

BARFORD VILLAGE SCHEME CONSULTATION No.3

SEPT – OCT 2009

Background

Further to two previous evolving consultations and four surveys, Sharba Homes undertook a third engagement with the village community about their views on the future use of the land behind Barford House including the area off Wasperton Lane.

A detailed presentation was issued in booklet form, via a hand delivery, to households in the village on the 26th September 2009, and everyone was invited to attend either or both of two workshops held in the Village Hall on the 3rd and 7th of October 2009.

Pro forma questionnaires were requested to be submitted either by post, in person at one of the workshops, or electronically by e-mail on the dedicated website: www.sharbahomes.co.uk/barford.html

The closing date for responses was set as the 16th October, however due to a few households being missed in the initial mail drop, and the national postal strikes, votes have been accepted up until the end of 2009.

At previous consultations, a significant number of attendees and responders requested that we moved on from the general question about the principle of development to more detailed issues. For this reason, the general question of whether development was appropriate 'yes or no' was omitted and this consultation was intended to focus on the proposed community facilities being offered.

However, initial feedback to this third consultation suggested that some people still wanted the opportunity to vote "no", whilst others felt that Question 1 was not possible to be answered by them as it asked them to comment on views of the village as a whole, not their personal views. It was quickly confirmed verbally by Sharba as acceptable for any person raising these issues that 'qualifying comments' in any form given would be taken into account for the statistics arising from this consultation. It was also advised in writing via a 3rd party known locally as "Friends of Barford Park" who distributed a leaflet to village households (it should be noted that this group has no connection with Sharba).

All "no" votes were duly recorded, as were all qualifying comments that any individual did not wish to answer for the village as a whole.

280 individual residents returned answers to some or all of the questions asked.

The Parish Council held an extraordinary meeting on the 5th October to discuss the scheme with the villagers where a number of views both for and against were aired. A show of hands was not held, however anecdotal reports given to Sharba by a number of sources suggest that of the 100+ attendees, significantly more were in favour than against.

Questions asked

Q1

“Are you happy that within our scheme proposals we have, on balance, identified and addressed the views of the majority in the village?”

Answer

275 responders' answered this question, of which 27 were “undecided”, and 248 were “decided” and either voted to agree, disagree, or said “no” as above.

Of the 248 “decided” votes:-

- The “no’s” numbered 64, or 26% (this was the new category introduced in response to specific verbal requests)
- “Agree’s” numbered 136, or 55%
- “Disagree’s” numbered 48, of which 41 or 16.5% also disagreed with the proposed mix, AND 7 others or 3% who voted positively in favour of providing the proposed mix of housing on the site

Of the 27 “Undecided” votes, 16 agreed with providing the proposed mix of housing on the site.

The total number of people who therefore “Agreed” either personally, specifically or generally with the proposed housing and/or for the site numbered 159, or 58% of the total 275 responses.

Overall, only 64 out of 275 (23%) were completely against the proposals, with 211 (77%) in varying degrees of partial agreement to full support of the scheme as presented.

Q2

“Which community facility would you prefer? (see page 4)”

A total of 174 people answered this question.

104 (60%) preferred Scheme A, the largest hall.

45.5 (26%) preferred Scheme B, the medium sized facility.

10.5 (6%) preferred Scheme C, the smallest changing facility only.

14 (8%) voted for no facility at all.

N.B. the “half” votes were where people voted for either more than one scheme, or for example “B/C”.

A preference for a larger facility was clearly established.

Q3

“Are you happy with the wide mix of housing suggested? (see page 3)”

The consultation set out details of a proposed mix of 89 homes consisting of a wide range of sizes and tenures to be developed across the site.

265 people responded to this question.

64 (24%) did not want development at all, and a further 40 (15%) did not think the mix as currently proposed was appropriate.

141 (53%) said that they were happy with the mix as proposed, and a further 20 (7.5%) who had agreed the scheme addressed the views of the village in Qu.1, did not express an opinion on the mix.

A total of 161 (61%) were therefore happy with the mix, or happy with the scheme and not unhappy with the mix.

Q4

“Please consider the attached montage of Building styles, and indicate by number your first and second preference for the site, and also your least favoured two choices.”

246 people responded to the likes, and 248 to the dislikes.

