

# The Glebe field and housing development – past, present and future

## The Past

The first development on the field – I think – was the building of the Cross Keys Inn – but so far I have not been able to pin down exactly when this was built, although Martin Bullock reckons it was built at the same time as Mr Brunel was building the railway in the late 1830s, as a house for the local head of railway building.

What we do know is:

- In 1924 - the Glebe Cottages were built on the Wallingford Road
- In 1952 - the houses to the East of the railway line in South Bank were built
- In the 1960s the Rev Roy Price – then Vicar of South Stoke & Woodcote – submitted a planning application to build quite a few houses on the field. This application was rejected by Oxfordshire County Council - who in those days was responsible for planning matters - on the grounds of poor access arrangements.
- In 1970 - the bungalows in the Gardens were built
- The remainder of the field was farmed up to the mid 1990s, but due to the option of set aside, and it becoming too small to be economically farmed, it was decided to leave it fallow.

Since then, and as far as I personally know, further development started with contact which I made with the major local landowners back in 2009 when I became a Parish Cllr for the second time. This was given more impetus, when I was given the PC's planning portfolio. I wanted to find out if any of these landowners had any plans for development in or around the village.

I met the then Director of Glebe (Roger Hargreaves) for the Diocese of Oxford – owners of the field – and he advised that the Diocese would be interested to discuss some further development on the field. There followed more discussions with both Roger and his replacement – David Mason – who took over on Roger's retirement, between then and 2012, when the Parish Council authorized the Oxfordshire Rural Community Council (ORCC) to carry out a Housing Needs Survey in South Stoke.

The results of this survey indicated a then need for 9 individuals or families - who had "South Stoke connections" - for affordable homes in the Village, and it also indicated that Parishioners viewed the Glebe field as the most suitable place for such houses to be built.

The Parish Council then agreed with ORCC that four new affordable homes should be built and after further discussion with The Diocese, the PC decided that the Sovereign Housing Association (SHA) should lead on this, and submit a planning application for the 4 homes on the field. The SHA presented a plan to a village meeting in Nov 2013, and following a PC decision in favour, the SHA submitted a Planning Application, which was approved in 2014, building commenced that Autumn, and the 4 houses were completed in July 2015. They were all let within 4 days of completion, to families who were already on the South Oxfordshire District Council's (SODC) Housing Register – two of them to families with South Stoke connections, and two to families with South Oxfordshire connections.

That brings us up to where we are to-day in terms of houses being built on the original field.

## The Present (2015 onwards)

Following the building of these four affordable homes in 2015, the PC and the Diocese discussed possible further housing development on the Glebe field, and the PC decided that if there was to be further development it should be one final plan for the field, and not piecemeal developments, over the years.

A Parish Plan Re-Fresh exercise was undertaken during 2014/2015 and at an open meeting in February 2015, Parishioners voted on which things they would like to happen in the Village – top of the poll was housing development, followed by a new/replacement Village Shop and either a re-vamped Village Hall or a new Village Hall. As a result of this,

the PC then set-up three working project groups, one of which was the Housing Development groups, chaired by myself.

The South Stoke Housing Development Project Group (SSHDP) first met in March 2015, and composed of Ian Haslam, Andrew Scrivener and me. Over the following months we were joined by Stuart McKay, Phil Wortley, Michael Saunders, Diana Hathaway - and Janet Jones, who kindly agree to be our note-taker for our roughly monthly meetings. Andrew Scrivener later had to resign due to his work commitments.

Our first job was to hold a Parish-wide consultation on Housing development – did Parishioners want more housing in the village, and if so where did they think it should be? This consultation was held in October 2015, and the summary results – which were also published in the Dec 2015 newsletter - were as follows:

- 77% of eligible residents in South Stoke completed the questionnaire
- 59% of the respondents were in favour of some form of housing development. If an incentive to village infrastructure were added, a further 14% then favoured development, giving an overall total of 73% of respondents.
- This combined total represents 56% of the total eligible residents in South Stoke, and concluded that the majority of eligible residents supported some kind of housing development in the village.
- Regarding the type of development there was mixed support for all types except Larger Housing - with the strongest support for Smaller/Starter and Family Housing
- In terms of the preferred location of any new housing development, the Glebe Field was by far the most strongly supported with 'Infill' a much weaker, second preference.
- If there were any incentive funding to be gained from any new development there was strong support for putting this towards toward a bus service, with similar levels of support for both a permanent Community Shop and the Village Hall.

