

APPENDIX B



STATEMENT OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

In the formulation of this proposed scheme and the preparation of the planning application, regard has been had to the Swale Borough Council's (SBC) Statement of Community Involvement which encourages the engagement of the community in the planning process.

The project to develop this local needs housing scheme on a rural exception site in Hemhill began with the Parish Council supporting a Parish Housing Needs Survey in August 2015, undertaken by the Rural Housing Enabler (RHE) from Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK) funded by Swale Borough Council (SBC). As well as identifying local housing need, the survey sought to capture the community's views on the merits of a small affordable housing development specifically to address the housing needs of the Parish; 57% of respondents supported the principle of such a development that would meet local housing need. The survey identified a need for twelve affordable homes.

The Rural Housing Enabler and planning officers at Swale Borough Council were involved in the search for a suitable site on which to build a local needs housing scheme and regular progress updates were given at PC meetings. Formal votes of continued support were minuted at PC meetings during the project.

Once a suitable site had been identified, English Rural prepared preliminary plans and the PC held an Information and Consultation Event on 15 March 2018. The event was advertised in the Parish Magazine, the Village website and posters displayed in the Parish. At the event, coloured plans of the proposed preliminary layout and elevations of the properties were displayed. Information handouts were available giving details and history of the project. Hemhill Parish Councillors, the RHE and staff from English Rural were available to answer questions or discuss any concerns residents might have.

The event was attended by around 37 residents (who registered attendance) and they were invited to submit written comments about the proposal. Nineteen comments were received and forwarded to the Parish Council for discussion at a full Parish Council

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meeting in April 2018. At this meeting Councillors voted to continue support a small local needs housing development in Staple Street.

Following the March consultation event, English Rural worked further with the Parish Council and Hernhill Village Conservation Society (HVCS) to mitigate the concerns raised regarding design and the access point to the development. A design team meeting was held with the Parish Council and HVCS to discuss revisions to the layout and the appropriate materials to be used. It was agreed that timber boarding and windows frames would be incorporated, together with such features as chimneys, arches over openings and a mix of roofing materials, to reflect the surrounding properties.

It was agreed that a further information event would be held, to display the revised plans on 9 April 2019. The event was well advertised locally and on the village website. Forty-Five people registered attendance at the event and 23 comments were received. The event was also an opportunity to launch the follow-up Housing Needs Survey, again carried out by the Rural Housing Enabler. Following the results of the survey, which identified a need for up to eleven homes, it was agreed that one of the two bedroom houses would be offered for shared ownership sale, with the remaining five properties for affordable rent.

All parties attended a Parish Council meeting on 16 July to discuss the outcome of the information event and the second housing needs survey. English Rural was asked to continue preparing the required reports and surveys to support a planning application.