

Shapwick Parish Council
Minutes of a meeting held on 5 February 2024
at 7.15pm at the Village Hall, Shapwick

23/24/133 Present: Graham Croucher, Wendy Anderson, Lesley Gaskell, Tracey Lockyer, Moray McGowan, Nikki Polden and Paul Rogers

23/24/134 In Attendance: Sue Williams (Clerk)

23/24/135 Also Present: 25-30 villagers

23/24/136 Apologies for Absence
There were no apologies.

23/24/137 Declarations of Interest
Lesley Gaskell declared an interest and took no part in item 23/24/138 as she is now a member of the advisory board at Dovecote School. Tracey Lockyer declared an interest and took no part in item 23/24/138 being an employee of Dovecote School.

Villagers' Open Period

23/24/138 Planning Applications 43/24/00001 and 43/24/00002 Dovecote School, Church Farm, Church Road - Change of use from dwelling and annex to school building with minor internal alterations

The Chair invited Jason Goddard to explain the plans. The Parish Council had received a last minute email from the seller of Church Farm of which the Chair gave a copy to the applicant and asked him to include within his explanation of the plans comments on the one legitimate planning matter contained therein - traffic levels and parking issues. Jason Goddard explained that the Church Farm site will be used for more independent students aged 14 years plus to help them integrate into the wider world of college and work. There will be a reception area as well as parking for one electric vehicle plus two others. There will be no drop off and pick up of students – this will take place at the main site and pupils will use the footpath to access the Church Farm site and therefore Jason Goddard felt there would be no increase in traffic caused by returning Church Farm to an educational property from a residential one.

Open Session

Mary Tucker asked whether the pupils will be accompanied when moving between the two sites. Jason Goddard confirmed pupils will always be accompanied and that there will always be a high adult to pupil ratio. Neil Gage, head at Dovecote School, said the process of moving between sites has been risk assessed.

Mary Rayment queried whether the purpose of the Church Farm site had changed as comments now appeared to contradict those given in the previous meeting. Jason Goddard said the pupils are those of high anxiety and the aim is to aid transition to the next stage of their education.

Moray McGowan asked Jason Goddard to be clear about drop off and collection of pupils. Jason Goddard reiterated there would be no change in vehicle movements – drop off and collection would be at the main school site. Moray McGowan said that there were two different versions of the planning statement on the portal – one which had the access section removed. Neil Gage confirmed Jason Goddard's comments that pupils will be dropped off and collected from the main school site.

23/24/138 cont'd

Nikki Polden said she noted there were 7 office spaces and questioned where staff would park. Jason Goddard said staff may drop off lesson resources at Church Farm but all parking would be at the main school site.

Graham Croucher summarised 1. Children would be dropped off and collected from main school site and 2. Staff may drop off equipment etc. at Church Farm but would park at main school site. Jason Goddard confirmed this saying there may be occasion to park at Church Farm site but there would be very little movement during the school day. Moray McGowan said he was delighted the school is growing but hoped Jason Goddard understood the need for the Parish Council to ask questions to protect the village. Moray McGowan asked whether it would be possible to close off the parking area. Jason Goddard said access is required.

Closed Session

The Chair asked Councillors to comment.

Nikki Polden said more definition of how parking and vehicle movements will be managed is required.

Paul Rogers said he had no further concerns other than those already addressed.

The Chair asked Councillors whether the concerns raised met the threshold to object to the application.

Moray McGowan said he felt more information was needed but it was not enough to object.

Open Session

Jason Goddard and Neil Gage reiterated that parking will be at the main school site and that pupils and staff have to go through the main entrance to log in and out.

Closed Session

Wendy Anderson proposed that the Parish Council support the application. Seconded by Moray McGowan. Unanimous.

