

BISHOPS COURT, NEWTON HILL, NEWTON FERRERS

The history of the development of the Old School Site

The initial proposals were born out of a desire to....

- a) Ensure the vitality of the centre of Newton Ferrers was safeguarded;
- b) Sustain the shops and businesses in the village after the School moved to its new site;
- c) Provide a facility which was not already available within the Parish.

For many years there had been proposals for local sheltered housing. In September 1997 when the possibility of a new school became a reality, a community group formed which involved many local organizations including the Parish Council, R.Y.D.A., School Governors and many concerned residents. From this came the initial ideas of a consulting room for the doctors, a community building and an Abbeyfield home on the site. At all stages there were updates in the Parish Magazine, a number of open meetings and questionnaires. The following is a detailed diary of events:-

1. On 24th/25th January 1998, two open sessions were held at the Primary School with the proposals developed by the Community Group, including plans which showed Abbeyfield and non-Abbeyfield units (23 in total) plus a community facility. 150 people signed in from approximately 200 who attended; of those who registered an opinion, 89 were in favour, 6 were against and 4 were undecided. It was agreed that the project was worth pursuing.

2. In May 1998 a questionnaire was distributed to 752 homes in the Parish; 552 were returned, i.e. 73.27%. The question: "Would you be in favour of an Abbeyfield providing accommodation for active elderly?" was answered thus:-

405	[73.6%]	YES
47	[8.5%]	NO

3. As South Hams District Council's Housing Department had indicated that a need for sheltered accommodation in the western area of the District had been identified, discussions were opened.

4. In April 1999 a workable solution appeared to be a tripartite group of social housing, Abbeyfield and community centre to provide 23 accommodation units plus consulting room, resource centre and small meeting room.

5. In Autumn 1999 a development brief was drawn up to examine the potential of the site and published in January 2000. Comments from interested parties were invited up to 1st March 2000. No substantive changes were made.

6. By December 2000, Social Services and the local Health Group were involved in the development of the scheme.

7. On 22nd March 2001, a questionnaire - on which the Parish Council had taken advice from the Postgraduate Medical School of Plymouth University - was distributed to every household in the Parish. 967 were sent out, of which 464 were returned. 396 people said YES to Abbeyfield/sheltered housing/community facilities [85.34%]. 74 said NO.

8. On 8th/9th April Focus Group meetings were conducted in conjunction with questionnaires. It emerged overwhelmingly that people preferred self-contained flats to bedsits [Abbeyfield format].

9. In July 2001 tenders were invited from providers of sheltered accommodation including Abbeyfield. In January 2002 Signpost Housing was appointed.

10. In May 2002, the Parish Magazine carried not only information on the progress of the discussions regarding the future of the site, but also an invitation to attend an exhibition of the proposals which was held in both Newton Ferrers and Noss Mayo on 23rd May. Parishioners were invited to.... "consider the proposals and express your views and any concerns". It was estimated that 150 people attended the two meetings. Pre-paid response forms were also available so opinions could be expressed direct – 56 forms were returned.

11. A further consultation was held for the exclusive benefit of the residents and businesses on Newton Hill, Riverside Road East and other site adjoining owners most likely to be affected; as far as possible their concerns have been reflected in the designs.

12. In November 2002, a public meeting was called by the R.Y.D.A. at which the Architects, Signpost Housing, Parish Council and others were available to answer questions. At the end of the meeting, a straw poll showed that the majority of those in attendance were in favour of the scheme.

The aim of the scheme....

The proposed sheltered housing scheme will enable the older members of this Parish to remain within the centre of the community, living independently but supported when required, in a safe environment for as long as they wish. It will provide a mixed tenure scheme without differentiation. The mix of residents will encompass frail, very frail and active elderly and will enable them to have tailor-made care packages which will evolve with individual needs.



*Newton & Noss Parish Council
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