An erratum was noted with a duplication of styles 8 and 20 due to a printing error – any votes for these styles have been amalgamated.

Some strong opinions on preferences emerged, with 41, 37, 30, 22 and 20 votes respectively for styles 8/20, 4, 7, 21 and 2. Other styles received substantially less votes, most (seventeen out of the twenty four) only in single figures.

Styles 8/20 and 4 were clear top choices.

Similarly strong opinions on dislikes emerged, with 41, 38, 31, 29 and 23 votes respectively for styles 16, 9, 24, 22 and 10. Only one other style achieved double figure votes for dislike.

Styles 16 and 9 were clear strongest dislikes.

A number of ancillary comments (6) noted that it was felt too early to be deciding on architectural styles for the Hall.

Additional Comments made

152 voters added additional commentary to their forms, many simply reinforcing their vote with simple support or objection.

A summary of the other comments is listed below. General sentiments have been grouped and paraphrased – it is emphasised that these are not verbatim quotations. A full copy of the feedback is with the Parish Council for independent review. In addition, copies of all comment forms, minus identifying details (eg names, addresses etc), will be posted onto the Sharba Homes website www.sharbahomes.co.uk/barford.html

Area of Comment	Nature of detailed comment	Number of comments	Sharba Proposal to address
Housing	Distribute the affordable dwellings across the site	4	This is already in the proposals
	80(+) homes are too many for the site	8	The 89 dwellings proposed cover just half the site, and within this half are at the absolute minimum National, Regional and Locally permitted development density of 30 per hectare
	More homes for the elderly and/or bungalows are required and/or located nearer the village shop	4	Sharba have consulted both the housing needs survey and the housing department and agreed that 8 bungalows (i.e. 9%) are appropriate. Sharba have maximised footpath links out of the site where this is within their control, however there is no ability to link directly to Church Lane.
	40% “affordable” homes are too many. A reduction should come directly off the overall numbers.	2	Local Policy guidance is clear that 40% is a minimum requirement on any development, irrespective of the overall numbers.
	Want to see more numbers of smaller low cost market homes.	1	Sharba’s current proposal already provides in excess of 75% 2 / 3 bed smaller homes

Area of Comment	Nature of detailed comment	Number of comments	Sharba Proposal to address
Recreation Centre/ Hall	Would like large Hall with varied facilities for a range of sports, other events and youth activities	12	We are happy to accommodate a consensus of opinion on what the village want in what is to be their own Hall. It is our proposal to request that a Working Committee is appointed by the Parish to work with us on both internal & external design of this new facility.
	The Hall should be vernacular in style	3	
	The Hall should be contemporary in style, an innovative eco-design	6	
	Hall to be vandal resistant	1	
	The Hall should have a bar	4	
	The Hall should have no bar	1	
	Would like to see an independent survey and working party assigned to design the facilities	3	
	Hall will need facilities to cater for the disabled	1	
	The Hall should be turned through 90 degrees	1	
	The larger Hall should be provided with two gift houses, not one.	16	

Area of Comment	Nature of detailed comment	Number of comments	Sharba Proposal to address
Recreation Centre/ Hall	Providing more housing to fund the smaller Hall schemes is illogical	2	The intention was to offer a range of packages for consideration that represented a consistent overall total value. The largest scheme should be adequately run from the housing provided. The additional revenue generated from more housing with the smaller facilities (i.e. the same value package) could provide sports/function equipment or other facilities within the village, at the Parish's discretion, at a later date.
	It is too early to consider the Hall designs	6	Sharba like to involve the community in the design, and were only looking for an early indication general preferences in broad styles.
	The new Hall must provide a complimentary range of facilities and not clash with the existing Village Hall	1	We are happy to accommodate a consensus of opinion on what the village want in what is to be their own Hall
	The Hall and Public Open Space should be gifted to the Parish	1	These facilities will be gifted to the Parish
	The Community could provide the facilities themselves	1	Sharba are not in a position to comment on this
Area of Comment	Nature of detailed comment	Number of comments	Sharba Proposal to address
Open Space	Fruit tree planting should be included	1	These ideas/suggestions will all be discussed with the Working Committee
	"Poop scoop" bins should be included for dog walkers	1	
	Would like a tennis court	7	

