

## **Shearsby Housing Policy Group**

Meeting of 20th July 2015,

Ann Blaine, Ralf Dahm, Martin Reynolds

We agreed on the following points

### **1. Retaining the character of Shearsby.**

Our housing policy will propose (to the community) that above all else its main aim is to retain the character of Shearsby (as defined/outlined by the Character of Shearsby Policy)

### **2. Developing guidance specific to Shearsby**

To be practical and effective in influencing planning decisions our housing policy will aim to provide specific guidance on certain areas of general guidance/design principles which already exist, for example

- planning guidance already states that the materials used in development should be in keeping with those of the (conservation) area. We will aim to specify a (non-exhaustive) list of materials which would be in keeping (and maybe those which would not) for Shearsby.
- Planning guidance also states that developments should provide an assessment of the impact of proposals on the conservation area generally and on specific heritage assets in the vicinity of the development. We will, (using the character of shearsby policy), aim to help this process by giving more specific guidance about the significance of the heritage assets and the contribution of their setting to that significance (for example the importance of the Church and its position in the village, the nuclear layout of the houses around the green, the listed buildings and their setting relative to buildings around them and similarly for buildings not listed but which are intrinsic to the character of the village).
- we will also aim to add guidance which may not already exist but which won't conflict with current planning regulations for example - "that no developments can be of any more than x number of houses and that they must not be of uniform design".

### **3. Developing relations with the planning department**

It is highly likely that every development in Shearsby will be somewhat unique which makes it difficult to prescriptively cover all possible development variables in our policy. In this regard we thought it wise to propose that the housing policy should outline a process to facilitate a close and constructive working relationship with our planning department.

This would include for example a requirement to schedule periodic meetings, to maintain active communication and interest in all planning applications, to encourage early engagement between planning officers, applicants and the Parish Council (to attempt to influence and resolve potential issues early on by, for example where deemed necessary, encouraging applicants to provide independent heritage statements to accompany their applications).

### **4. Mix of houses, style, size, layout, age, private/public ownership, residential/commercial**

As well as the mix of houses in terms of style, size, layout and age adding to the character of Shearsby, we thought it useful to note in the policy that it was in the interests of Shearsby as a diverse community to have a mixture of privately owned and some housing association properties (such as those currently owed by Sevenlocks) and to have commercial properties which add to the community and character of the village (e.g. the pub). It is also worth noting that the quality and range of choice of houses helps the virtuous circle of encouraging families to stay in the village for many years which in turn helps develop the community which in turn preserves the character.

## **Working Assumptions**

- 1.** Apart from any requirement to identify an area of development in Shearsby (to be dealt with separately) the working assumption will be that infill will conflict with (detract from) the fundamental character of Shearsby. However this remains an open question until the character of Shearsby is outlined in more detail.
- 2.** We are assuming that the policy for developments on currently undeveloped land (outfill) will be covered by the land use policy group.
- 3.** We are assuming that we can ignore in this iteration of the plan the significant constraints on infrastructure in Shearsby (drains, traffic load, access issues) which would need to be addressed for larger scale developments.

## **Actions and further research**

1. Martin to arrange a meeting with our planning contact to discuss how we could best start to develop our constructive relationship with them.
2. Ann to call the heritage consultants to get an understanding of how much their reports typically cost (how practical to use)
3. To come up with our more specific guidance for Shearsby all of us are to trawl the internet for examples from other village plans, village design statements etc., which we will collate and organise at a future meeting (a few examples attached below).
4. To propose (to Jane?) that all the 4 policy groups meet before too long to discuss and be aware of each others progress, significant overlaps and assumptions.

## **Next meeting Tuesday 28th July, 7pm, Ann's house.**

Materials and designs for new/renovated buildings which preserve character for the village

- lime mortar for pointing
- reclaimed local bricks
- swithland slate
- use of gravel/stones in driveways
- any original arts and crafts design features of building
- wood
- stone
- thatch
- decorative chimney pots
- multiple-paned (small-paned) windows
- decorations over windows (half moon decorative shapes are common over a lot of windows in the village)
- decorative brickwork - stone quoins

## **From a village plan/ character statement -**

. The scale, design and materials of any refurbishment , redevelopment or new development (including extensions) should be appropriate to the existing character of nearby dwellings. In particular:

New dwellings should not be more than two storeys in height;

Standard designs should be avoided and certainly not grouped together;

Roofs should be pitched to no less than 35°- 45°.

The building of blocks of flats to replace existing dwellings should be discouraged;

Local limestone – for both walls and boundaries should be encouraged;

The following materials are not common in the village and would therefore be considered out of character by the community:

Walls: Reconstituted stone walling, timber faced walls, concrete and calcium silicate brick, half timbered construction, and flint

Roofs: Stone slates, thatch, asbestos cement slate, copper, flat or monopitch.

#### The Built Environment:

1. The existing settlement boundary, as defined in the North Somerset Local Plan, should be maintained to protect the character of the village.
2. Overall, the sense of spaciousness and privacy should be preserved. This means no over-dense infilling or squeezing in of out-of-scale development.
3. Existing natural stone structures, including boundary walls and agricultural buildings (whether redundant or not) should be retained or incorporated into new development and new plots should be required to have boundaries of natural stone whenever possible.
4. Newly built garages and car parking areas should be unobtrusive. Blocks of garages should be avoided.
5. The mixture of large and small, intermingled properties should be continued, against separate enclaves of such property types.
6. Avoid Abbots Leigh becoming "suburban" through inappropriate development.
7. Homes and gardens should remain private places in accord with Policy RL/1.