23/24/139**Planning Application 43/23/00008 Land to West of Mill Lane - Erection of 8no. dwellings (including 4no. affordable dwellings) with all associated works**

The Chair informed the meeting that since the Parish Council meeting held on 23 January 2024 an unsolicited invite from the applicant's planning consultants, on listening to concerns raised, had been received. Conditions for the Parish Council to attend such a meeting would be: 1. A significant extension to the deadline, 2. All matters relating to the application would be on the table, 3. Two to three villagers could attend as observers and 4. Major stakeholders relating to the application would be in attendance.

Open Session

The Chair asked the applicant if they wished to address the meeting – the applicant declined.

The Chair invited comment from the floor.

Mary Tucker asked the Chair to clarify his opening comments.

Fletcher Robinson of Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) asked to comment on behalf of the trustees of the CPRE. The CPRE are objecting to the application for the following reasons:

1. The scheme is too large for a Tier 4 settlement
2. Tier 4 policy criteria are not met – scale not appropriate to character of the settlement, the scheme does not maintain or enhance the historic environment but detracts from it and the scheme does not provide an appropriate level of cross-subsidy by way of market housing to deliver affordable housing.

23/24/139 cont'd

3. Heritage – One of few villages in the area with a conservation area which should be protected. The ladder formation dating back to C10th should be protected. The area is of archaeological importance.

The Chair said the Councillors would discuss the application so that villagers could hear the Parish Council position.

Frank Barnard said he was surprised by the Parish Council indication that it was considering attending a meeting to find a way to make the application more acceptable and get it voted through. He said he felt there was sufficient evidence from villagers and professionals to object to the application. Frank Barnard said there was more to it than just making it acceptable as that would be the beginning of the end and would pave the way for more development and he hoped the Parish Council would object based on the information before it and reject the application once and for all.

Mary Rayment asked if the meeting invitation was to make up for not consulting in the first instance. The Chair confirmed that there had been serious issues in the way the application had been approached and the planning consultants were now trying to put some of that right.

For clarity Lesley Gaskell confirmed that the meeting invite had been made by the applicant's planning consultants and not by Somerset Council planning team.

Stuart Dennes said that he felt it would not be a fair balance – planning consultants, the Parish Council and only 3 or 4 villagers. The Chair said the aim is to be as open and transparent as possible. Frank Barnard said the invitation should be turned down. Stuart Dennes asked how long the consultation period would go on for and who was driving the meeting. The Chair said he did not know the time frame but confirmed that it would be an equal input from Parish Council and planning consultants.

Sheila Coles asked why her property had been singled out on the plan and stated she had not received a letter. Lesley Gaskell said the plans and letter distribution are outside the control of the Parish Council but postcode generation could account for which properties are numbered.

Mary Tucker asked why the Parish Council is considering the invite.

Frank Barnard said it seems the purpose of the invite is to review the application and see how it can be made more acceptable. The Chair said applicable planning rules have to be considered.

Frank Barnard said judgement should be made on the current application.

Moray McGowan reminded the meeting that the Parish Council can take a view on an application at any stage during the consultation process but ultimately Somerset Council make the final decision.

Fletcher Robinson, CPRE, said his view would be to consider the application as it stands and should amended plans arise consider those at a later date. The Chair said he wanted to make sure that the Parish Council has a say.

Lesley Gaskell suggested objecting to the current plans as these are not acceptable and if the planning consultants wished to enter into consultations then the Parish Council would consider that, with the proviso any consultations must meet the Tier 4 requirements.

The Chair informed the meeting that the deadline for the Parish Council has been extended to 31 March 2024. The Chair said the Parish Council has not given up the ability to reply nor has it yet made a decision on what its response will be but will consider all concerns raised. Frank Barnard said this situation is not acceptable.

23/24/139 cont'd

Closed Session

The Chair asked Parish Councillors for comment.

Paul Rogers said he understood that the applicant had approached the process in the wrong way and had not carried out community consultation first but felt that if there was no dialogue with the planning consultants then the scenario would be repeated again and again in the future and felt that engagement and dialogue with the planning consultants would aid the process.