Area of Comment	Nature of detailed comment	Number of comments	Sharba Proposal to address
Open Space	The Open Space should be a simple green space, just cleared and fenced	1	These ideas/suggestions will all be discussed with the Working Committee
	No lawnmower is required with the Open Space	1	
	No football should be allowed	1	These requests will be under Parish control not ours
	Cricket should not be allowed	1	
	Footpath link to Church Lane should be provided	2	Unfortunately this is not physically possible
	Football cannot be played on a cricket square	1	Sharba are not providing a cricket square, they are providing an open space that is big enough (to ECB standards) for cricket to be played on, if required and permitted. The Working Committee will determine how this is laid out & planted and it will be up to the Parish thereafter to decide what sports and events are permitted to take place.
Site access / highways	The safety of the access, particularly from Wasperton Lane, need to be addressed in any designs.	4	Sharba have already undertaken a detailed highways assessment. Designs will fully comply with Highways guidance and be subject to their approval
School issues	The impact on the school should be considered	1	Sharba have already undertaken initial consultations with the School head teacher and head of governors in this respect
	Consideration should be given to putting the Hall on the School land	1	The school are not keen on this idea

Area of Comment	Nature of detailed comment	Number of comments	Sharba Proposal to address
School issues	The school should receive funding to cope with additional children generated by the housing	1	This will automatically happen as a legal requirement through S.106 contributions
	An access should be provided for the School	2	This is under discussion with both the School & the Governors. Should any access be provided, this will be in the schools complete control.
	The School should be consulted and approve any scheme for the site	6	We have consulted with the School head teacher and head of governors in this respect
Other comments received	Rear access should be provided for houses on Church Street that abut the site	1	It will be an ecological requirement to preserve the woodland belt between the site & these properties.
	Youths should be consulted	3	All households have been provided with a consultation pack, and it was our hope that all families would engage their children to represent the family opinions as a whole, and encourage their children to vote separately where appropriate.
	The consultation should be on facebook	1	We have covered a full range of media having consulted by post, website, and public presentations.
	Question 1. was wrong to ask individuals to speak on behalf of the village	5	Previous consultations attracted requests to move on from the question of principle. However, by popular demand, those raising this question were told they could vote "Yes" or "No" in addition to the questionnaire, and a circular to all household by "Friends of Barford Park" also confirmed this.

Area of Comment	Nature of detailed comment	Number of comments	Sharba Proposal to address
Other comments received	Any S.106 agreement will need to be secure.	2	This is a legal requirement that is a condition of any planning application granted at committee that has to be completed before the planning consent becomes legally valid. It is controlled by the Council's own solicitors.
	Only Wasperton Lane area should be developed	2	All opinions will be considered.
	Providing more housing to fund the smaller Hall schemes is illogical	2	The intention was to offer a range of packages for consideration that represented a consistent overall total value. The largest scheme should be adequately run from the housing provided. The additional revenue generated from more housing with the smaller facilities (i.e. the same value package) could provide sports/function equipment or other facilities within the village, at the Parish's discretion, at a later date.
	Can the two sites be physically linked by a path?	1	There is no physical ability to do this
	More consultations and a working party are required	6	We will now defer to the Parish Council to advise on this
	A footpath link along the rear boundary of the school to the Easternmost point should be provided	1	The school have strong objections to this proposal on safety grounds. The link provided only adds 20-30m to the walkthrough.
	The statistics in the consultation pack did not include numbers.	4	We have detailed numbers and percentages in this consultation.
	Do not like the "buy off" proposals to get housing.	4	A majority appear to favour the facilities on offer, and the houses to enable this.

Response to Friends of Barford Park Leaflet

Although this leaflet was not submitted directly as a response to the consultation, it is felt appropriate to set out a few further facts to put into context the commentary in the leaflet that was circulated to Barford households by “Friends of Barford Park” during the last consultation period.

▪ **Historic Parkland**

- The land is not and never has been a designated Park or Parkland at any point during the history of Barford House. The first association of ownership between Barford House & the fields behind was made in c.1800 when the land was purchased by George Kitchin from multiple previous ownerships and the house was built. This association was severed during the 1900’s, with a buffer strip of land being retained in addition to the existing pleasure gardens of the House, to the rear of the property. The fields have always been described as arable/pasture land in any reference documents, including periodic sales particulars, with an occasional reference to a small orchard/pasture on a small area of this land. The site is currently low grade grazing/pastureland in private ownership, completely separate to that of Barford House.

