

Councillors Chronicles No.6 – A Cunning Plan

Regular readers of the new Blackmore Vale magazine can't help but notice that planning applications, often followed by disputes, feature in successive editions. Planning consent is of concern to so many of us and we tend to have strong views about what should be permitted and what is unacceptable. The 6th August edition contains an article which highlights the tension that can exist between Neighbourhood Plans and the Dorset Local Plan. Our parish is one of the fortunate ones in having a Neighbourhood Plan because its existence ensures a strong influence in planning decisions regarding local policies and preferences.



In Fontmell Magna, one on-going planning application, land South of Home Farm (aka. Pennyfarthing Homes) has taken over three years to resolve, see

<https://planning.dorsetcouncil.gov.uk/plandisp.aspx?recno=59976>

Reasons for delay have included style and design, what the developers will contribute in terms of amenities and facilities, concern for wildlife and ecology, visual impact and most recently the question of who will be responsible for the drop-off area at the back of the school. Negotiations are proceeding and Dorset Council should reach a decision about the outcome by the end of the year.



The scheme complies with the Neighbourhood Plan which identifies the site as one of the most suitable for the development of the 40 new homes that the current Dorset Local Plan has specified for our parish. This number is likely to rise in the next edition of the Dorset Local Plan. Like most other parishes, the Parish Council should identify where a prescribed number of new homes can be accommodated.

Before any planning application is discussed by FM Parish Councillors, an informal advisory group of volunteers, who were all involved in constructing the Neighbourhood Plan and who wanted to use the

knowledge and experience they had built up to benefit the community further, assess each submission according to strict criteria. The NP Monitoring Group report on each planning application and make a recommendation to the Parish Council. The PC decides whether to support or object to an application or to make no comment. This is not a subjective response - all decisions must be made according to local and national regulations and to what is specified in the Neighbourhood Plan.

The FM advisory group includes two retired architects and a parish councillor amongst others and the Parish Council is much indebted to them for their diligence and commitment. They are a significant asset to the community and of considerable help to the PC, so thank you to them all. If you are interested in joining the Neighbourhood Plan Monitoring Group please email Robert McCurrach at robertmccurrach@aol.com