

## **Sharba Homes, Barford CONSULTATION EVENT – 14 July 2008 Feedback report**

### **Approach and purpose of consultation**

Sharba Homes is looking at the potential for bringing forward development proposals for a site on Wellesbourne Road, next to Barford House, in the village of Barford. Sharba Homes have a contract with the land owners to promote this site and would like to progress a scheme through the Local Development Framework.

There have been previous proposals to develop this land. In 2005 the results of a public consultation were published in the Barford Parish Plan and identified this land for the development of public open space, community use and a mix of housing. This is in line with Warwick District Council's Local Development Framework which is exploring options for new development including one of which is for the identification of suitable sites in the larger villages including Barford.

Sharba Homes and their design team are at an early stage in their thinking and have not yet drawn up a detailed scheme. The project team has however undertaken a number of studies and investigations, for example looking at the surrounding village, the site history, ecology, trees, highways and drainage in order to better understand the site's context.

Sharba Homes and their project team were keen to meet local neighbours and organisations with an interest in this site to hear what the community thinks about a future development on this site and what it might include.

### **Scope of consultation**

ABC was appointed as an independent advisor by Sharba Homes to organise and oversee this consultation on their behalf. The aim of this consultation was to inform and engage with individuals, groups and organisations with a direct interest in the site.

ABC recommended holding two rounds of consultation. The initial round held on Monday 14 July provided an opportunity to introduce the team, to find out what benefits people thought such a development could bring to the village and an opportunity for the community to raise any issues or concerns which they felt the developer should be aware of as plans progress.

A follow up session has been arranged for **Monday 29 September 2008** so that people can see how their comments have been responded to and view more worked up proposals for the site.

### **Round 1 Consultation**

The initial consultation event was held **on Monday 14 July 2008 from 2-7pm in the Barford Memorial Hall, Barford**, to enable interested parties to view the exhibition material and discuss the proposals face-to-face with representatives from Sharba Homes and their project team. Attendees were encouraged to express their views through written comments and also through discussion with team members.

During the session as people came into the hall a local resident Roger Braithwaite was also canvassing views through his own personal questionnaire. (see *Appendix D*)

***Notifying Barford residents and stakeholders:***

Over 500 letters of invitation (see *Appendix A*) were mailed to local neighbours within the village. In addition some 45 invitations were sent out to named stakeholders including local ward councillors, representatives of Village interests/groups, Barford, Sherborne & Wasperton Joint Parish Council, Warwickshire District Council officers and other organisations with an interest in the site.

A public notice was also inserted in the Courier Midweek on Wednesday 9 July & in the Leamington Courier on Friday 11 July.

***Attendance:***

In attendance at the consultation event from the project team were:

**Sharba Homes:** (developer) Phil James, Gill James, Lydia Cope

**CSJ Brooke-Smith:** (planning consultants): Graham Parker, Andrea Caplan, Anna Bend

**The Hurlstone Partnership:** (transport consultant) Jeremy Hurlstone

**Avril Baker Consultancy:** (consultation co-ordinator): Avril Baker, Jenny Nethercott, Holly Baker

On the day over 112 people came through the doors of whom 108 signed in. The vast majority were local residents but other named stakeholders included representatives from the local school and the Joint Parish Council.

***Consultation material:***

A series of exhibition panels (see *Appendix B*) were on display showing the following:

- Introductory board setting the scene and explaining the consultation process
- existing site plan showing the extent of the proposed development site, its location within the village and photos of key views
- site features and surroundings showing adjacent properties, existing landscape, key landmarks and sun path
- initial concepts showing areas of potential residential development, open space/community use, trees/planting, indicative transport routes and pedestrian and vehicular access
- historic maps showing the site from 1760

Another display contained some photographs and brochures of other recent bespoke developments by Sharba Homes.

Also available to view was the original concept model produced for the Parish Plan consultation.

***Feedback:***

Representatives from Sharba Homes and the project team were on hand throughout the afternoon/evening to talk to attendees and hear their views. This verbal feedback has been incorporated into this report and is important because not everyone who visited chose to make written comments. Many of these visitors however seemed generally happy with the proposals.

In addition to their discussions with the team, attendees were invited to provide written feedback on comments forms (see *Appendix C*) which were handed out at the exhibition. Comments could either be posted in the comments box on the day or returned by post or email. A deadline of 23 July was given for those attending to return forms to ABC.