▪ **Parish Plan commentary on land identified for development:**

- The Parish Plan 2005 identified this site as a “Possible Development Site” on page 4.
- On page 11 it stated that any future development should be appropriate to the needs of the village, and that the Parish should seek to work with developers to maximise the benefits for ‘our’ community.

▪ **Strong support with 95% in favour but limited numbers:**

- The consultation was open and communicated to the whole village. Inevitably there will only be a percentage of individuals available and interested in participating in such a consultation at any given time. Of those that chose to be involved, a majority have always shown favour at every given stage. However, at no point have Sharba received or claimed 95% support for the scheme. The only statistic quoted at 95% was in relation to support for Sharba involving the community in the design of the housing styles for the site via a board of photographs of typical architectural styles in Barford, for votes on the most typical and desirable styles.

▪ **Sharba have not responded to Friends of Barford Park**

- At no time have “Friends of Barford Park” approached Sharba under this designation. However, Mr Braithwaite (who we understand to be a member of Friends of Barford Park) has approached both Sharba & Sharba’s planning consultants, PJPlanning, as himself during our third consultation. PJPlanning responded on behalf of Sharba both verbally and subsequently in writing to all the questions raised. No further requests for information have been received by Sharba or PJPlanning from Mr Braithwaite.

▪ **Contrary to Planning Policy**

- The current Local Plan is in the process of being superseded. The emerging Core Strategy, which will become the new Local Plan in due course, identifies a need for sustainable village communities to be strengthened by appropriate and locally supported development, in line with National Policy. This is a policy supported and promoted by both main political parties.
- The site is actually in the heart of the village, yet fenced and/or walled off to the public at present. With the proposals being to open this site up and dedicate half of it to the community, along with strong access permeability and proximity to key services, this is a strongly sustainable development proposal.

▪ **Conservation Area**

- Policy has never dictated a blanket ‘prohibition’ of development in such areas, indeed most Conservation Areas include elements of built up environments. Any development in such areas is required to be sympathetic to the character of the surrounding location and of overall benefit. Such development is undertaken in conjunction with significant consultation with the Council’s Conservation Team and subject to a separate ‘Conservation Area Consent’ application made concurrently with the Planning Application.

▪ **Setting of Listed Buildings**

- The “setting” of a listed building is broadly a) the views of the surroundings enjoyed by that property, together with b) the views of that property from its surroundings. Barford House enjoys a substantial plot of land in excess of 2.5 acres in area. It also has firmly defined boundaries of mature trees, mainly evergreen, that are virtually impermeable to any vista out of, or into the land, which strongly define its ‘setting’ as being within its own landscaped garden area only. The fields beyond this strongly defined estate are no longer either part of the property ownership or its setting.
- With the proposed properties to be a) located beyond this visible setting, b) at a minimum respectful distance from the original main building of 35m to the sides and 80m to the rear and c) designed as bungalows in the nearest locations in each direction to further restrain any impact, Sharba feel that the setting of Barford House is adequately protected.

▪ **Housing Need**

- Sharba do not claim, as suggested, that recreational facilities are a housing need, but merely that the surveys suggest that there is a community desire for such a facility. The majority of those expressing an opinion feel that the housing proposed would bring an overall benefit in both its mix to provide for locals needs, the additional vitality of an enhanced community, and the enabling of the facilities.

- Warwick D C is under pressure to provide a substantial number of new homes, and both National and emerging policy dictate that smaller sustainable communities should not lose out on the benefits that development can bring.
- Many ex-Barford residents have been forced to move into Warwick and Leamington to find affordable homes that have been lacking in their own village for them. According to the Warwickshire Rural Housing Associations independent survey undertaken during October/November 2008 and published in January 2009, there were 11 households identified to be in current need at that point in time within the numbers of households that responded to the survey – unfortunately, the Needs Survey was returned from only 19% of the households it surveyed, so that nearly 600 out of 700 homes’ potential needs were not accounted for, in arriving at the requirement for 11 affordable homes within the Parish. The needs survey also does not specify how often this need arises or is catered for, but assuming this to be an approximately annual need, and given that the site will deliver housing over a 3 year period beginning c.2011/2, the 35 affordable homes proposed make appropriate provision for the medium term of the Parish housing need.

