

ASHLEY PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting of Ashley Parish Council held on Wednesday 6th July 2011 in the Pavilion.

Present Cllr Olive Oakervee (chair) Cllr Ivy Parkes
Cllr Ann Spurling Chris Lewis (Clerk)
and 14 members of the public

1. Public Open Meeting

Cllr Oakervee explained the purpose of the public meeting and invited members of the public to address the Council on any matter not included in the published agenda. In the absence of any response, the public meeting was closed at 7.35pm.

2. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Carolyn Mahony.

3. Members' declaration of interests

Cllr Oakervee declared a possible interest in the discussion at item 4, as her property, although not adjoining the field referred to under item 4, was in close proximity and so any development there would be bound to have an impact.

4. Release of Land to support the future development of Ashley

Cllr Oakervee explained that the proposal to release land had to be seen against the background of other initiatives to assess local requirements and capacity. She advised that during the summer of 2010 a housing needs survey had been undertaken by Cambs ACRE. This survey, which yielded only a 25% response rate, revealed that 10 households were unhappy with the size of their properties but of these only one household was actually looking for larger accommodation. The Parish Council did not feel that the survey necessarily reflected village opinion as a whole and in consequence, it had felt unable to support a proposal for additional affordable housing units.

In response to the recent publication of the Localism Bill there was now a drive to give communities a greater say in how local areas are developed. East Cambs District Council,(ECDC) (a pro-growth authority), had very recently begun a district-wide consultation to help them to develop a 20 year plan aimed at delivering the housing, employment and infrastructure needed by communities within that period. As a part of this process all households in Ashley should have received a questionnaire for completion, asking about how they would wish to see Ashley develop in the future.

Following the announcement of the consultation the Parish Council was approached by Strutt and Parker, (S&P) - who act as land agents for Darley Estates. The S&P representatives explained that ECDC had contacted the landowners directly to enquire whether they wished to release any land for development. Darley Estates had since advised that they were prepared to release a 7.52 acre field, sited opposite the Recreation Ground. (see attached plan). S &P were keen to establish how the village viewed the possibility of development and pointed out this could involve a mix of

market and affordable housing, new facilities (eg new Village Hall) and additional green space. However, the adequacy of existing infrastructure and services to cope with additional development would also need to be considered. Cllr Oakervee stressed that it was important that everyone likely to be affected should have an opportunity to express their views so that the Parish Council could properly reflect the views of the community.

Cllr Oakervee closed the meeting at 7.45 pm to allow members of the public to express their views.

In the discussion that followed, a number of concerns were expressed.

- It was believed that the land owner would wish to proceed quickly, therefore the questions to be addressed in terms of development were quite pressing.
- Ashley already has sufficient social housing. It was felt that further building could result in an increase of anti-social behaviour.
- The access to any development from the B1063 would be very difficult.
- The field had poor drainage and it was feared that development could adversely impact on neighbouring properties and the playing field.
- Householders in Silhalls Close were concerned about the impact on property values.
- If the village is to retain its character, any development would need to be on a small scale.
- There were serious doubts as to the need for development given the difficulties experienced in selling new houses at Red Lodge and the close proximity of other potentially large developments.
- New housing was likely to be taken up by people from outside the Newmarket area
- District Council may purchase the land ahead of receipt of planning permission and against the wishes of residents.

Cllr Oakervee concluded, on the basis of the opinions expressed, that whilst there were clear concerns about the impact of a major development on the village, there was some support for small scale development within the development envelope. A group of householders from Silhalls Close, indicated that they may be interested in purchasing the entire field as a joint venture. It was agreed that the outcome of the meeting together with the enquiry about land purchase would be notified to S&P as soon as possible.

Action :Clerk

Cllr Oakervee also emphasised that the date for the return of the ECDC "Village Visions" questionnaire had been extended to 31 July. It was extremely important for Ashley to achieve a good response. The questionnaire could be completed on line at www.eastcambs.gov.uk/local-development-framework/consultation-villagetown-visions, or sent by post. In addition, responses lodged with members of the Parish Council or the Parish Clerk could be submitted as a batch, at no cost to the respondent.

It was confirmed that the matter would be reviewed again at the next ordinary meeting to be held on Monday 11 July. This meeting would be open to the public in the normal way.

The meeting closed at 8.15 pm.