

ST ERTH RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION



Notes from Meeting on 08/08/2024 held at St Erth Church Hall at 7:30pm

In attendance: Derek Tilby (Chairman of Residents Association), Andrew George MP, Cornwall Councillor John Martin, Helen Purchase (PCC), Natassia Player and Ted Taylor (St Erth Parish Council) and around 50 members of the public.

Chairman stated that the meeting had been called for the purpose of 'SAVE OUR SCHOOL' and not about "Boscarnek 2 or Boscarnek 3". He then began to outline how we got to where we are today:

- The Diocese in Truro have made the decision to sell the Glebe land in the village to Gilbert and Goode (G&G) subject to G&G obtaining planning approval. St Erth church (PCC) received an Email from the Diocese in December 2022 stating that they were giving Gilbert and Goode an option on the land behind the school. St Erth church (PCC) immediately wrote back to the Diocese stating that they didn't want the land to be sold, however, the PCC do not have any legal say in the matter.
- A meeting then took place in March 2023 between Savills (the land agent for the Diocese), G&G, the school, the PCC, and members of the Parish Council. At the meeting Savills explained that the Diocese sell Glebe Land to pay for Priests. By the time of the meeting, the options agreement had already been signed despite the PCC asking for it not to be. The Agreement is a 7 year agreement (believed to be from early 2023). G&G still need to apply for planning permission; a portion of the land contains an SSSI (this won't be built on, but enhanced).
- The School is currently full so there is no room for the children that will occupy the houses that are currently being built in Boscarnek and Treloweth.
- Problems raised from Boscarnek - traffic and congestion through the village.
- It was explained in writing to the Diocese from the PCC that the land is not included in the Parish Neighborhood Plan for housing development. If houses were built on this land, it would compromise any development of the school which is already at capacity. There was no response from the Diocese to this communication.
- This matter has escalated as it appears that prospective buyers of the current Boscarnek 2 development have been told by G&G that if they don't get a property on the current development then they can on the next phase of development.
- At the meeting in March 2023, G&G said that they were willing to consider letting the school have a piece of the land that they could lease. This would enable the school and community to get together and raise funds for a hall. G&G also stated that they had not surveyed the land or applied for planning permission. Nothing has been heard since.

Discussions from the floor were then opened up:

- Question asked as to whether if the current development in Boscarnek contributed S106 money. It was stated that S106 money is not given for social housing but that the school had received a considerable sum from the current Boscarnek 2 development. How that money is spent is complicated. Discussion regarding the aspirations for the school.
- From the audience, they believed the meeting had been called to discuss the inappropriate development of the land that had been sold to G&G by the Diocese, not about the school.
- The only information that St Erth church (PCC) had received was the option, the legal document signed by both parties. All Glebe land in Cornwall belongs to the Diocese. The only reason St Erth church (PCC) know about the options agreement is because in the law passed in 1976, the Diocese have to politely inform the PCC of a change in use of the Glebe land.
- Andrew George stated that the normal procedure is that the option is valid for 36 months to secure planning permission plus a long stop date on the option of another 12 months, so roughly early 2026. G&G are the private side of a social company, that being Ocean Housing, therefore they should be open and honest with the community regarding their development plan.
- From the audience, she stated that the whole point is that the village cannot support another large development of houses.
- Andrew George confirmed that he supported the St Erth Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP). This should be respected along with the views of the community should there be any proposals that breach or go beyond the NDP.
- From the audience, she mentioned that having had first-hand experience of the current G&G development, Cornwall Council and G&G have not followed the correct process.
- From the audience, it was stated that G&G had been witnessed measuring and using equipment on the proposed land for development.
- The question was asked as to how the Diocese had been able to get the option signed. Andrew George gave an example of how an option could and should work. He stated that if the development is outside the NDP it is just more difficult to get planning permission, not that it can't be granted. He suggested the land in question would be a policy 9 site (rural exception), therefore, mostly affordable housing, no open market housing.
- Parish Councillor detailed other proposed developments that have been suggested in and around the area. He then asked if the community would accept any more development in the parish? It was suggested from the audience that the development at Chenhalls Road should be finished first. The Parish Councillor estimated that in the next 5 years he expected further development at Treloweth and Ercus Way. But regardless of what the NDP stated, the final decision is usually made out of county.
- From the audience, he stated that the community should be focusing on trying to reverse the decision between the Diocese and G&G. Suggestions on how to do this were put forward such as setting up a pressure group to petition the Diocese.

- From the audience, he stated that this needs to be stemmed before it goes to planning and asked if there was a way to counter the process.
- It was recommended that G&G are contacted to find out if they had submitted a pre-app (confidential). The pre-app would be submitted, and the planners would give an indication on the likelihood of success if they put in a planning application. Recommend that G&G share the information from the pre-app with the local community. Now it is out in the public domain, it will be up to G&G if they want to share so this will give an indication as to whether they want to engage with the community.
- It was mentioned that the Parish Council have found it hugely frustrating that they have not had any communication with the Diocese.
- St Erth church (PCC) will ask the ArchDeacon or someone from the Diocese to come down and speak to the public.
- Andrew George clarified that the purpose of the option agreement is an intention to purchase subject to securing planning permission, so there is a legal obligation on the Diocese to sell on a pre-agreed price and an obligation on G&G to purchase should a viable planning permission be granted.
- From the audience, she stated that G&G had already made moves to engage with the school saying that they could help the school to get a hall. To stop more housing, the community must rely on the NDP and not accept the carrot that G&G are offering that this is the only way to help expand the school.
- Question was asked as to how an options agreement can be ended. It was explained that both parties would have to agree to withdraw the options agreement.
- John Martin and Andrew George gave their support to the community.
- Concerns raised regarding the infrastructure in the village, particularly traffic congestion and drainage.
- Request was made for more volunteers to join the St Erth Residents Association Committee so that they have the resources to fight this and any other future issues in the village.