

# PORTREATH PARISH MEETING OF ELECTORS 18/09/23

Minutes from the Parish Meeting of Electors held on MONDAY, 18<sup>th</sup> September 2023  
At St Mary's Church Hall, 7pm to: *'discuss the disposal of parish land for housing'*

## Meeting Called by Electors:

Sara Clasper, Roselyne Verraneman-Eyre, Elizabeth Gerrish, Terry Reynard, Heather Mullin, Catherine Reynolds

Present: Sara Clasper  
Roselyne Verraneman-Eyre  
Elizabeth Gerrish  
Terry Reynard  
Heather Mullin  
Catherine Reynolds  
Sue Heath, Representative of Electors who called the meeting & Love Portreath CAN  
Cornwall Councillor, Dave Crabtree  
Chairman of Portreath Parish Council, Cllr. Mr Ian Stewart  
Clerk to Portreath Parish Council, Mrs L Jose  
33 Electors  
17 Members of the Public

## Abbreviations:

<b>WAAF</b>	Women's Auxiliary Air Force
<b>NDP</b>	Neighbourhood Development Plan
<b>SSSI</b>	Site of Special Scientific Interest
<b>PPC</b>	Portreath Parish Council
<b>CC</b>	Cornwall Council
<b>RAF</b>	Royal Air Force
<b>BNG</b>	Biodiversity Net Gain
<b>The Developer</b>	Classic Builders SW
<b>The Housing Association</b>	Coastline Housing

## 1. Welcome and Safety Procedures

Chairman of PPC welcomed those present to the meeting. The Chairman explained the format of the meeting and outlined safety procedures for the meeting.

## 2. Statement from Portreath Parish Council on the proposed 100% affordable housing development at the Former WAAF Site

The Chairman read a statement on behalf of PPC outlining the history of the WAAF site since devolved to PPC and a summary of the project to date.

The Chairman summarised:

- **The History of the WAAF site**, its devolvement from CC in 2017. The initial plan for an ecological education centre for local schools, which never came to fruition. Confirmation that the council resolved not to pursue the plan for the education centre in August 2018.
- **Potential 100 % Affordable housing development**, the initial idea for the project, the options investigated by council, the desire of the council to reuse the land as it had been for social housing until the 1970's.
- **NDP**, the NDP Process, public consultation process, the need for affordable housing highlighted within the research for the plan.
- **Timeline for the project**,
  - Initial discussions with the idea of an affordable housing development at the WAAF Site, *Summer 2021*
  - *Inclusion on every agenda for PPC meetings from July 2021*

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- Initial community engagement, *January 2022*
- Resolution to proceed with the project, *February 2022*
- Signing of the option agreement, *October 2022*
- Further specific community engagement, *January 2023*
- Public Consultation Event, *July 23*
- Draft plan presented to the Parish Council for their approval prior to the submission of the full planning application, *July 23*
- Submission of the full planning application to CC, *due September 2023*
- ***The Agreement with the developers***, to work alongside Coastline Housing to investigate the feasibility of providing a 100% affordable housing developed on the WAAF Site with the option to purchase the site should the project be feasible. The agreement the council made would allow access to the area for preplanning works including surveys, under the supervision of an ecologist.
- ***Public Consultation***, having outlined consultation during the NDP research, initial and further consultation in the public notice boards, website and social media, the Chairman reiterated that the project had been published on every agenda since summer of 2021 and discussion recorded in the minutes of the meetings which are available on the parish council website.
- ***Housing Need in the Parish***, January 2022, **24** households registered with a local connection to the parish in need of housing. July 2023, **60** households registered with a local connection to the parish in need of housing.

The Chairman informed the meeting that representatives of Coastline Housing and Classic builders had been invited to attend the meeting, however they would not be attending due to one of the objecting electors who called the meeting visiting the offices of the developer to inform them that they were not welcome to attend the meeting. The Chairman commented that this meant that there was no opportunity for the questions electors may have to be answered.

The Chairman asked that objectors to the project refrain from interfering works at the WAAF site due to health & safety concerns.

