

### **Helsington Community Trust Steering Group**

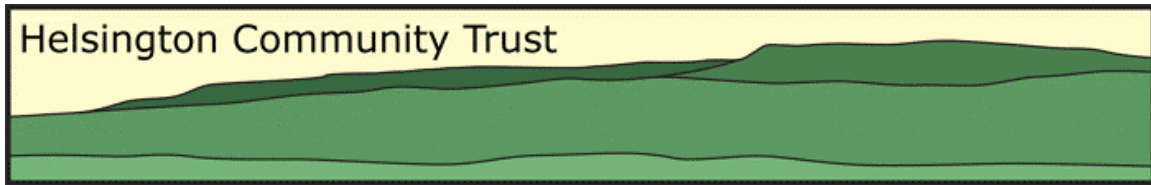
The Helsington Community Trust will very soon be a legally constituted body, it has been formed by a group of residents of the parish who wish to address the lack of affordable housing, and other community assets within the parish. We represent the members of the parish who are interested in its viability and sustainability. At present the Steering Group is made up of local residents, parish councillors, the local church, once established it will be open to all members of the community who wish to participate.

The Parish Council is also concerned by the lack of affordable housing within the parish. Arising from this concern, in 2008 a Housing Need's Survey was carried out, by Cumbria Rural Housing Trust. This found that there was a need for 17 affordable houses within the parish. A high return rate of 62.56% was achieved, of these approximately 80% supported the provision of affordable homes within the parish. In addition it was found that there was no existing supply of affordable houses within the parish.

The continuing high local support for affordable housing and the Trust, was recently demonstrated by an informal opinion survey into people's views about affordable housing, carried out by a resident in Brigsteer, this showed 87% agreed with the principle of affordable housing, and 94% supported a community trust as being the best body to manage our affordable housing.

The Steering Group is now separate from the Parish Council, although three of its members are parish councillors. The Group recognise the difficulty of finding a suitable site in a rural parish, and to that aim have worked with the Parish Council and local residents to establish a consensus.

Indeed initially the allocations process caused some anxieties to local residents and the Parish Council, due to the SLDC's high suggested housing densities, being misunderstood as definite plans for development. However we have, through dialogue and a more detailed explanation of our own plans, reached consensus. We are delighted that this has been achieved over the site RN 213. The Trust will continue to develop its plans in full collaboration with local residents, with the aim of providing affordable housing in a sensitive scheme, suitable for the parish of Helsington.



The certainty that allocation of this site would give to the community is valuable and beneficial. It will allow the community through the Trust, to plan the delivery of affordable housing. Furthermore residents of the parish will be re-assured that they can continue to live in the community where they grew up. Families will be able to stay as they grow older and their needs change.

In relation to financing any development, allocation will remove the uncertainty about the viability of a site, and so enable it to be developed quickly as funds become available. It provides assurance to financial backers and clarity in negotiations with landowners and stakeholders.

The Trust along with the SLDC Affordable Housing Officer, has been instrumental in identifying three sites, two of these, RN 213 and RN214, have been adopted by the SLDC as emerging sites, for further consultation with the parish, interested parties and the local community.

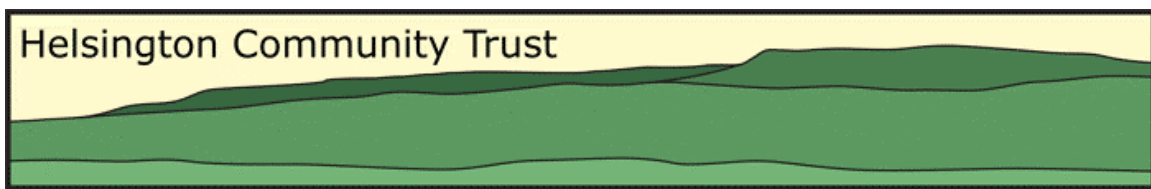
In consideration of these sites, the Trust's comments are:

### **Emerging Site RN 213**

The Trust considers this to be an ideal site for a small development of 7 well designed and built houses. Using cross subsidy, 3 would be freehold and so fund the other 4 affordable houses. The ability to cross subsidise in this way has become vital due to greatly reduced rates of housing grant, which are also attached to new conditions, such as charging 80% of open market rents. In addition to making the project financially viable, it will also result in a well balanced sustainable community. The landowner supports us in our backing for this site, as does the Parish Council. Following consultation and discussion with Cumbria County Council Highways Dept, an access point onto the Underbarrow Road is feasible.

This site is in line with the SLDC policy CS1.2. which states that new small scale infilling and rounding off development will be permitted outside the service centres, in order to satisfy local need across the numerous smaller villages and hamlets scattered across the district.

We do however take issue with the SLDC's proposed density of the development as reported in the Fact File. As noted above our proposal has always been for a maximum of 7 houses. This is in response to the topography, existing trees and most importantly, the adjoining properties.



Helsington is an active, community minded parish, with high standards in terms of sustainability and environmental standards. The community has recently come together to build a new high spec village hall, it has set aside land for biodiversity projects, and come together for horticultural projects. It is important for the Trust to move forward that this site be allocated, thus enabling the Trust to progress with detailed plans and explore financial options.

### **Emerging Site 214**

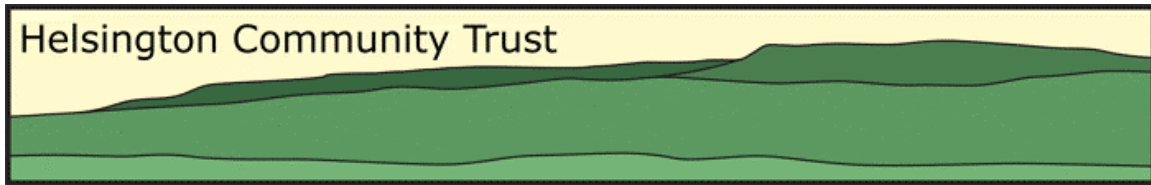
We also support the site RN 214, known as Peat Houses, although we disagree with the SLDC's categorisation of this as an Exclusion site, with the consequent need for 100% affordable houses. This, in contrast to the RN 213 site, could easily become a ghetto, with its separation from the village emphasising this. Moreover it will be very difficult to finance the development of this site, because of the impossibility of cross subsidising from the sale of freeholds.

### **Gunpowder Works at Sedgwick RN 215**

In addition, we are in favour of the old Gunpowder Mill site at Sizergh, this would, we feel, be suitable for a mixture of small workshops/studios and some affordable houses. This site is owned by the National Trust, so any development is dependant on them, but we feel it is important to register our support for this site. Particularly in view of its potential as a source of local employment. Although the site is located in open countryside, it is part of a small residential community and an existing successful caravan park. A small scale development of this site would be seen as helping to sustain this community. The site is close to Kendal and major road access.

### **Emerging Site RN 227**

RN 227, this site is, in the opinion of the HCT, not appropriate for development. Not only because of the low lying nature of the ground, which is prone to flooding, but more importantly its high visual impact. It would be clearly and widely seen across the valley, and would consequently be so visible as to appear an unbalanced development. In addition it would be separate from the larger part of the village.



## **In Conclusion**

A Housing Needs Survey carried out in 2008, found that 17 families and individuals, already residents of the parish, were in housing need. A recent informal opinion survey conducted amongst residents of Brigsteer, confirmed their overwhelming support for affordable housing. Whilst rejecting the housing densities proposed by the SLDC, it affirmed their support for small scale developments on these sites, and that they be managed by a community trust.

The Helsington Community Trust fully support site RN 213, as we consider this to offer the community the opportunity to bring forward a well balanced, financially viable and high quality development, helping to meet the need for affordable housing within the parish.

Helsington Community Trust Steering Group:

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