

## **Brief Synopsis on the Housing Action Group 25/07/2024**

The need to address a range of issues related to housing arose from the extensive consultation which delivered the 2022 Community Action Plan (where housing was identified as a key priority). The range of issues identified included - Fewer short term lets and second homes; More affordable housing, to buy and rent locally; Ownership of land and buildings as community assets; Sheltered and social housing, including options for downsizing.

This note focuses on the specific issue of affordable housing and summarises the chronology of meetings over the last 2 years, the key outcomes and proposed way forward. We have initially focussed on sites within Dunkeld and Birnam as these accord with the 20 minute village concept (as detailed in National Planning Framework 4 NPF4) and are largely within designated areas for potential development (as informed by the current Local Development Plan LDP2).

Our Community Housing Needs Survey conducted by Communities Housing Trust in 2022 further evidences a need for more affordable housing locally. Respondents to the survey clearly indicated that there is a lack of affordable housing in the area with the high price of homes for sale on the open market making it difficult for local people to get on the housing ladder. A recent survey undertaken by the HAG in May 2024 echoes these sentiments. Both reports illustrate that members of our community who responded to these surveys consider an affordable rent to be in the region of £400 to £600 per month and an affordable home to be around £200,000 to £250,000.

Perth & Kinross Council have provided support and guidance to our local Housing Action Group (HAG) to help identify potential sites for affordable housing. They supplied the HAG with a spreadsheet which detailed 38 sites and ranked these using a traffic light system to indicate their potential for development (see attached below). This spreadsheet formed the basis upon which decisions for the shortlist of sites (presented at the Open Afternoon on 18th April 2024 and detailed below) was determined.

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1aYYjg7eHEipvzpNr5aCop70kmvho14hRCnwppULucsE/edit?usp=sharing>

Maps showing the illustrative boundaries for the shortlist of four potential sites can be found here:

Ardnagag

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1MltdD4vXXf-EGcluU6mVjLQZmFrwtbuu/view?usp=sharing>

The Glebe

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1toBeCB0KMZGCWoriRlo6NuDKSCtea4jB/view?usp=sharing>

Torwood

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1NQCyCbCBYEdinsSt-buDjj2yuu-DyXUR/view?usp=sharing>

Willowbank

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tHEoyX9ZLIKtsnfKxCUycVCKw1O4sInj/view?usp=sharing>

The issue of housing is a contentious one that divides our community and has caused the HAG to come under some criticism. The HAG is not currently active following the resignation of the Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary in May 2024. The HAG now seeks new office bearers to reestablish and reinvigorate the valuable work this group has been concentrating on over the last few years. We would appeal to anyone with an interest and / or expertise in affordable housing development to get in touch with Trust via our email [dbdcdt@gmail.com](mailto:dbdcdt@gmail.com)

## **Housing Meetings Held:**

### **June 2022 – PH8 Housing Meeting**

Focus: Findings from Housing Needs & Demand Assessment (HNDA) presented by Joe Gribben of Communities Housing Trust. Discussion followed and a plan for next steps. (Attended by 4 representatives from Atholl Estates).

Link to PH8 Housing Needs Assessment:

[PH 8 HNS Survey Report FINAL.pdf](#)

### **August 2022 – PH8 Housing**

Chair of PH8 Housing stepped down from the group and asked BT to assist with ongoing work being undertaken.

### **October 2022 – HAG Meeting**

Focus: New Chair elected, MOU with PH8 Steering Group and next steps for HAG.

### **November 2022 – Meeting with Murthly Estates**

Focus: The history of the 'Carrot Field' was covered, including the current proposal by Erigmore. Murthly Estate have attempted to apply for permission to build houses on this site several times during the last 30 years but have always been unsuccessful. For this reason, they have now moved on to identify other land for the building of houses which lies closer to the village of Murthly.

TSF indicated that he was sympathetic to the challenges facing the community and that he would be willing to sell land for affordable housing subject to appropriate

planning approval. Two areas were discussed – Torlee Road, Birnam and Ringwood (off the B867).

### **November 2022 – HAG Meeting**

Focus: DBDCT Chair attended, Vice Chairs were elected, discussion of possible sites for affordable housing on Murthly Estate, contact with Councillors and MOU.