Nikki Polden said there are many unanswered questions and the planning consultants had not followed due process as laid out in the last objection. Nikki Polden also said there needs to be more clarity and understanding around the affordable housing element and the Housing Needs Survey (HNS). Nikki Polden said she did not think this application should be pursued further at this point and agreed that consultation is required.

Lesley Gaskell said that the Tier 4 criteria have not all been met – she drew attention to 'meaningful and robust engagement and consultation with the Parish Council'. Lesley Gaskell said she appreciated the offer of consultation but felt it should take place in an open meeting. Lesley Gaskell said she felt the best way forward was to object to the current application and if the planning consultants wished to enter into consultations then the Parish Council would consider that, with the proviso any consultations must meet the Tier 4 requirements.

Moray McGowan said he felt torn – the offer of consultation might be important however there has been opportunity to do so since September so is less sympathetic to the current offer. Moray McGowan agreed that any consultation should be in open session for all to attend. Moray McGowan said the Parish Council should make a decision in this meeting and be willing to engage in a consultation afterwards under certain conditions and made reference to the need for affordable housing and how it could be considered in a Tier 4 settlement as well as addressing the concerns of scale, sewage and character. Moray McGowan had analysed the views on the planning portal and said those had to be weighed up against the offer of four affordable homes. Moray McGowan said the Parish Council should object to the current application.

Tracey Lockyer said her view was to enter into consultation to save time in the future.

Graham Croucher said he felt that by entering into conversation with the planning consultants it would be the quickest way to get answers to the concerns raised at both meetings and on the planning portal.

Graham Croucher said Tier 4 exception sites are part of the Local Plan 2011-2032 and that this application shows more of the Tier 4 criteria have been met, although not all and there are valid planning issues also associated with the application to consider.

Graham Croucher said he felt by declining the opportunity to engage and objecting now may exclude the Parish Council from having an input to any outcome and the cycle may start again.

Lesley Gaskell said she felt the best way forward is to object now which would give the planning consultants the opportunity to discuss the objections and any amendments made could then be open to proper community consultation.

Nikki Polden said she thought this suggestion to be a good compromise.

Moray McGowan said he would include within any objection engagement with the community on any amendments.

Lesley Gaskell said the Parish Council should vote on whether to support or object and leave the door open for consultation with the whole community after submission.

Paul Rogers said this is a good compromise.

Lesley Gaskell said object with a clear list of reasons to give a basis for discussion.

Graham Croucher said the Parish Council would not have supported the current application but wants to ensure engagement and Parish Council input.

23/24/139 cont'd

The Chair asked Councillors to detail specifics to form the Parish Council response. Graham Croucher said there had been no consultation between application 43/23/00005 and 43/23/00008.

Moray McGowan said the affordable housing element should be community led.

Nikki Polden said the HNS said 3 properties should be rented and 1 shared ownership.

Graham Croucher said there is an implication within the application that the affordable housing would be held in perpetuity but there are no specifics.

Traffic and access as well as loss of amenity for properties 11, 15 and 19 Mill Lane were highlighted and privacy loss.

Visual impact – Councillors supported Historic England's view in relation to the proposed Church Road properties.

Archaeological Importance – The Parish Council would expect a trench evaluation to be part of the application

Drainage – the applicant has not responded to the local flood concerns – more information is required

Sewage – The Parish Council recognise that Wessex Water cannot object to permitted development but the flooding issues in Station Road must be recognised.

Lesley Gaskell drew attention to the Tier 4 criteria and said that the Parish Council response should highlight criteria not met.

Nikki Polden proposed that the Parish Council object to the application with the response to include the observations/highlighted by Councillors. Seconded by Lesley Gaskell. Unanimous.

The Chair thanked villagers for their input.

23/24/140**Allotments**

The proposed allotment agreement has been discussed with Shapwick Allotment Association (SAA). SAA raised a number of queries which Lesley Gaskell has worked through and an amended agreement has been produced and circulated to Councillors. A basic plan drawing is also attached with the agreement and identifies responsibilities of the Parish Council and the SAA.

