

Wark - Housing at Church Lane.

Chair, Ladies and Gentlemen. I am Rupert Gibson, Ward Councillor

I went to a Parish Council meeting in the Wark Town Hall on a winter's night three years ago and much to my surprise forty plus people were in attendance. In rural parish council terms, that is an enormous crowd. They had come to ask about one subject only. They had come to ask why there was such a lack of housing for those who wanted to stay in Wark, or the lack of new housing full stop.

In the mean time the need has not waned. The Parish council is in favour of this project. The school needs more pupils. More trade in the village etc. Looking at the papers there are more people supporting the project than objecting. That is a very unusual situation, for a new housing development.

Two years ago, this applicant came to a Parish Council meeting to present his application, to very little objection. It has evolved a lot since then to become a very well designed site, which will have all types of houses including more affordable units than required by planning law. The houses are very well designed, which also have a very high specification. The site now includes enhanced landscaping, zoned shelter belts, so in effect causing a buffer zone for more development.

There are two outstanding planning points which are, that this site is to be built in open countryside. And my answer to that is, how can you **not** build in open countryside if you live

in a rural situation. And of course, the Persimmons and Bellways only build in open countryside. So, I consider that to be hardly a point. The more serious point is that the site is just out of the new settlement boundary. If anyone has looked at the “boundary” for this village there is no where vacant to build a small site like this. Infill is not possible. There isn’t any available ground! There is a “special consideration” mechanism however, to free sites such as this, and the special consideration here is that the developer has ticked all the planning department boxes. They say it is the best designed and engineered site to appear in Northumberland in a very long time.

I know some of the councilors here this evening, including the esteemed member for Allendale are very uneasy about voting against the officers recommendation. The thinking being that there is no respect for the officers work on these applications. But in this case, it has got to be a very close call. There are items in the papers that give this away. 7.26 “it is considered that based on the layout of the site this would not be to the extent where planning permission should be refused”. 8.2 & 8.3 are worth reading as well. And in fact at the end application paperwork. I would consider the reasons for refusal very weak.

I wouldn’t be in favour of this site if any of the following were in these papers. Green Belt. 100 letters against the application. Poor design. No benefit to the village etc

We are here this afternoon as the local area committee to consider how the application sits with the locals. They want this site building. Please appease them.