By the end of July, 39 completed forms had been returned, which is a relatively low level given the attendance on the day. One explanation may be that if people had detailed discussions with the team they may have felt it unnecessary to then repeat their comments on the written forms. During the evening there was a steady flow of attendees to the exhibition which meant that most people would have had the opportunity to have conversations with one or more team members if they wished.

The comment form asked three questions about people's views on the proposals with space for comments. There was a further section which asked more about respondents with individuals asked if they had taken part in the 2005 consultation, whether they were residents/a business or work locally and how they had heard about the exhibition.

Commentary was also received from exiting visitors who did not complete or take forms that they were generally happy and had no comments to make.

### **Question 1. “Do you generally support the principle of redeveloping this site?”**

Respondents could either tick: generally supportive, broadly supportive but with some concerns, opposed or undecided/no opinion.

Of the comment forms that were posted on the night and additional ones received by post or email nearly three quarters showed a level of support for the proposals. Of these 15% (6) were generally supportive whilst a further 57% (22) were broadly supportive but with some concerns. 20% (8) were opposed and 8% (3) had no opinion/were undecided or didn't say.

This written response follows the general verbal the feedback to the team at the event. This was that the majority of the people who spoke with them expressed positive views about development but understandably wanted to raise some concerns and that a small minority were strongly opposed to development and/or had particular overriding issues.

### **Question 2. “What benefits do you think a development could bring to the village? e.g is there a need for more housing or other community facilities?”**

Twenty-seven people made written comments/suggestions to this question. When reviewing the comments it was however clear that some people had included some areas of concern in their response to Question 2 (which asked for benefits of proposed development) rather than in response to Question 3 (which provided an opportunity to raise concerns or issues about a new development). Therefore where applicable these comments have been included under the analysis in Question 3.

Supportive comments included: “Strongly agree that the proposed site is a good choice for a development of this type, only concerns are sufficient parking for residents and use of the open space area...” another that: “Any good quality housing would be welcome to replace the current wilderness.” Similarly: “make use of ‘dead’ inaccessible space....clear up the mess to the right hand side of Barford House.” and “tidy up area – make it usable by villagers” another benefit quoted was “bringing into use for the community of an area of land in the centre of the village”. Some people also said that they felt additional housing with sports/social facilities would be a benefit.

The topic of most interest was around the provision of housing with a wide range of views expressed about the preferred type, tenure, number of units and design. The next most commented on issue was around the potential for the development to include more facilities or amenities for the village. In particular there were a wide range of views around the potential use of any green space for cricket and/or other sports/leisure facilities.

More specific comments are included under topic headings below.

### **Housing:**

In terms of housing type a number of people commented on the need for sheltered or elderly housing, three of whom specifically mentioned wanting bungalows and one, suggested warden assisted housing. One person however felt that elderly: “do not need ‘old people homes’ type housing but good quality smaller scale housing. Another thought that “There could however be a need for a small development of sheltered housing in addition to the proposed mixed housing.”

Others commented favourably on the need for affordable housing to enable young people and families to stay in the village including the view that: “We believe that there is, in the longterm, need for affordable and family housing – probably not too much executive housing.” A further point was made that: “There is a need for low cost housing but on a site such as this it needs to be supported by private housing.”

Other specific comments included one view that they wanted: “sympathetic development now better than high density housing later”; that redeveloping this site would: “provide more opportunity for families to live in the village, or older people who have very limited options in Barford at present” and a further comment suggesting: “mixed housing – some affordable with sheltered housing – not too dense.”

One person commented that they wanted to see in-fill housing to satisfy the local authority requirements without development of the land strip between the by-pass and village.

In terms of the overall number of housing units several people mentioned that they would like to see a more modest level of development in line with the previous proposals. Further comments about density and scale of development is detailed under question 3.

### **Facilities/amenities**

There was a wide variety of comments and suggestions around the potential for community facilities and amenities for the village, what these might be and how any new facilities might affect the village hall and the school.

People mentioned they would generally like to see more community and/or recreational facilities including the comment that: “On a village centre site such as this community facilities are an important factor.” Another commented that this would provide: “More communal space to enjoy for villagers.” A third said that: “at present the green space is preserved but not used by the village. I would be in favour of a development which enables the village to use it e.g a cricket pitch, pavilion or even just a footpath through it.”