The Parish Council is responsible for the boundaries marked on the plan between points B-C and the external maintenance of hedging between points A-D with the SAA being responsible for the maintenance of the boundary hedging between points A-B and the internal maintenance of boundary hedging between points D-A and any boundaries separating individual plots.

Lesley Gaskell suggested that it would be appropriate to add an ownership plan in addition to the boundary plan.

It was noted that the agreement has been amended to include that no dig is the preferred method of cultivation due to the area being of high archaeological importance as this will minimise soil disturbance.

Paul Rogers proposed the amended agreement be given to the SAA for signature. Seconded by Nikki Polden. Unanimous.

The rent charged for 2024 will be apportioned based on the date the agreement is signed.

23/24/141 Strimming of Green

The Parish Council had received a request from Poppy Bishop that the pupils of Dovecote School be allowed to carry out some basic strimming on the rough grass periphery areas of the village green as part of their curriculum. The focus of the work will be on Health and Safety, how to approach work requiring a strimmer and carrying out said work. Dovecote School will risk assess the activity and provide all insurances.

23/24/141 cont'd

Nikki Polden said the Parish Council needs to make sure that it is not open to any risks. Lesley Gaskell said that sight of the Insurance Liability Cover is required. Paul Rogers proposed that the Parish Council agree to the request providing a risk assessment and appropriate insurance is in place. Seconded Tracey Lockyer. Unanimous.

23/24/142 Safeguarding Policy

Lesley Gaskell has amended the Safeguarding Policy and has obtained confirmation from the Somerset Community Foundation that it meets their criteria. The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Wendy Anderson proposed that the Parish Council adopt the amended policy. Seconded by Nikki Polden. Unanimous.

Lesley Gaskell has completed some safeguarding training and will complete further training. Tracey Lockyer is safeguarding trained.

23/24/143 Play Area

Quotes from three suppliers have been obtained. Paul Rogers met with Scott Mason of Somerset Council to discuss the options. Scott Mason carried out an assessment of the proposed schemes based on various play value criteria. This exercise has narrowed the decision to two suppliers – Kompan and Green Scheme. Each scheme has some limitations/amendments that would need to be made to maximise the appeal across age ranges and to satisfy installation requirements. Once installed the play equipment will need to be inspected on a regular basis by the Parish Council and annually by an outside specialist.

Lesley Gaskell said she liked Green Scheme's use of sustainable materials. Paul Rogers said Scott Mason favoured Kompan on the basis of looking at the bigger picture and not just Phase 1 but said he had not worked with Green Scheme. Nikki Polden suggested asking Kompan if they have a sustainable/green range.

Lesley Gaskell suggested going back to the two favoured suppliers and asking them to put forward their best plan.

Paul Rogers suggested visiting local play areas to view equipment from both suppliers, Wendy Anderson queried the target age range for the equipment. Paul Rogers said up to 11 years. Catering for 11+years might be part of the later Phases.

Councillors agreed to visit local sites and to go back to Kompan and Green Scheme and ask for best final versions of their proposed schemes before making a final decision.

23/24/144 Minutes of Meetings held on 23 January 2024

The minutes were approved and duly signed. Proposed Paul Rogers. Seconded by Moray McGowan. Unanimous.

23/24/145 Clerk Position

Sue Williams has handed in her resignation as Clerk to the Parish Council after 24 years service. It was agreed that the Clerk, Chair and Vice-Chair would meet to discuss the recruitment process and seek some advice from Somerset Association of Local Councils.

23/24/146 Finance**a) Approval of Expenses**

Expenses approved for payment were: Shapwick Village Hall £60 (Hire of hall)

23/24/147

Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next Parish Council meeting will be Tuesday 19 March 2024 7.15pm Village Hall.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.00pm.

Signed.....

Date.....

DRAFT