▪ **Development size and later changes**

- Nearly half the mix 40% is affordable and not private, and overall 75% are smaller low cost homes that will suit both younger start up families forming within the village, and those downsizing in retirement years.
- Friends of Barford Park suggest that “tasteful applications are made to establish a principle”, and that the site is then sold on and/or subsequent amendments are then made, which they fear could include additional housing numbers. However, under planning legislation, any changes to the 1st consent granted would require a full & new planning application to be made. As the main concern appears to be over the ‘open land’ being developed, it should be pointed out that, once the 1st consent is granted, the open land will have been legally committed for transfer into the Parish’s sole ownership and will not be available for any developer to build upon. In addition, although government defined densities for development range between 30 – 50 dwellings per hectare, this proposal is at the absolute minimum of 30 per hectare in keeping with the village location which precludes any later amending applications for the areas designated for housing. Higher densities are only appropriate for towns/cities.

▪ **Previously used land**

- The Government has set a Policy to target 60% of new homes to be built on previously used land where viable, it has not directed all development to be undertaken solely on such sites as this is a practical impossibility. Emerging policy treats sustainability as a greater priority above the previous usage of the land.

- **Ecological Value**
 - Friends of Barford Park claim a high ecological value to the site with no evidence for this. Sharba have had a detailed ecological assessment undertaken on the site by “Ecoline”, identifying every species of flora and fauna present, and the constraints that they put on any development. The site was described as “generally poor” in respect of habitat and landscape quality, with the exception of the surrounding tree belts. There is only one protected species present on the site residing in and close to the tree belts. Sharba intend to retain the tree belts and protect the habitat of protected species on site.

- **The Future**
 - Sharba were not invited to the village meeting held by the parish to enable free discussions. Sharba cannot therefore comment on any information that was either imparted or discussed at that meeting. However, it is logical that this scheme will open up the land to the village, and that such a scheme will be permanent – its future is otherwise inevitably uncertain.

- **Access via village acquisition**
 - Sharba cannot comment on the Parish’s ability to purchase this land for its own use.

- **Recreation**
 - Sharba are happy to engage with a working party to deliver a package acceptable to the village - the purpose of their consultations was to establish an outline of those requirements.

OTHER FAQ’S

Who are Sharba?

Sharba are a family run housing developer who design and implement high quality bespoke schemes in sensitive areas across the South Midlands. Their team has worked on numerous prestigious projects, many in Warwickshire itself.

What guarantee does the village have of delivery of the promised facilities and land?

Any planning application with proposals to provide land, facilities or money such as this, will be subject to a S.106 legal agreement. Until this is signed by both the Council and the Parish, no development can commence. Lawyers acting for both Councils will ensure that any agreement is fully secure by restricting housing sales via specific and legally binding performance obligations.

Can the current drainage cope with such a scheme?

A drainage strategy has already been drawn up by civil engineers. If the village has insufficient capacity, the development will be legally obliged to upgrade the network and pumping stations to cope, such improvements often leaving the sewers with a better capacity than previously existed. All surface water has to be dealt with sustainably, using a combination of soakaways and storage to ensure that no more run off is generated than by the existing usage of the site.

What will happen to the wildlife and the trees?

The tree belts and specific habitats will be protected, excluded from the house sales, and offered to the Parish to supervise and maintain. The open areas have no ecological habitat value according to the report undertaken.

SUMMARY

Sharba were pleased with the substantial and representative numbers of votes received on this third consultation by Sharba, the fifth in total to take place in respect of this site.

Less than a quarter of voters objected outright to the proposals or mix, and in excess of half supported both as proposed – more than twice that of the objectors. The middle quartile demonstrated a range of partial support / disagreement with proposals as they stand.

Preferences for the Hall were clearly in favour of the larger Hall with complimentary facilities to the existing Hall, catering for a range of sports and social activities but with minimal changing and kitchen facilities – i.e. not a restaurant, bar or social club. As an indicative view, voters clearly liked the broad and traditional styling of Hall types 4 and 8/20.

The full report and feedback is being circulated back to those who asked for a copy, and the Parish is invited to engage with Sharba to interpret the results and discuss a way forward, including a suitable working party for the design for the Parish facilities.