

Minutes of a meeting held on Wednesday 21st February at 6pm via Zoom

The purpose of meeting was to receive a presentation from Sworders on the proposal that land at Moat Close could be suitable for a mixed-use scheme including community facilities, affordable and some local market housing. The meeting did not constitute a formal Parish Council meeting.

In attendance:

Avon Dassett Parish Council Cllr Darrell Muffitt (DM) – Chair
Cllr Trevor Gill (TG) – Vice Chair
Cllr Liz Hirst (LH)
Cllr Alex Jackson (AJ)
Jo Jarman (JJ) – Parish Clerk

Apologies: Cllr Mike Blakeman (MB)

Sworders Lois Partridge (LP)
Naomi Puliston (NP)

Introductions

DM made introductions and Sworders introduced themselves.

DM requested that the meeting be recorded for MB in his absence. The recording will be deleted once he has seen it. All agreed.

ADPC Legal Protocol for dealing with developers in respect of pre-application discussions

The Legal Protocol had been distributed prior to the meeting. LP confirmed that Sworders will comply with the protocol. DM confirmed that the minutes will be published on the Parish Council website subject to confidential items that are highlighted in the meeting.

Brief background to the site and previous meeting with the Parish Council

NP outlined the site - 1.5 hectares sitting within a conservation area and in proximity to listed buildings. Tree survey has been carried out. Site does not flood. Housing needs survey identified the need for 12 houses.

Questionnaire

NP noted that the recent survey was sent to circa 80 residencies with a 50% response.

Of those who responded the following were noted:

33% in favour of some sort of development to support housing needs within the village as a whole

46% could support 1 to 10+ dwellings within the village

33% - could support 1 to 10+ houses at Moat Close

Comments were around:

- affordability
- delivery of housing possibly supporting amenities and services
- need for family houses as well as smaller units.
- some wanted completely affordable units and others a mix.

Call for sites and Sworders response

NP: a letter was sent to the Parish Council following the Call for Sites. Our client has land in the village and is open to discussions on how some of the site can be used to meet needs identified in the Parish Plan.

Update from the Parish Council on Call for Sites responses

Sworders asked for details of responses received to the Call for Sites, including the type of sites and if discussions are being held with anyone else.

ADPC – Questions

DM: expressed surprise at the summary of the questionnaire responses as he and other Councillors are aware of the general feeling within the community. He suggested that the questionnaire process was flawed in a number of areas including the delivery of forms and the collection of forms. Where there are multiple properties on one site – not all properties received questionnaires. Only one response was asked for per household, not individuals in households. Councillors have received negative responses to the questionnaire process.

DM: Housing needs survey was undertaken as a feed into the Parish Plan. However, when the Parish Plan survey results were analysed the demand for housing seemed to vaporise. Parish Councillors are concerned about the way the questionnaire was conducted and the reliability of the data. The summary may appear convincing but we are concerned about the validity. We would want a more controlled questionnaire and analysis of the responses.

TG: supported DM's comments. The issue of one questionnaire per household is not satisfactory as members of the household will have different views. There needs to be 163 questionnaires being the number on the electoral roll. The Parish Council should have been consulted prior to the questionnaire.

DM: asked if Sworders were aware of a community led scheme that their client had brought to the attention of the Parish Council – the Hook Norton scheme. This is a community-led scheme. Is the landowner proposing that we have a similar community led scheme in Moat Close?

NP: confirmed awareness of the Hook Norton Community Land Trust but had not had time to discuss with the client.

DM: have you researched the scheme beyond the TV report? The TV report was superficial; there is more information available online.

NP: looked at planning history and is aware of planning permission granted in 2020. Hook Norton is a different type of village to Avon Dassett. We do not know how the Community Trust works. It is interesting and seems to be a positive scheme. It needs a strong community group to push this type of scheme forward.

DM: we were confused about why the landowner forwarded this to us as it would be a completely different proposition than a planning application. There is a Benefits Society that bought the pub in the village so some experience available on community led schemes. Is the landowner thinking about a community-led scheme?

NP: I am not aware of this

Responses received on Call for Sites

DM: what we can share around the responses to the call for sites is limited; it is on the agenda for our next Parish Council meeting. We have received suggestions for how land might be used eg electric vehicle charging, allotments, community garden etc. There is currently one planning application in progress for the redevelopment of the Carrow Barn; an application which the Parish Council supported.

NP: was there a positive response to the Call for Sites?

DM: we were not expecting many responses but we have received some interesting suggestions.

LP: were any of the suggestions for the land we represent?

DM: there were none about this land other than Sworders response

NP: why was there a Call for Sites? Will there be a review of the Parish Plan? Will there be a Neighbourhood Plan?

DM: we have no intention to develop a Neighbourhood Plan for Avon Dassett.

TG: Sarah Brooke-Taylor recommended that we did not develop a Neighbourhood Plan, but supported a Parish Plan.

DM: on the Call for Sites, since the Parish Plan was published, we have set up a projects group to take the highest priority projects forward first. A number of projects are underway but we quickly identified that sites will be required to enable some projects and others require volunteers to progress the identified actions.

What we can offer on Moat Close

NP: we do not have a scheme to offer at this stage, but wanted the Parish Council to be aware that the site could offer a mixed-use scheme which incorporates affordable housing. The client is willing to open up the discussions on which community needs might be met within a scheme but it must be viable. What does the parish Council want?

DM: we represent the community and are not taking a lead on planning issues. We can take a lead on what sites are available. It depends on what your clients propose and if that's a community-led scheme similar to the Hook Norton model it will require a different approach than a traditional planning application. What sort of conversation your clients are looking for? We question whether those who have housing needs in Avon Dassett are likely to come together to drive a community scheme like Hook Norton. Any proposed community-led scheme would need to be led by and consist of predominantly Avon Dassett residents.

Next steps following Call for Sites

NP needs to establish their client's position and clarify what they mean by a community-led scheme and come back with a proposal for the village, not just the Parish Council. NP was unaware that the client had shared information on the community-led scheme and needs to clarify with the client.

DM: expressed support for a questionnaire process but proposed a joint approach that would be unbiased and include control of its distribution, collection and validation of the responses.

TG: Plunkett can provide support in developing questionnaires to support rural communities.

The meeting closed at 6.42pm