### **3. Open Discussion: 'to discuss the disposal of parish land for housing'**

Members of Love Portreath addressed the meeting for approximately 20 minutes, speaking in objection to the proposal, starting with one for the electors who called the meeting stating that there was not adequate public consultation for such a large-scale project, commenting that it was a critical environmental site and not the right place for housing, and raising concerns that the project challenged the NDP. The elector commented they felt the community was divided and apportioned this to lack of community participation. The Elector highlighted the key points, democracy, community, NDP and closed with the words 'we must take seriously the climate crisis'.

Member of the public Sue Heath, on behalf of love Portreath continued with the presentation, summarising their background in planning, commenting that they were gathering information to go in a report to coincide with the planning application for the potential development and introducing the phrase, 'right homes in the right places'. The speaker summarised some of the issues with lack of housing, large scale net migration to the county, low wages in the area and high house prices.

The presentation looked at the NDP, stating that no provision had been made for affordable housing in favour of using infill and rounding of for affordable housing.

The presentation used visual aids to highlight the location of the WAAF site and the amenities that the village of Portreath offer.

The Presentation introduced the phrase 'Community Matters', stating that the NDP did not recognise Cambrose as a community, but a scatter of dwellings with no services in the immediate area, therefore not considered a settlement. The speaker informed the meeting that the planning consultant

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employed to assist with the preparation of the NDP, agreed that Cambrose was not a settlement. This was reviewed by the NDP steering group following public consultation and who maintained that the area was not a settlement.

The presentation highlighted the lack of services in the area and commented there were no public bus services to the area. The speaker acknowledged that Coastline housing had committed to consult with the local bus companies about including the area on a bus route, but this would not guarantee a service. The speaker commented that there was not pavement to the nearest bus stop or village, and acknowledged the multiuse coast to coast trail, stating that it was not lit and often muddy. The presentation surmised that car ownership would be a must for the potential residents which would further be an economical burden on the residents.

The presentation introduced the phrase 'Democracy Matters' commenting on the lack of public consultation prior to the option agreement being signed. The speaker commented on the robust communication surrounding the NDP and commented that the council had not be proactively communicating with the public on this project.

A second of the electors who called the meeting addressed the meeting starting with playing an audio extract of bird song recorded at the WAAF Site. The speaker commented that the area was teaming with nature and they were speaking on behalf of nature who could not represent themselves.

The speaker invited a group of children from the parish to address the meeting, they spoke courageously and passionately in objection to the destruction of the wildlife haven for housing, commenting that nature must be saved.

The speaker gave an overview of the WAAF Site, 1 hectare of land which they surmised had been undisturbed for 40 years. The Speaker outlined the 4 county wildlife sites and 2 areas of SSSI nearby, highlighting the importance of the area as a nature corridor.

The speaker suggested the WAAF Site could be the 'jewel in the parish' with the vision of the site becoming a nature and heritage centre celebrating the brave women who served there, for school pupils in the local area.

The speaker explained that they had become aware of the project approximately 1 year ago and they felt that their views were being ignored by the council. The speaker commented that they cannot support housing in this location. The speaker highlighted some clearance of the land, commenting that this would cause the wildlife to leave the site.

The speaker closed their presentation quoting David Attenborough, *"It's surely our responsibility to do everything within our power to create a planet that provides a home not just for us, but for all life on Earth."*

The Elector who had opened the discussion closed the presentation by playing an audio extract from Chris Hines MBE offering potential solutions to the dilemma of where housing should be placed.

The Chairman opened the discussion to meeting:

- A member of the public confirmed the initial plan when the land was devolved, was that the council would use the land to provide an education resource for local school children and community use.
- An elector reiterated its intended used when devolved and commented that the RAF had shown interest in assisting with providing resources to show its history with the WAAF. The elector expressed concern about where children from the potential development would go to school.

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An elector spoke in favour of the 100% affordable housing development, commenting that there had been a total lack of public interest in the land for the last 40 years. The elector commented that there should be more land made available for affordable housing.