The majority who commented on this issue felt there was scope to improve or add to community facilities for the village specifically some form of sports facilities. Others wanted to see this development to create a centre for the village, a focal point for village events and specifically something for teenagers. There was also the suggestion from two people that the school could potentially use facilities during the week.

Opinions were divided about whether the proposals should include a cricket pitch as shown in the previous proposals. In addition to the written comments, this issue was raised by many people in conversations with team members at the exhibition. Inclusion of a cricket pitch as part of the open space was generally supported by the majority of those who expressed an opinion either in writing or verbally. A number of people felt that the space should not be exclusively a cricket pitch with a few suggested other uses such as tennis courts or a bowling green.

Linked to this topic was the issue of a pavilion and its location. Several people asked whether this could perhaps accommodate other uses such as a village hall for drama or indoor sports such as badminton.

Other suggestions for use of the open space included a playground, a garden area with flowers and benches. One person suggested incorporating the children's playground from the playing field so that all the amenities are in one area.

### **Access**

Several people raised the issue of access, asking whether this site could provide a new access to the school and take traffic off Church Street, perhaps even provide an alternative access with car park to serve the school.

Another person suggested that there was scope to provide rear access to some Church Street properties.

### **Impact on the village**

In addition to the points raised above there were two further comments that the development could provide more customers to help support the local shop.

### **Question 3: “Do you have any concerns or issues about a new development on this site that you would like to raise?”**

The issues of most concern to the widest range of attendees were; what type of community facilities/amenities could be provided and the impact this might have on the existing hall, local need for affordable and/or sheltered/elderly housing, the overall density/number, design and type of houses and the impact of such a development on the local infrastructure and the village e.g the school.

The next most pressing issues raised were around access/transport/parking followed by concerns around the wildlife and change to the landscape.

These and other issues raised have been summarised under the following broad headings:

### **Facilities/amenities**

There were a number of comments in this section that echo the wide ranging views and opinions on this topic expressed in question 2.

Again there were very differing views expressed in the comments forms and discussions with team members during the exhibition about whether there should be a cricket pitch and/or other sports facilities.

Those that support having a cricket pitch have strong views about its inclusion. A minority disagree or feel it would have limited use. Several who support inclusion of a cricket pitch also commented that it should not be exclusive. No other use for the entire open space was suggested although a few mentioned tennis and/or bowls.

Of the people who specifically said they wanted a cricket pitch a couple of people commented that this should be larger. It was suggested this could be achieved by removing the tennis courts and relocating housing in the west corner to the site of the tennis courts. Then moving the pavilion to the site against Wellesbourne Road where currently housing is shown.

One person questioned whether residents would be happy to live next to a cricket field, another felt that it would only be used by a small number of people and only for part of the year.

A member of the Barford Cricket Club verbally commented that they had no current facilities and that the need is for a cricket pitch as part of a multi-use space. He also commented that the proposed area would be sufficiently large enough for them.

Several people questioned the need for any new village hall, some of whom felt that the existing hall was sufficient. Another preferred keeping more open green space.

A couple of people also asked who would maintain or look after any facilities such as tennis courts and green areas.

Again, a verbal comment was received questioning the need with Warwick Tennis Club a very short distance away.

A couple of people mentioned allotments. One asked if these would be used in a possible Phase 2, if so would they be replaced. The other suggested that there should be more allotments.

### ***Density/scale of development***

Although no figures for the number of proposed housing units was shown on the display material a number of people thought that the proposals indicated a much higher density/larger scale of development than that shown in the previous plans. Those that expressed an opinion either verbally or in writing had concerns about the impact of this on the village.

Specific comments included the view that: “proposed density of residential development could swamp the site and its surroundings,” another that: “it would move Barford from being a rural village to a small town.” Regarding numbers of homes one comment was that: “the size of development would increase the village by some 20% and may open the door to further developments.” Another that: “80 houses too many – ½ that.”

A couple of people specifically mentioned the by-pass infill land. One was against all development in Barford and said that this was: “Conservation Area destruction when by-pass infill is available.” The other however saw development of this site as a potential benefit saying: “produce infill housing to satisfy local authority requirements for more housing without triggering development of strip between by-pass and village.”

A further comment was that: “the development is not in line with current Warwick District policy (though things may change with the new core policy) and that the loss of breathing space is to be deplored.”

### ***Impact on the village***

Comments on this aspect included a concern that the present infrastructure could not support this level of development and the resulting increase in population.

