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14th August 2020

Dear All,

As you know, your parish council meets monthly, currently on the first Wednesday of the month. Meetings are open and there are always 15 minutes at the beginning when any member of the community can raise an issue of concern. At our last meeting we welcomed two residents of Roughmoor Lane who spoke about their concern for the future use of land behind Court House Farm and opposite their houses. This land is designated in the Mendip local plan as suitable for housing development. There were two key arguments the residents made. Firstly any planning permission should ensure that a green corridor is established between Roughmoor Lane and any new houses (likely to be in the region of 40 to 50) and secondly the rural nature of the lane should be protected by making entry to any new development through a new access point onto the A371.

Discussion among the councillors showed agreement with the principles suggested. They felt they fitted well with the Council’s developing green policies and with its wish to see space made in any new development for improved amenity value and better village infrastructure. When the landowners will move towards seeking planning permission is unclear, but it’s important for everyone in the community to think about what we would like to see happen here. Change will come and new properties will be built, but what will the village need to service a larger community? What improvements would you like to see? It is nearly 15 years since the community produced a village plan. We now have the opportunity to restart a neighbourhood plan process, held up by local and general elections and then the Covid 19 pandemic. A neighbourhood plan allows a community to state its environmental preferences and needs to be taken into account by the local planning authority, in our case, Mendip District Council. Built into this process is a community referendum which ensures close consultation.

Meanwhile central government has come up with suggested new legislation that would see the role of local authorities in detailed scrutiny of planning applications much diminished and requirements on developers to build affordable and social rent housing on small sites (up to 40 or 50 houses) waived. Commenting on planning applications is a major part of your council’s work. We would like local opinion to have more weight not less. Let me know if you agree and give me your ideas for village growth and improvement.

Keep safe

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