In Dec 2015 the PC asked the SSHDP to commence discussion with the owners of both the Glebe field and several so-called "infill" sites around the village, about future housing development plans. This started a year of consultations with land-owners which resulted in March 2017 in the group holding a second Parish-wide consultation on three alternative proposals for a housing development on the Glebe field. This second consultation consisted of an Open Day and several presentations in the Village Hall on 4<sup>th</sup> March, with a vote being taken of the attendees' choices. This was followed up by an eight-page copy of the whole presentation in the April 2017 newsletter, and house-to-house calls by Group members to obtain preferences from those who had not been able to attend the Open Day. The overall results were as follows:

- 243 responses were received - from an estimated eligible electorate of 414 ie 58%
- Of the options proposed the results were;
  - Option 3 (25 homes)            113 votes    46%
  - Option 1 (6 homes)            58 votes    24%
  - Option 2 (16 homes)        43 votes    17%
  - Other                                31 votes    13%
- Key Issues for any development identified by Parishioners, with highest priority first were ;
  - Open spaces
  - Access routes
  - Funds Generated
  - Housing location
  - Screening
  - Housing Density

Comments made by Parishioners included concerns regarding infill housing, affordable housing issues (including clarification of the housing mix) and suggestions for alternative access routes

The results of this second consultation were published in the May 2017 newsletter, and showed that the clear winner of the three alternatives voted on, was for the 25 home development option on the Glebe field on the basis that the development was sympathetic to the village aesthetic, retained a large part of the Glebe for the village with a restriction on any further development, provided some affordable homes with the intention to make as many as possible of these

available to those with South Stoke connections and provided a significant contribution towards village infrastructure projects.

Following this consultation the Group went back to the Diocese with several small amendments to the layout, which had been suggested by Parishioners, some of which the Diocese were able to incorporate in a finalized layout.

In the June 2017 newsletter, I advised Parishioners that a pre-application request for advice was going to be submitted to SODC both for this proposed housing development, by the Diocese, and for the linked Hall n' Shop project by that Project's group, and the following month we advised about the SSHDP plan to undertake a Housing Needs Survey (HNS) for the Parish, which would be used to support the housing pre-app'.

This HNS was carried out last Summer, and the summary results were as follows:

- Responses were received from 109 households – out of an estimated 220 households
- Of these, 65 households had no interest in seeking new/alternative housing, 22 households were interested in affordable housing, 19 in down-sizing and 15 in up-sizing
- Of those interested in affordable housing 14 concerned individuals with South Stoke connections not currently living in South Stoke, 7 were individuals with South Stoke connections currently living in South Stoke and 6 concerned whole households interested in affordable housing options
- The main reasons that prevented people from moving to a new home were that they were unable to afford one, there was a lack of suitable housing to move to, there was a lack of social housing and there was a lack of affordable private rented accommodation in South Stoke
- In terms of types of accommodation that were sought in South Stoke, there was a majority for 2 bedroom, detached and semi-detached properties that were either privately owned or rented from a Housing Association

SODC finally responded in late November on the pre-app for the housing. It was a very mixed review, pointing out both negative and positive factors. But as a result, the Diocese decided to press on, and appoint an agent to progress matters towards an ultimate full planning Application.

In the March newsletter this year we reported that the Diocese was having second thoughts about the likely success of a full planning application and also about their ability – if a planning application was successful – to make any payment to the Parish to assist in the cost of building a new Community Hall and Shop.

By June of this year we were able to report that the Diocese and their agents had come to the conclusion, that the Housing Project could proceed towards a full planning application, and produce funds for the Community buildings if indeed it became a joint Planning Application for both projects.

In September we also reported that the SSHDP, in agreement with the PC who would fund it, were going to find a suitable independent body to carry out a new Affordable Housing Needs Survey, in order to update our own survey of the previous year, and to support a full Planning Application next year.

Now in November 2018, we have arrived at the situation, where the Diocese, having consulted with several prospective developers, has selected a preferred developer – Messrs Rectory Homes – and they have produced a draft plan for the Glebe field, very similar to the 25 home layout voted on by parishioners last year and which was supported by the Parish Council.

The Diocese and Messrs Rectory Homes have agreed to our suggestion to make a presentation of this proposal in the Village Hall on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> and Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> November.

### **The Future – potentially one of the biggest developments in South Stoke for many years**

Only time will tell, but critical will be SODC Planning's attitude to a full planning application, which The Diocese expect to be submitted in Spring of 2019. If that is successful, the expectation would be that further negotiations would be needed which would probably take until the end of the year, and then construction might commence in early 2020.

All the above information, and more, can be found in Housing Development page of the Parish Council website:  
<http://www.southstoke.org.uk/14-2/sshdp/>

**We look forward to seeing you at the consultation in the Village Hall on**

**3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> November.**

My sincere thanks to Ian Haslam, for his significant help in preparing this piece, and to Martin Bullock, Harry Hogg, Paul Jenkins, and Mick Walsh for their input on some of the historical aspects.

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