



WALMER PARISH COUNCIL

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Q&A Sheet for website

York and Albany Close

What plans does Walmer Parish Council have for the open land at the end of York and Albany in Upper Walmer?

The Parish Council is exploring a number of options for the land off York and Albany. There are no actual plans at this time.

What options are being explored?

The Council has instructed a specialist company to seek the views of Dover District Council, as the local Planning Authority, about the possibility of developing the land for up to 8 apartments which would be starter homes for people raised in the parish. The Council has also approached the Ministry of Defence which has an interest in the land if used for any form of housing.

But only a handful of people will benefit if the building goes ahead?

The intention is for each tenancy to last 3 years and for the tenants to come from among the families and friends of those living in Walmer. The project would benefit not only those who get a tenancy but also put an end to sofa surfing in the homes of parents and friends.

Why is the Council thinking of building on this land when permission for housing has been refused in the past?

Firstly, there is a desperate shortage of affordable accommodation in the area for people starting out to make a home of their own.

Secondly, if planning permission were eventually be given, the scheme would be overseen by the Parish Council, which would rent the properties at affordable rents with part of the rent going into a savings scheme for the residents so they would have a deposit for a larger rented property or towards a mortgage.

The previous planning applications were for commercial property developments by speculators.

Will the Parish Council manage any housing scheme?

No. The Parish Council would use an existing Housing Association to manage the scheme or would set up a special, arms-length body to do the job.

What happens if the Parish Council doesn't get planning permission for housing?

Then the Parish Council would know that the land has no value as building land and instead would explore other options to improve the amenities and biodiversity of the area.

Does that not mean that the Parish Council will have wasted money on trying for planning permission?

No. The Council has a duty to use its assets to the full. Exploring whether starter homes are appropriate would eliminate one potential use for the land and allow the Council to value its asset properly.

Why is the Council even considering building starter homes on this land? Would it not be better to build elsewhere?

The Council own this piece of land. Though the Council would have to negotiate with the MoD regarding a top-up payment to the MoD if planning permission were to be granted, but this would be cheaper than buying building land outright.

Surely commercial developers include or can be made to include starter homes in the major developments that are going on all around Walmer?

Dover District Council can impose conditions on developers to include a certain percentage of affordable homes within their developments. But what a commercial developer considers to be affordable is not necessarily what people can actually

afford. Also, once developers have got planning permission, they often ask for the percentage of affordable houses to be reduced – sometimes to 0%.

If the Parish Council gets planning permission, would the Council just sell the land with permission?

The Council has no intention of selling the land and if it got permission, it would make sure that the project went ahead in the form envisaged. If, in the distant future, the Council or a successor body were obliged to sell, then the Council could place covenants on the land and buildings.

If the land is built on what will happen to the trees on the site?

It is intended that the trees will be retained and that additional planting will be put in place.

The Council's lawyers have written to some residents in York and Albany regarding the access to the site. Why is this?

A couple of households have encroached on the Council's access to the land and they have been reminded of the boundaries between their land and the Council's.

The access is too narrow for building traffic and emergency vehicles to get to any homes on the site.

The access is adequate provided the legal boundaries are maintained.