

## **Minutes of Hybrid Meeting Held on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2022 with RSUA and RTPI Members**

### **Topic: Second Homes**

#### Attendance

Denise Dickson (Head of Planning) (DD) - Cloonavin Offices

Sharon Mulhern (Development Plan Manager) (SM) - Cloonavin Offices

Karen Dickson (Senior Planning Officer, Development Plan) (KD) - Cloonavin Offices

Ruairi McGrath - (Senior Planning Officer, Development Plan) (RMG) - Remote

Murray Bell (Local RSUA Rep MB) – Bell Architects Ltd - Cloonavin Offices

Ciaran Fox (RSUA Chair) (CF) – Remote

Emmet Doyle (RSUA Public & Policy Affairs Officer) (ED) - Remote

Julie Sullivan (RTPI Northern Ireland Administrator) (JS) - Remote

Damien McLaughlin (HERE Architects) (DML) - Remote

Graeme Montgomery (Montgomery Irwin Architects) (GM) - Remote

John Fleming (JF) – Remote

John Scally (Carlin Planning) (JS) - Remote

Philip Parker, (PP) - Remote

Clive Henning,(CH) - Remote

Scott Caithness (Montgomery Irwin Architects) (SC) - Remote

Tom Stokes (TSA Planning) (TS) - Remote

Andrew McCready (AMC) - Remote

David McKenna, (DMK) - Remote

Cahal Donaghy (McGirr Architects) (CD)- Remote

Colm Donaghy (McGirr Architects) (CoD) – Remote

Paul McAllister (PMcArchitects) (PMA) - Remote

Apologies: Maura Quigley, David Mountstephen, Roisin Wilmott, Rhiann Brimble

- 1.1 DD opened the meeting and welcomed attendees. She advised the purpose of the meeting is to discuss the issue of second homes in the Borough and was raised at meeting with RSUA. DD advised the council is considering this issue

in the context of the Local Development Plan (LPD) and, if relevant, within the draft Plan Strategy which will be issued for public consultation.

- 1.2 DD outlined the agenda for the meeting.
- 1.3 DD advised it was her intention to place the minutes on the Planning website in the future, to be as open and transparent as possible, and make the minute available for those who have not taken part in the discussions.
- 1.4 DD then provided updates on the last meeting.
  - Customer Survey – due to commence in April on a system similar to Survey Monkey.
  - Design Arbitrator – DD advised the Welsh system was very similar to MAG. MAG is due to give a presentation to Planning Committee Members on 30<sup>th</sup> May. RSUA Design Panel information is awaited from Ciaran Fox.
  - Random check – Information on ARB register will be used to categorise agents.
  - Meeting re PAD process on 28<sup>th</sup> April. Dfl considering the issue of PADs and depending on Dfl timeframes will determine whether DD proceeds with undertaking this review.
  - Other issues – Guiding Principles for DPS – may attach to PAD meeting at end of April. Important to get input regarding new technical specifications.
  - Contact details for staff - on the Planning website.
  - Renewals – raised at next Principals' meeting.
  - Non Material Change – prepare a leaflet.
  - Further action – review CLUD letter.
  - RSUA – consider possibility of any training for planning staff.

### *Second Homes*

- 2.1 DD went through a powerpoint presentation to outline the difficulties in dealing with the issue of second homes and compared research in other jurisdictions. Discussions covered:
  - The definition of development under the legislation;
  - The definition of a dwelling house under the Use Classes Order;
  - Intervention in the open market;
  - Use of legal agreements and the impact on resources to monitor these; and
  - Future policy cannot be applied retrospectively.
- 2.2 DD referred to the fact that the Housing Growth Indicators contained an element of provision for second homes, and the potential of the provision of affordable housing to assist in providing more local choice, subject to Housing Needs Analysis.

- 2.3 DD referred to other jurisdictions – in Wales, the Government is considering the issue and whether second homes are solely responsible for increasing house prices or decline in local services. In Wales there are suggestions to change the Use Classes Order to include a sub-section on holiday use. They are also looking at taxation which is outside the Planning remit.
- 2.4 DD Advised that in the Lake District, research undertaken by the London School of Economics found that second homes did not have a significant impact on property prices; they were location led. Also, it was difficult to enforce against due to evidence regarding proof in relation to the change of use to second home.
- 2.5 DD advised that in Scotland, the 2019 Act definition of development has been amended and Regulations are under review to allow Planning Authorities to designate an area as a 'short-term let control area' where use of the property for short-term lets will involve a change of use and require planning permission.
- 2.6 DD advised that in England, in Northumberland County Council new dwellings in parishes of 20% or more household spaces with no usual residents will be secured by a S106 Agreement. In St Ives, there is a ban on second homes through the use of a planning condition/agreement which has been challenged under Art8 of the Human Rights that allows justification in terms of the economic well-being of St Ives.
- 2.7 DD advised that she considered a change of legislation necessary by DfI in relation to the definition of a change to short-term let as development requiring planning permission and this should be reinforced with a licensing regime similar to HMOs.

*Comments from those in attendance*

- 3.1 Discussion on whether there is considered to be a problem in relation to second homes and whether locals and councillors see second homes as a problem. If there is an issue, spend time on it, if not, don't. If there is a problem, wish to try to avoid exacerbating it.
- 3.2 Zoning of land for 25% affordable housing can be very effective. However, there is a lot of infill development, which may be driver for new development rather than expansion; brownfield development rather than greenfield development.
- 3.3 Presence of second homes provide for wider range of services and facilities in the affected settlements. The extension of the 'season' has extended the use of second homes substantially, which means more people around in the winter months. Evidence does not indicate curtailment of second homes reduces the price of houses. There is no evidence to demonstrate second homes are the reason why prices are high. Restaurants are able to survive with the current level of second homes and permanent housing stock, so any change will not

impact on the current level of service. If all new housing is affordable, this will not diminish the current levels of service and should not cloud the issue.

- 3.4 Census 20 years ago and information may be out of date – Portballintrae and Castlerock are examples where there has been erosion of the sense of community. It is resulting in an aging population as local, young families are not able to purchase a dwelling who do not meet the housing need requirements. The benefits to the local economy becomes an issue as there are no young people to support the services. 2<sup>nd</sup> homes have positive impacts for local economy, current area plan is the only one with a social housing policy in it which has been successful on the North Coast.
- 3.5 Reference was made to a presentation by Stuart Pollard regarding Portstewart Second Homes.
- 3.6 Local perception is that there is a difference between second homes and holiday lets and perhaps it's the holiday lets that is the bigger problem. Airbnb and self-catering can create more problems due to the transient nature of their occupation. Belfast seeks change of use application for Airbnb on the back of enforcement. They consider short term lets to be sui generis use, from private dwelling to Airbnb.
- 3.7 The issue requires a whole council conversation on how to make it better for our area.

#### *Actions*

- 4.1 DD to contact Belfast regarding its approach to Airbnb.
- 4.2 DD to follow up with new DfI Minister in correspondence. Also may write to Chief Planner regarding legislation changes and possible associated licensing arrangements.
- 4.3 DD suggested the group that both RSUA and RTPI may also wish to communicate with the Minister and Chief Planner also.

#### *AORB*

- 5.1 Next meeting – 28<sup>th</sup> April 2022 – PAD process, and General Principles re new technical specifications.
- 5.2 Full joint meeting on 15 June. Minutes of key points will be placed on Planning section of council website.