Several people specifically mentioned existing problems with the local drains and sewerage system and a number expressed concern about pressure on school places. One specific comment in relation to the school was that: “we don’t want a new one built, possibly outside of the main village, as a resulting need for more places.”

Others were concerned that any new community facilities, particularly a hall could threaten the existing hall.

### ***Access/transport and parking***

A number of people mentioned concerns about likely increase in traffic and access to/from local roads whilst a couple of others wanted to ensure there was adequate parking provided.

In discussions with team members there were views expressed about the congestion on Church Street, the merits of putting a new road through the site and the potential for creating a new access for the school. Access was also raised in relation to the location of any new community hall/pavilion suggesting it should perhaps be moved to Wellesbourne Road.

A couple of people wanted more pedestrian and cycle access to any community facilities from Wasperton Lane rather than vehicular.

One person suggested that: “the perimeter road to the north (back of Church Street) should be ‘grasscrete’ or similar to lessen visual impact whilst maintaining ability to access properties.” Three others asked if parking spaces could be included for existing houses fronting Church Street if trees permit. One person however added that they: “would not like a road at the back of Church Street.”

One person had concerns about safety in relation to vehicular use of the potential emergency access.

### ***Local housing need***

Despite the positive comments expressed in Question 2 several people questioned more local housing and mentioned the forthcoming Local Needs Survey.

Specific comments included: “There has just been an increase at Bremridge Close and this needs to be assimilated before another 5% - 10% should be considered.” Another comment regarding overdevelopment of housing stock cited: “Oldham’s increased by >10% if another 100 houses added this would be 20% over the 2000 stock.”

Another suggested that large houses were not needed in the village and that low cost housing is already fulfilled by the new estate. A couple of people mentioned there had been difficulty in allocating and selling homes on the former Oldham’s site and therefore suggested that new affordable homes should be rented and not shared ownership.

In discussion with team members the need for affordable housing was raised by a number of people. Some people did not want to see any affordable housing on this site. Others thought there was a need in the village particularly for elderly.

### ***Ecology***

Several people were concerned about protecting the mature trees and greenery and another about the loss of rough area with trees currently used as a good play area for children. Two others commented in writing about the threat to wildlife, particularly bats and badgers. The existence of the badger sett also came up several times in conversation with team members.

### ***Historic setting/conservation issues***

Several people mentioned their concern about developing in the Conservation Area. One of whom specifically commented that: “housing to the rear of Barford House would be harmful to the setting of the listed building, the character of the Conservation Area and openness of a registered garden.”

In relation to a new access off Wellesbourne Road two people mentioned the need to limit loss of the high wall.

### ***Design***

Several people raised the issue of the design and style of houses. One person said that Barford had already been spoiled by poor 1960s development.

There was a concern that the style of any new housing should be high quality, in keeping with the surroundings and that it should be a mix of type and character of houses.

#### **Question 4:**

***“Did you take part in the previous consultation exercise in 2005?”***

Of those that responded: 27 indicated ‘yes’, 7 ‘no’ and 3 were ‘not sure’.

***When asked to categorise themselves:***

Of those who responded 35 were local residents, five of whom also worked locally, two others indicated they worked locally/were business people.

***When asked how people had heard about the consultation event:***

Of those who responded: 31 had received a letter, two from the public notice and four by word of mouth.

#### **Conclusion:**

Sharba Homes and their team were appreciative of the number of people who took the time and trouble to come along to the exhibition and who provided comments and thoughts. Those who attended also seemed to generally welcome the opportunity to be consulted at this early stage in the proceedings and recognised the depth of studies and consultant reports that had already been undertaken by Sharba Homes and their team.

Copies of the exhibition boards from the July exhibition have been forwarded to the Barford Community website and this feedback report will also be made available.

Sharba very much valued the opportunity to discuss the proposed development of this site face-to-face with local people at an early stage and have found the high level of feedback very helpful.

Whilst some people are opposed to the development of the site there were an encouraging majority who support residential development with additional community facilities and welcome the possible benefits this could bring to the village. There were also some issues raised which the team will investigate more thoroughly in order to provide a response.

In view of this, Sharba Homes has commissioned the design team to work up more detailed proposals showing options for development which it would like to present to the local community for further comment.

A follow up consultation session has been arranged for **Monday 29 September** in the Barford Memorial Hall. The team hopes that there will be a similar turn out at this next session so that residents can see how their comments have been responded to and how the team have progressed their proposals from the early concepts presented in July.