- An elector commented that in leaving the land it has become a haven for nature, the speaker commented that England is one of the most nature depleted places in Europe. The elector surmised that within 30 years there would be civil unrest as we are not looking after nature. The speaker commented on the lack of public transport, pavements, and lighting.
- An elector addressed the meeting reminding electors that the former WAAF Site had previously been used for social housing with many of the children from the housing attending Portreath School. The elector informed the meeting that during their term as councillor they had put forward the vision of an affordable housing development for key workers due to the lack of affordable housing available to them. The elector highlighted the lack of affordable dwellings and gave their support the proposal for the 100% affordable housing development.
- One of the electors who called the meeting agreed that the village needed some truly affordable housing but suggested that people would not want to live in that location, suggesting the former car park on Lighthouse Hill be a better location for building affordable housing.
- An elector stated that it would be the choice of those applying for the homes to live in that location.
- An Elector stated that parishioners should make it their business to be involved with the parish organisations so that they do know what is going on in their community.
- An Elector spoke in favour of the 100% affordable housing development, highlighting the housing need in the parish which they surmised was partly due to the large amount of second homes in the parish. The elector questioned where else affordable housing may be built if not at the WAAF Site.
- An Elector asked if the parish council had been offered the land, the former car park on Lighthouse Hill. The Parish Council Chairman confirmed that the land had been offered to the council for devolution, for use as a public car park, however at the time building on the land was not considered, and councillors at the time felt the financial incentive from Cornwall Council to take on the liability of the land was not adequate to take on this risk.
- One of the electors who called the meeting addressed the Parish Council Chairman stating that the decision to sell the WAAF Site should have been made by parishioner and not just councillors and asked where the project is now.

The Chairman of the council stated that the NDP did highlight the need for affordable housing in the parish. The chairman confirmed that the option agreement for the developers to study the feasibility project of providing a 100% affordable housing developed on the WAAF Site with the option to purchase the site should the project be feasible. The Chairman stated that when the full planning application is submitted to Cornwall Council the public would be consulted on the full plans and have the opportunity to comment as consultees. The Chairman confirmed that the planning officers of Cornwall Council had responsibility for making the decision whether to grant permission or the development or not.

- One of the electors who called the meeting addressed the subject of the NDP. The speaker explained the process of developing the NDP including the redrafting of the settlement areas following public consultation. The speaker stated that all the policies of the NDP had equal weight and none were less important than others. The Speaker stated the NDP explicitly outlines where housing should and shouldn't be built in the parish, the plan addressed the issue of large houses being built and that other than infill in Portreath and Bridge the NDP only supported the building of affordable housing in Rural Exception Sites which it was their opinion the WAAF Site was not. The speaker reminded the meeting that 84% of the voters at the NDP referendum voted in favour of adopting the NDP.

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The Chairman commented that following talks with Cornwall Council on the matter, should there be significant changes since the NDP research was carried out the council planning officers may give weight to the changes over the policy adopted.

- An Elector confirmed that the NDP would be relevant until 2030.

The Chairman confirmed that the NDP was made in June 2022, and that the Cornwall Council planners would use the NDP in conjunction with other local and national planning policy to make a decision on the planning application.

- One of the electors who called the meeting stated the council had missed an opportunity for parish consultation, which is why they felt there is not parish support for this proposal. The elector asked of the legal and financial commitment the council has made as asked what cost to the council there would be if the project did not get the planning permission.

The Chairman reconfirmed the legal agreement with the developers and stated that if the planning permission was not granted the council would not have a financial commitment however should they unnecessarily object to the planning application they could be liable for the costs to the developers which the Chairman estimated to be a six-figure sum.

The elector commented that better public consultation at the start of the project may have helped the community not to have been divided and the council to be in such a position with the developers.

- An Elector addressed the meeting stating that their family had struggled to find housing, so understands the struggles, but expressed concern for the land and any damage that may have been caused by the surveys. The Parishioner asked who is responsible for the land.

The Chairman confirmed that the land belonged to the parish council, and that responsibility for the surveys and clearing of the land was with the developers. The Chairman confirmed that the Developers had employed an independent Ecologist to supervise clearance works on site.

