



Presentations made by TCLT Board Members at April 26 Open Meeting

Andrew Foster opening remarks:

Welcome to our eighth Open Meeting. Some of you may well have been here two years ago when we raised the prospect of forming a CLT and trying to build some affordable housing here in Thorverton. I remember saying at the end of that meeting that I thought we had a chance of succeeding on this occasion and, I think today represents a significant milestone as we introduce Jo Petford from Hastoe.

Jo is the Development Manager at Hastoe Group and is here to give you some more information about her Housing Association and how they see the Silver St site project progressing. By the way please note that Jo is not going to show any specific designs today as they are still with their architect, Matt Sicolo of Sicolo Webb architects. We intend to ask him back later in the summer to present them at another meeting. What we can say, having seen some feasibility sketches, that the homes are built around an open space or courtyard area which picks up on a theme used elsewhere in Thorverton.

There's an important point we need to confirm here; we have had to park the idea of building any starter homes on the southern site for the moment. It became clear that trying to develop on the southern site was in danger of compromising our plans for the north, and might delay the progress of the purchase of the land. The CLT felt that our primary objective and over-riding priority was to get the north site secured and begin working with Hastoe; when this is locked in we can return to the potential development of the southern side. We thought long and hard over this, but are confident we have reached the right decision.

You will get the chance to question Jo about her proposals, but as is our established routine we ask you to hold on for a few minutes until we have finished all of the presentations. Please also bear in mind that Jo isn't able to answer specific questions about the Glebe field and Lynch Rd developments, except where they overlap our Silver St project.

So, without further ado please welcome Jo Petford.

Jo Petford presentation:

Jo Petford introduced Hastoe Housing Association to the meeting; please see www.hastoe.com

Andrew Wiles presentation:

"In the light of the two market-led developments, why should we continue to support the TCLT/Hastoe project in Silver St?"

I need to preface our answer to this question by announcing that Summerfield, the intending developer of the Glebe site, has just told the Parish Council of their latest affordable housing plans (within their overall proposals for 30 homes), which are:

- 4 x 1-bed and 2 x 3-bed homes at what is known as "Affordable Rents"
- 4 x 2-bed homes at Discounted Market Sale prices



And also to let you know that Wain Homes has just approached the Parish Council to ask if they can come to speak to the Council about their proposals for what we know as the Lynch Road land.

Now to some answers to my question: “In the light of the two market-led developments, why should we continue to support the TCLT/Hastoe project in Silver St?”

Firstly, about the overall numbers of affordable homes that might come out of the various development proposals: it is not yet certain whether none, some or both of these sites will actually be delivered, and with what numbers – especially if the village’s fight against one or both of the proposed developments is successful.

And developers are notoriously successful in arguing down with Planners their affordable housing contribution.

Moreover the Government’s draft National Planning Policy Framework, which is allegedly to be finalised this summer, suggests that what it calls “medium developments”, that is those of 10-49 homes, may include cash payments for affordable housing to be provided elsewhere as an alternative to on-site provision.

Secondly it is also not clear what kind of affordable housing the developers will eventually provide. Some points under this heading:

- The first is that developers are resistant to providing social rented housing because it is so expensive for them. Yes, Hastoe will do social rent on the Silver St site, but to do so it will rely both on free land from TCLT and then Homes England grants of around £150k per home. Developers are much more likely to provide rented housing at 80% of market rents, well above the level of social rents. Indeed this is precisely what Summerfield have just offered to Mid-Devon.
- Next, regarding low-cost home-ownership: now that TCLT has parked our ambitions for the south site on Silver St, we will under-provide against the numbers from the Housing Needs Survey interested in low-cost home-ownership. It may be that private developers’ ability to provide some Discounted Market Sale homes could help fill this gap. Summerfield have offered Discounted Market Sale homes, but at 75% of open market value - whereas we would hope to see a bigger discount than this.
- Lastly, would the developers agree to prioritise the affordable homes for Thorverton-connected people? We know that TCLT & Hastoe will do so – see our strap line. But its easier for a market developer to label their contribution as available for anyone in need across the whole of Devon – much less administrative hassle.

With respect to both the letting of the rented homes and the sale of the low-cost home-ownership ones, we would expect, at least for the TCLT/Hastoe homes in Silver St, that there will be put in place what is known as a geographical cascade with regard to lettings & sales. This will mean that if there are no qualifying applicants from Thorverton, the next search will be for qualifying people connected to one of Thorverton’s neighbouring parishes. After that the search will be to Mid-Devon (or maybe to Devon as a whole after local government reorganisation). And then only after that to areas outside Devon.

We don’t know whether similar cascades will be put in place for any affordable housing provided by the market developers.



All in all, and particularly taking the longer view, that is looking decades hence, we think that it would be very sad for the village to want to pass up the here-and-now Silver St opportunity for social-rented housing for local people, pretty much protected in perpetuity.

The opportunity is one which all of the Church Commissioners, Hastoe and Mid Devon are actively supportive of, and which will be underpinned by TCLT's long-term legal interest in the site; and Hastoe are confident of the necessary grant support from Homes England. The highly unusual convergence of our various partners' support is not to be dismissed at all lightly – their interests and commitments might very well not be available or converge again.

Finally, if TCLT & Hastoe withdraw their interest in the Silver St site, that doesn't guarantee the Church Commissioners will simply leave the land as agricultural land in perpetuity. It is the most developable site in the village, and it is therefore surely highly likely that at some point they will be drawn to sell it for market-led development.

So, for all the above reasons, we – Thorverton Community Land Trust – believe that it is definitely right for us to keep going.

Andrew Saunders presentation:

"There is one other question which we have been asked, which we think it might be helpful if we answered before opening up to questions from the audience.

The question is:

TCLT's plans for Silver St currently fall below the numbers in the Housing Needs Survey, particularly for low-cost home-ownership.

Doesn't this play into the private developers' hands, with their planning application by enabling them to argue that they will be helping to meet some unmet local housing needs? Why don't you increase the size of the Silver St development to see off this argument?

And the answer is:

That the concern underlying this point is misconceived –

The Council will expect any speculative housing development in the village to provide a minimum of 30% affordable dwellings, **irrespective of the number of homes being planned at Silver Street.**

What happens at Silver St will make no difference to the developers' chances of getting planning approval, and no difference to the amount of affordable dwellings that they will be expected to provide.

They will simply be able to justify the need for their schemes by saying that Mid Devon is not meeting its Government-imposed housing targets and therefore schemes such as theirs should be permitted.

So, the issue of providing affordable housing to meet local needs will be irrelevant to their chances of getting planning permission."



Andrew Foster opening remarks:

Thank you again for coming out tonight and our special thanks to Jo for attending the meeting. As ever we are indebted to Helen Ratcliffe for her note taking and to Jo Petford for travelling so far to meet us.

We hope that you found this evening informative and helpful and that the project is still supported by the community. We promised to keep you informed on the progress we are making in these regular Open Meetings and look forward to the next one when we will introduce the architect and their potential designs, sometime in the summer. Details of this will be in Focus and on the website, which is always the best place to see all the latest information.

At the end of these meetings I try to gauge the general mood of the room, are you all agreed we are heading in the right direction?