

From: Nick Alford <>  
Sent: 10 March 2022  
To: <>  
Subject: Neighbourhood Plan policies consultation

I am writing to express my views on the proposed modifications to the Neighbourhood Plan.

Whilst I totally understand the concerns of many people regarding the gradual increase in the proportion of second homes in the South Hams and the parish itself, I do not agree with the proposed amendments to the Neighbourhood Plan.

In my view they will achieve very little if anything to change the statistics for the following simple reasons:

1: Currently 100% of the housing stock is unrestricted and will continue to be so, such that any house can become a second home.

2: One for one redevelopments will still be permitted so will not stop the current trend.

3: The restriction will reduce the likelihood of new houses being built, beyond those being redeveloped by wealthy individuals, who are more likely to be second home owners, able to write off the value of the existing house being demolished.

4: A more progressive policy should be to encourage the increase in supply which will reduce high prices and allow more people to live in the area.

4: It is also a myth that larger scale housing schemes of more than 1 property don't get bought by permanent residents. I have been involved in the delivery of approximately 22 houses over the last 5 years in Salcombe and Frogmore. The sites previously had 4 houses on them and a run down former hotel. We have now created 22 houses, increasing the stock to those communities without the need to build on agricultural land. At least 6 of the properties are occupied by permanent residents (6 of the houses are still under construction so it is not yet clear if they will be permanently occupied or second homes). Therefore the number of families living in those communities permanently has increased, whilst the second homes are used far more all year round than the dilapidated, poorly insulated, properties they replaced. Furthermore, some of the previous residents have remained in the town where they previously lived.

5: I fully support larger scale housing schemes being obliged to provide affordable housing, especially on windfall agricultural sites which would not otherwise be regarded favourably for planning consent. However small scale brownfield schemes will be uneconomic if a permanent residents restriction is applied. Instead of increasing the stock of houses, existing properties will be replaced on a one for one basis by wealthy buyers, more likely to use it as a second home. We already find we cannot compete with individual buyers on small sites with the potential to

provide two houses, as we are often outbid by people looking to replace 1 dwelling for a larger second home. A permanent residents restriction will reduce end values by at least 25%, thus leaving second home buyers to outbid anyone trying to build more than 1 house.

6: We are faced with the same restriction in adjoining parishes and as a result we anticipate that we will curtail our construction and investment activity once our existing schemes have been completed. The knock on effect will be a reduction in the employment of local labour and building supply companies. Currently we employ 20-30 people all year round and are one of the major customers for the main building supply companies in the area. All this income and investment in the local economy will disappear.

7: Similar restrictions have not had the desired effect in St Ives. House prices have continued to rise, with the existing stock gradually being converted to second homes and development activity has reduced enormously. That means builders lose their jobs or are forced to travel or move out of the area. Little consideration seems to be given, when these policies are introduced, to the huge numbers of local builders, suppliers and tradesmen who live in the Kingsbridge/Salcombe area and provide support for the local economy. Far more people are builders than fishermen, yet only the latter are seen as a cause worth fighting for.

So what is the answer?

I accept that measures are needed to encourage permanent residents. Technology is now enabling people to work from home or in remote locations. Little research is given to understanding whether people are now spending more time to live where they want to - ie are second homes now occupied for longer during the year? Anecdotally I think they are. Plus many people are now able to relocate permanently to places like South Devon.

Larger schemes on greenfield sites are needed to provide real affordable homes.

Positive policies are needed to encourage employment and therefore help people live in the area permanently. This can be done by creating business hubs for small enterprises, improving internet connections, creating more business parks.

Council housing is needed to replace the stock lost since the Thatcher years.

The Local Authority need to get involved in re-shaping the high street and providing funding to create accommodation above the shops in high streets, much of whose upper floors lie empty and under utilised. It doesn't stack up economically for the private sector due to the high building costs and poor end values, but would stack up on a non profit basis, thereby increasing the housing stock, providing reasonably priced housing to buy or rent, rejuvenating town centres and helping the shops to thrive. Fore Street in Kingsbridge has enormous potential. I have viewed several properties along the high street which have lain semi derelict for many years, so the opportunity is there.

Increasing the housing stock is the answer to the problems faced. Many people have an inherent fear of such a prospect, but the alternative is that the trend towards greater second home ownership will continue unabated.

I hope the above provides food for thought as I appreciate the proposed policy is well meaning, albeit, in my view flawed.

Regards

Nick Alford