside development boundaries.

Your views are key to us deciding whether to make representations on your behalf. So please have a look at the application by going to:

<http://apps.southhams.gov.uk/planningsearch/default.aspx?shortid=37%2f1621%2f15%2fF>

and letting us know what you think before the closing date of 2nd September.