The parishioner asked several more questions regarding the site, but the Chairman explained that these could only be answered by the developers who had been asked not to come to the meeting.

- An Elector highlighted areas where the council should have been more proactive with consulting parishioners and commented that they hoped the council had learned lessons from this project.

The Chairman acknowledged that there are areas where the council could have done better with this project and commented that the council has learnt lessons from his project.

- A member of the public asked, if the council was obliged to support the development when the full planning is submitted, the councillors consider that they had an interest in the application.

The Chairman confirmed that the council had sought legal advice on the matter and would be following the legal guidance they had been given when and if they responded to the consultation of the full application.

- A member of the public asked the Chairman to liaise with the developers to ensure the contractors on site are courteous to the adjacent neighbours and their guests, exemplifying an instance where the access had been blocked and words that were exchanged between the neighbours' guests and the contractors on site.

The Chairman agreed to address this with the developer.

The member of the public went on to comment that the council had consulted the public on a separate project asking why this couldn't have been done for the WAAF site. The member of the public commented that the council would be making money by selling the site.

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The Chairman explained the overage clause on the land and commented that CC only agreed to waive the clause if the monies generated from the sale of the land was used for the benefit of the parish.

- A member of the public asked if it was certain the development would get permission and questioned if the proposal met the criteria for development.

The Chairman commented that they could not confirm this, and CC planning officers would determine this.

- An Elector commented that from their experience with planning that CC planning officers often disagreed with the views of the parish council when considering planning applications.
- An elector commented the proposed site was out of the village and not a suitable location for housing. They questioned if the properties would really be affordable and informed the meeting that they understood the land was contaminated and commented that school was full when they applied for places in 2019.

The Chairman responded that it was the choice of the applicants if they wanted to live in that location. The Chairman confirmed the proposal was for rental properties as a social rent level. The risk of the contamination of that land was the financial risk to the developers only, not the parish council or the residents as this risk would have to be mitigated prior to the construction of any properties.

- A member of the public, spoke in objection of the proposal outlining the rich nature space that is the WAAF Site and expressing concern for the badgers and wildlife on the site. The speaker suggested that PPC should follow St Agnes Parish Council's example of tree planning and increasing biodiversity in the parish. The speaker surmised that it would be impossible for the 10% BNG the developers had promised, as it is impossible as it could not be met if part of the site was developed.

The Chairman explained the hierarchy for BNG that must be followed legally by such a development, commenting that the BNG did not need to be on the actual site of the development. The Chairman commented that the developers would have been able to provide more information on this had they not been stopped from attending the meeting.

- A member of the public drew the Chairman attending to minute 23210 of the PPC meeting held on the 31<sup>st</sup> July stating *'It was confirmed that no further clearance of the site would commence until planning permission is granted.'*

The Chairman confirmed that this was not a statement made by the PPC. It was a statement made by Coastline Housing, which was correct at the time of the meeting. The Chairman went on to explain further ecological and ground water monitoring surveys had been requested since the 31<sup>st</sup> July.

- A members of public confirmed that the land is contaminated, and that the council should have records of this information in their archive.
- An Elector suggested that there are no such thing as affordable homes, only subsidised ones. The Speaker then addressed the lack of consultation and commented that many older people could not access the internet or parish notice boards and they suggested that doorstep drops to all properties in the parish was the only way to ensure all parishioners know what is going on in the parish.

Bringing the meeting to a conclusion the Chairman made closing comments

- Acknowledging that the council could learn from the process and concurred that more public consultation could have been undertaken at the start of the project.

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- Outlining that the proposal was for social rental properties (which are far cheaper than 'affordable' rental properties)
- Suggesting that many more of the questions from the meeting could have been answered had the developers and housing association not been stopped from attending the meeting.
- Thanking parishioners that have supported him in the role as chair of the meeting.

#### **4. To receive motions from the meeting**

None

#### **5. Close of meeting**

The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance and participation and encourage those present to attend parish council meetings and to read the minutes and agenda available on the council's website.

May 2024

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Chairman Cllr.

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