

Shapwick Parish Council
Minutes of a meeting held on 15 January 2024
at 7.15pm at the Pavilion, Shapwick

23/24/117 Present: Lesley Gaskell, Moray McGowan, Nikki Polden and Paul Rogers

23/24/118 In Attendance: Sue Williams (Clerk)

23/24/119 Also Present: County Councillor Matt Martin
40+ villagers

23/24/120 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Graham Croucher. In Graham Croucher's absence Lesley Gaskell took the chair for the meeting.

23/24/121 Welcome

Lesley Gaskell welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the purpose of the meeting was to give villagers the opportunity to comment on planning application 43/23/00008 Land to the West of Mill Lane - Erection of 8no. Dwellings (including 4no. affordable dwellings) with all associated works. Lesley Gaskell informed those present that there would be no Parish Council comment or response at the meeting. All comments will be minuted and will inform the discussion at the next Parish Council Meeting since the Parish Council needs to be able to consider other input such as the online comments on the Planning website. If anyone was unable to attend this meeting they can make comments at the next Parish Council meeting. The Parish Council will hold an additional separate meeting at which the response to Somerset Council will be agreed.

Lesley Gaskell reminded those present that anyone is welcome to comment.

Prior to the start of the meeting Lesley Gaskell reminded everyone of the Parish Council's Policy of Recording of Meetings and asked if anyone wished to record the meeting.

Open Session

23/24/122 Planning Application 43/23/00008 Land to West of Mill Lane - Erection of 8no. dwellings (including 4no. affordable dwellings) with all associated works
Villager Comments

Stuart Dennes, resident of Mill Lane for 28 years, expressed concern that no case officer has been assigned to the application and queried how the 1 February 2024 comments deadline would work with this and how it affects the Parish Council's response. Lesley Gaskell said the Parish Council has just been granted an extension to reply until 8 February 2024.

Stuart Dennes said it is well known that living in a rural community rather than a suburban one has a more positive affect on wellbeing and mental health and he did not want the rural nature of Shapwick to be changed. Stuart Dennes also commented on planning enforcement saying that in most cases developers flout the permissions given and with a virtually non-existent enforcement system more properties get built than were actually applied for or approved

Lesley Gaskell reminded those present that Parish Councillors can only comment on the application before them and not make speculations as to what might happen.

23/24/112 cont'd

Jerome Hayes said he had lived in Shapwick for 50 years and commented that the demographic of the village has now become ~70% older/retired residents and said he supports the application as it is an ideal opportunity to help younger people move into the village.

Steve Dunster said he agreed in many respects with what Jerome Hayes said as there is a need for younger people to live in Shapwick. Steve Dunster also said that younger people acknowledge that affordability of Shapwick properties is out of their reach and said the comments of younger people in the latest Housing Need Survey back this up saying they look towards renting. Steve Dunster said he felt that the properties in the application are not right for those younger families trying to move into the village due to affordability – many on lower incomes would not even be able to afford the affordable element of the application.

Mary Rayment said as newcomers to the village they had an awareness of previous applications but not the detail but felt that they give an indication of mindset. Mary Rayment asked about the affordable housing project that the village hoped to set up.

Lesley Gaskell said that the previous schemes had been withdrawn so presently there was no refusal on any application. Lesley Gaskell said that the Community Land Trust had not gone beyond the initial meetings stage as the funding from Somerset Council had not been forthcoming and given the current financial position receiving any funding from Somerset Council is unlikely.

Steve Bartram said he had lived in Mill Lane for 33 years and commented that the demographic of a village cannot be engineered. Steve Bartram said that Shapwick is a Tier 4 settlement and affordable housing is the gateway to building outside a settlement boundary. Steve Bartram said the application does not state who would manage the affordable element nor what type of affordable housing is proposed – there would be no guarantees if it was controlled by an outside body that the housing would be for village people - with no housing association named this application is speculative. Steve Bartram said he felt that the affordable housing would fall by the wayside probably being rental initially before a sale at less than market value in the first instance.

John Anderson said this application is very similar to the previous application as it does not meet the specific requirements for applications outside of the development boundary. John Anderson said he would like to see a village Community Land Trust which could explore other avenues. John Anderson detailed he following as showing the application does not meet requirements for a rural exception site – Affordable Housing – no guarantees, Access to Services – the village has none, Meaningful Enhancement – none, Allotments and Play Areas – Village has these through the purchase of the village green, Market Rate Integrated Affordable Housing – the Church Road properties are different, Engagement with the Local Community – Submission of an application close to Christmas was unkind and unacceptable, Habitat Assessment – Although Somerset say there is no link between the site and the sewage station the Environment Agency says there is. John Anderson drew attention to the size of the attenuation pond and questioned where the water would go if the pond flooded and also stated that Wessex Water claim they would make the sewage system work but said it had not in the past. John Anderson also said that the application is outside the boundary, not in line with the Village Design Statement and will overlook properties.

Mary Rayment drew attention to the narrow width of Mill Lane and asked where the traffic would go saying there is potential for vehicles to use other narrow lanes such as Blacksmiths Lane and Butchers Lane as a cut through.

23/24/112 cont'd

Steve McAuliffe said vehicles will use single track roads as short cuts and this increases the likelihood of accidents.

County Councillor Matt Martin made those present aware that he is the Vice-Chair of Planning North Committee which puts him in a difficult position. Matt Martin said representing his constituents comes first but he is mindful that if he speaks on behalf of a village it would prejudice him at Committee and he would lose his right to a vote so listens/makes notes at meetings such as this rather than commenting and considers his position at the time in question.

Lesley Gaskell reminded everyone that the application will be on the Parish Council agenda on 23 January 2024 when Councillors will discuss the comments made with the decision response being made at a further separate meeting. Lesley Gaskell reminded villagers to make their comments through the planning portal.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 7.50pm.

Signed.....

Date.....