### **December 2022 – HAG Meeting**

Focus: HAG meeting with Local Councillors and other representatives including: Stuart Hall – PKC?, Joe Gribben – Communities Housing Trust, Campbell Hall – Affordable Housing Enabler PKC, Ian James – Councillor, Ben Wilson – PKC, Martin Smith – Housing Manager PKC, Grant Laing – Councillor, Brian Smith – Buyback Officer PKC. Discussion of next steps and research required.

### **January 2023 – HAG Meeting**

Focus: Consideration of possible options – buyback of ex-council housing stock, approaching local landowners (including Atholl Estates) for land, EOI for CAT submitted for Jubilee Park.

### **March 2023 – HAG Meeting**

Discussion of Haughend and community opinions shared. General consensus is that the current scale of development (235 houses) is too large for D&B.

Sites for affordable housing identified:

- Jubilee Park
- Torwood Park
- Old nursery – flat land at top of Spoutwell
- Beatrix Potter Garden
- Disused entrance behind old walled garden near Tullymully
- Ardnagag Field
- Tullymully
- Burn Glen
- Area near Inver on A822
- Any large garden

### **April 2023 – HAG Meeting**

Focus: Workshop about affordable housing organised and led by Communities Housing Trust.

### **June 2023 – HAG Meeting**

Focus: New Vice-Chair is appointed. Discussion of possible sites, Short Term Let consultation and Big Place Conversation.

### **July 2023 – HAG Meeting**

Focus: New Chair elected. Big Place Conversation and discussion of possible sites awaiting input from PKC.

## **October 2023 – HAG Meeting**

Focus: This meeting was called to discuss the different possible sites identified and surveyed by Perth & Kinross Council as possible sites for the building of affordable housing. **Campbell Hall** showed tables and maps showing these sites. 38 sites were assessed. 6 were 'green', 5 were 'amber' and the rest were 'red'. They included existing buildings that could be renovated.

**Mary Arnold Forster** and **Amy Sanderson** also showed their assessment of different areas. Some of these were the same as the PKC list, others were new areas. All of these were new-builds.

A discussion was had about all these possibilities. It was decided that a meeting would be set up with Nicola Doctor and John Forbes to discuss all the possibilities with the intention of choosing a site to go forward with.

## **November 2023 – HAG Meeting**

Focus – Presentation by Nicola Doctor and John Forbes from Communities Housing Trust

The presentation outlined the importance of sustaining local communities in rural areas and how the CHT can help. The process of procuring community-owned affordable housing was discussed and how we can move on from the point we are at presently:

- Feasibility studies of selected areas in D&B need to be completed
- Final plot(s) selected.
- Decision on how many and what type of accommodation is needed to suit our community.
- After this stage has been completed the project can then go for planning permission.
- The Trust can apply for finance from the Scottish Land Fund and the Rural and Islands Housing Fund, among others.
- A start-to-finish service is available from the CHT – from Project development to Handover.
- Once the buildings have been finished, the homes will be allocated. This will not be done by anybody in D&B but the community will decide on the weighting given to different types of applicants.

**CH** summarised the Pilot Assessments carried out by the PKC and explained the traffic-lighting system they use. The 'Green' and 'Amber' sites were discussed.

Two new sites were suggested to him – Willowbank site next to the recycling centre in Birnam and the area next to the Glebe. He also mentioned the Key Worker Fund which is a new government initiative which community groups may have access to. PKC are also investigating empty properties which could potentially be assessed for inclusion in the affordable housing stock.

## **HAG Meeting with Haughend**

BT, EB Attendance at online meeting with Mark Richardson (Ristow Consulting) and Claire Troughton (Atholl Estates) to discuss Haughend proposal on 14<sup>th</sup> November 2023.

## **January 2024 – HAG Meeting**

Focus: Housing needs survey questionnaire, resume of public meeting on 17/01/2024 to discuss Haugend, shortlist of 4 sites to be presented at DBDCDT Open Afternoon – date tba.

1. Ardnagag : This is the largest of the areas. Owned by the Atholl estate. It is not however in the current Land Development Plan. Topographical problems – but may be achievable.
2. Torwood Park: Small space on Perth Road – but may only get a few dwellings on this site. Owned by PKC.
3. Area near Willowbank in Birnam – starting at the present site of Recycling Bins. SEPA includes this in possible flooding areas but PKC are willing to do a specific flooding survey for this plot. Owned by PKC
4. The Glebe – continuation of existing dwellings. Flooding issue. Owned by the Church of Scotland.

