

Mettle Hill - Summary of the Current Options

In last month's magazine, we set out in summary the background for setting up the Mettle Hill Working Group and what the group felt to be important in making decisions about its future. We summarise below the uses we feel are currently worthy of consideration. Both summaries will be reproduced in a leaflet which will be delivered to every household in late August/early September, to include a questionnaire to canvass your views. Details of how to submit your answer will also be included in the leaflet.

1. Self Build

These are houses built either by the future owner themselves, or their agents. A group of individuals can cooperate to build their homes, sometimes with a developer. The owners influence the design. Most self-builders would want freehold of their site. Leasehold is possible, but would require a Community Trust to manage the developments, and administer the lease.

Advantages

More affordable housing with individualistic designs.

Profit from sale of the land or Income from rents

Disadvantages

Difficult Planning Consent, as outside the village envelope and each house requiring separate Consents.

Without Planning Consent land has low value.

Village would lose control of the site or Leasehold would require considerable administration and maintenance costs

2. Live/Work

These are permanent dwellings which include a home and a workplace. The workplace and home can be in the same building or alongside. They can be any size or design, but require individual Planning Consent.

Advantages

Cash from sale of land or Income from rents

Artisan business are encouraged in the village

Disadvantages

Planning Consents difficult, and required separately for each unit.

If leasehold, cost to Meldreth of clearing and making the site safe (see below)

Admin cost of leasing.

(Few live/work projects have been established nationwide. New ventures have often become purely residential with no business established.)

3. Park Homes

These are detached bungalow style homes set in a private estate, built to a British Standard. Although moveable, they are permanent homes connected to mains utilities, built of timber and plastics. The flexible design has, typically, three bedrooms, sitting room, dining area, fitted kitchen and bathroom. They are usually sold furnished, with a small garden area. The estate is laid out to roads, footpaths, and landscaped with trees and shrubs and open spaces. Cost of a small basic unit is about £140,000 with larger units costing more.

Advantages

Inexpensive housing for Meldreth

Income from rents is potentially high or Cash from sale of land to a developer

Planning Consent easier from this mobile home development.

If Meldreth works with a Park Home developer, no clearance or set up cost to the village

Village controls land if done on a leasing basis.

Disadvantages

Park Homes are mobile homes, not permanent dwellings.

Developer involvement introduces middle man and inflates unit prices over what a DIY mobile home would cost

4. Other uses/mixed use

Other uses were considered by the group, such as allotments or an area for wildlife. The village is currently experiencing a slightly increased demand for allotments, which until now has been able to be satisfied by Fenny Lane Allotments. Both/either of these uses could be included in a mixed use site alongside any of the above uses and the group is strongly supportive of this.

We also considered suggestions that the site could be used for a woodland burial ground. Again demand is an issue; there have been four burials in the village cemetery (which, contrary to reports, has plenty of space) so far this year and trends suggest cremation is becoming more common. In our estimation, and taking into account the cost it would take to clear the front of the site means that we could neither recommend this use for the whole site, nor, given its sensitive aspect, support it as part of a mixed use scheme.

5. Sale

There have been a number of enquiries to purchase/lease the site as it is. A Park Homes developer has offered to buy at considerably more than our purchase price, and we have received offers from both the Showman's Guild and other

showmen to buy the site for the purposes of providing more plots for showmen.

Advantages

Cash from the sale.

Disadvantages

Loss of control of the site and its future use

6.Do nothing

Make the site safe and secure by demolishing dangerous buildings, and infrastructure.

Advantages

Time to consider new options

Disadvantages : Cost to Meldreth, approximately £28,000