Arch has agreed to buy the site to the north of Swinhoe Road subject to planning permission being granted to Hellens Residential for 52 homes. This is a cynical attempt by the developer to gain planning permission and make their multi-million pound profit and another example of Arch promising huge spending commitments before the election in an attempt to shore up support for their political masters, the Northumberland Labour Party.

I attended the public meeting on the plans in the W.I Hall on the 23rd of January and the plans were almost universally disliked due to the heritage and landscape impact on the village. From knocking on doors in Beadnell I feel those views have not changed. I agree Beadnell needs permanent affordable housing and, thanks to Andy Brown and the team at Beadnell Under Threat, that has been achieved. They have secured a legally binding Section 106 Agreement on the Northumberland Estates development which ensures homes must be for permanent residents and may only be let on long term tenancies, 9 of which will be affordable. If Arch was serious about providing affordable homes in Beadnell they should focus their efforts on this development rather than building a whole new estate.

The fact remains this is a wholly inappropriate development in a small village which has been under siege from developers with four major schemes built or with planning approval since 2001. Any further expansion seriously threatens to change the character of the village which is what attracts so many visitors and will lead to people booking their holidays elsewhere, hitting local people in the pocket. The scheme goes against the proposed Bamburgh, Seahouses, Beadnell Neighbourhood Plan and the Council's own Core Strategy which states under policy 31 (AONB) that development must respect landscape sensitivity and capacity to accommodate new development. Major developments will not be permitted except in exceptional circumstances and where there is no alternative location which could absorb the development without a significant impact. Paragraph 6.16a states within each small area it is expected that the majority of development will be focused on the larger settlement. From the Core Strategy the obvious site for new affordable housing development, highlighted by the recent application for Kingsfield, is Seahouses. Seahouses has the school, transport links, jobs and therefore demand for affordable housing and is where I would support this type of development.

What many people don’t know is that for every house built the Council gets a New Homes Bonus from the Government worth 6 years worth of council tax. The Government expects Councils to consult communities where houses are built about how they will spend the money. This Council has not done that and admits they put the bonus into the overall general fund which explains their aggressive housing policy which has caused uproar across the county and why this developer will expect to get approval if they have the backing of Arch.

Unfortunately, this is the behaviour we have come to expect from Arch and Northumberland County Council. This proposal has been made with no public consultation and the first many of us knew about it was reading last week’s paper. In this proposal The Labour Party has shown their complete lack of awareness and understanding of the complex fabric of our coastal communities.