## **February 2024 – HAG Meeting**

Focus: Housing needs survey questionnaire, shortlisting process for 4 sites explained, planning for Open Afternoon on 18/04/24 and reorganisation of the HAG.

## **March 2024 – HAG Meeting**

Focus: Plan to take HAG forward following the resignation of Eric Bremner, Jane Bremner and Beth Taylor. Existing members of the HAG to be contacted and asked to indicate if they wish to remain part of the group moving forward.

## **May 2024 - DBDCDT**

Representatives from DBDCDT visited the shortlist of possible housing sites with Campbell Hall (PKC Affordable Housing Enabler).

## **June 2024 - DBDCDT**

Trustees from DBDCDT visited a shortlist of potential sites. Willowbank was identified as the site most likely to proceed.

## **DBDCDT & Haugend**

DBDCDT Board of Trustees agreed that a small working group would form to liaise with Atholl Estates to understand what their proposal could deliver in terms of affordable housing for our community. A team consisting of Norman Grieve, Jane Bremner, Kathy Burns, Eric Bremner and Beth Taylor were mandated by the Board of Trustees to engage with parties and discover facts relating to the potential Haugend Development.

Since January 2024, the team have engaged face to face, by email and phone, with the owner Claire Troughton, the owner's Estate managers Atholl Estates, the owner's Project Manager Mark Richardson (Ristol Consulting), with Community Housing Trust (Scotland), and with various departments of PKC, particularly

Campbell Hall. They attended at length the second public Consultation held in early February.

The general observations of this group were:

- That the majority of information about the development has been placed in the public domain, and presented at public consultations.
- That all parties are knowledgeable, open to discussion, willing to discuss options, and their messaging consistent and straightforward,
- That we have not experienced any contradictions in message – for example, different representations being made to different groups.
- That we (and the public) have been listened to and alterations made to plans accordingly.

The more specific observations of this group were:

- The Council Planning department is engaged.
- The Estate intends to contract out design and Construction, but otherwise manage the project.
- Probably all the houses (65) will be built in a single phase – for most build contractors this is a small project, and needs the scale of a single phase to get competitive tendering.
- It is intended to convey ownership of the 23 plots to DBDCDT / Community Body at the point where they have been serviced (road built, utilities in place).
- Before that, some form of legal agreement needs to be put in place between the owner and the Trust / Community Body..
- The likely “modus operandi” is that the Estate and the Trust / Community Body will be “co-developers” in the Development.
- The Estate will pay for all the roads, water, electricity, drainage, sewage infrastructure.
- There appears to be a mutual preference that all the houses will have the same external design basis, thus appearing to be of the same style.
- Some of the Estate built houses will be the same size as the Trust / Community Body built affordable houses.
- All 65 houses will (probably) be subject to the Rural Housing Burden (i.e. to be lived in by full time residents).

### **Haughend Subgroup Meetings**

- BT, NG, EB, JB, KB on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2024.
- BT Attendance at online meeting with Nicola Doctor from Communities Housing Trust (CHT) on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2024. Brief overview of proposal by Atholl Estates and possible support that CHT could lend.
- BT Attendance at online meeting with Ronnie MacRae from Communities Housing Trust (CHT) on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024. Briefing on Atholl Estates proposal.
- BT Attendance at Community Presentation of Haughend Development Proposal by Atholl Estates at Birnam Arts on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2024.
- BT, NG, EB, JB on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2024.
- BT, NG, EB, JB & Campbell Hall on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2024.

- BT, NG, EB, JB, KB & Campbell Hall (PKC Affordable Housing Enabler), Nicola Doctor (Communities Housing Trust) and Mark Richardson, Claire Spencer Churchill (nee Troughton) and Andrew Bruce Wooton (Atholl Estates) on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2024.
- BT, NG EB Meeting with Mark Richardson (Atholl Estates) and Campbell Hall (PKC Affordable Housing Enabler) on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2024.
- BT, NG, EB, JB & Ronnie MacRae, Nicola Doctor and John Forbes from Communities Housing Trust on 17<sup>th</sup> April 2024.

