Alstonefield Parish Council

Dovefold

The 2007 planning decision by this Planning Authority to remove the occupancy condition was refused on the grounds that Dovefold would remain ‘more affordable’ and would provide a valuable family home for a local person wanting to step up the housing ladder, and further that (and I quote:)

“relaxation of the occupancy condition would remove a more affordable dwelling from the housing stock . Acceptance of the proposal would be creating a precedent for similar proposals which cumulatively would harm the National Park”.

We are unaware of any change to this policy.

In the current application, reference is made to the 2006 Alstonefield Parish Housing Needs survey, which was in actual fact carried out in July 2005, some 7 years ago, whereas in the case of Manor Lodge at Monyash, the Housing Needs Survey was carried out in 2011, less than 12 months before the decision to remove the occupancy condition there.

In 2005, Alstonefield was described as having an ageing population of mainly retired people. We wish to make it abundantly clear that this demographic has significantly changed over the last 7 years, so that in 2012 we have become a parish with a high percentage of families with young children. There are currently 58 children under the age of 18 in the Parish, over 20% of the population. Given the current population demographics in Alstonefield, there is a growing need for ‘more affordable’ housing in our Parish.

We wish to request that a further housing needs survey is undertaken in Alstonefield before consideration is given to removal of the occupancy condition for Dovefold, to allow a decision to be based on up to date and not out of date information.

In 2005 and again in 2007, this authority stated that the property had not been marketed at a realistic price. We would like to ask when and whether Dovefold has ever been marketed at the discounted rate. We believe that if the property had been marketed at £299,000, local people satisfying the definition of local need, would have been able to purchase it.

Our concerns extend to the precedent that removal of the occupancy condition would set in Alstonefield Parish. What consideration have the Committee given to treatment of future applications to remove occupancy conditions? To the best of our knowledge, there are at least 6 other properties with a similar condition attached. It appears that the fairly recent granting of lawful development certificates, both in the case of Manor Lodge and Dovefold, has become a method by which to circumvent the occupancy condition and achieve its removal. The operation of the planning system in this respect is unfair to local people and commands no public confidence, as witnessed by the comments from parishioners that we are receiving.