## **NEXT STEPS FOR COMMUNITY LED AFFORDABLE HOUSING FOR DUNKELD, BIRNAM & DISTRICT**

1. Site identified – Willowbank
2. Investigate SEPA flood risk with PKC Planning Department – Andrew Ballantine to provide guidance in the next 2 weeks.
3. Contact Communities Housing Trust (CHT) to discuss potential sites and their possible involvement.
4. (If PKC gives go ahead) Submit EOI to Scottish Land Fund (SLF) for Stage 1 Funding for feasibility.
5. Submit EOI to Rural Housing Fund to gauge potential funding and shortfall.
6. Undertake Feasibility Study with support from CHT or other body.
7. Feasibility study will highlight whether site is suitable for development, if site is suitable proceed to Stage 2 application to SLF.

## **NEXT STEPS for DBDCDT:**

1. Reinvigorate the Housing Action Group as an integral part of the Trust to comprise a steering group with Trustees and other Trust members. This group will start afresh ranking all sites (in parallel with the Willowbank process).
2. Community engagement to define Affordable Housing for our area.
3. Summarise the status of the other issues around short term lets / second homes, sheltered and social housing and ownership of community assets.
4. Next steps for Haughend. No further action until a pre planning app or full app is submitted.

## **Additional Information on Affordable Housing**

### **Rural Housing Fund:**

<https://www.gov.scot/policies/more-homes/rural-housing-fund/>

## **Rural Housing Fund Case Studies:**

<https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/factsheet/2016/06/rural-housing-fund-case-studies/documents/rural-housing-case-studies-2016-pdf/rural-housing-case-studies-2016-pdf/govscot%3Adocument/Rural-housing-case-studies-2016.pdf>

## **Average Private Rents:**

In the private rented sector the Scottish Government data shows that for a privately rented 2-bed property the national average rent during September 2021 was £693 a month or £173 per week.[3] However, this average figure conceals very wide geographical variations. For example, people renting privately in the Lothian area had a substantially higher average at £942 a month or £235 per week, with people in Dumfries and Galloway paying a lower private rent at £477 or £119 per week.[4]

[3] <https://www.gov.scot/publications/private-sector-rent-statistics-scotland-2010-2021/>

[4] It should be noted that the private rented datasets are limited as they are largely based on advertised rents, so they don't cover rents of existing tenancies

In the year to end September 2021, Lothian had the highest average monthly rents for 2 bedroom properties across Scotland (£942). Other areas with high rents included Greater Glasgow (£797) and East Dunbartonshire (£721). Areas with the lowest average rents for 2 bedroom properties included the Ayrshires (£500) and Dumfries and Galloway (£477).

These regional trends combine to show an estimated 25.1% cumulative increase for average 2 bedroom properties in Scotland between 2010 and 2021, reaching £693 in 2021.

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/private-sector-rent-statistics-scotland-2010-2021/pages/2/>

## **Affordable – What does this mean?**

'Defining affordable housing is complicated There are many ways to define affordable housing as it depends on many factors such as household type, household income, the location and size of a property, and the local housing market.



1 Social landlords are responsible for setting their own rents and they have different rent-setting policies reflecting the context of their areas and their housing stock. While this local approach to defining rent affordability is appropriate to reflect the local context, it means that there is no one common definition of affordability and it can be confusing for tenants and the public.’

[https://audit.scot/uploads/docs/report/2020/nr\\_200409\\_affordable\\_housing.pdf](https://audit.scot/uploads/docs/report/2020/nr_200409_affordable_housing.pdf)

### **Types of Affordable Housing**

- Social housing refers to secure, relatively low rent housing, prioritised by need and provided by local authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs).
- Affordable housing is used to denote a much broader category of housing tenures that includes social housing, but also a plethora of low-cost home-ownership and mid-market rent schemes.
- Mid-market rent (MMR) describes housing that is typically between the cost of market rent and social rents and is designed for low to moderate income households, i.e. often households that would not qualify for social housing but cannot afford market rent or owner occupation.
- Low-cost home ownership describes several schemes supported by the Scottish Government designed to enable lower income households, and often first-time buyers, to purchase a dwelling or a share in it.

Independent academic research outlines the requirement for a transformative affordable housing programme and details what is required – [Affordable Housing Need in Scotland Post 2021](#)