

SLOW START TO THE YEAR

In case you were wondering what had happened to us, please accept our assurances that we did not go into a terminal decline as a result of over-indulgence during the festive season. Your team have been acting as interim gatekeepers for the Neighbourhood Plan and we have been trying to keep the project moving along until someone does something about putting a permanent N3P Team in place.

Lest this sounds begrudging on our part, let us assure you that as every week goes by we become more convinced of the need for a Neighbourhood Plan to protect our community from the ravages of the Localism Act. (Planning applications for no less than 103 new homes within the Parish were lodged with SHDC during the twelve months of last year alone.) We have therefore given N3P our top priority.

ELECTION TIME

It is now less than 2 months until Election Day – just in case there is anyone who did not know! (No doubt there are some who may think that the next 8 weeks are more likely to seem like a lifetime.) However, whilst the RYDA is entirely apolitical, we thought that we should draw your attention to some really quite significant changes locally in the District Council election taking place on the same day.

South Hams Ward boundaries are being redrawn, resulting in a reduction from 40 to just 20 wards. We will be part of a relatively large ward known as 'Newton and Yealmpton'. As well as our area, covered at present by Cllr Suzie Cooper, the parishes of Yealmpton, currently covered by Cllr Keith Baldry and Sparkwell (including parts of the current Cornwood Ward) covered by Cllr Ian Blackler will comprise the new Ward.

To reflect the large area to be covered we will be represented by not one, as at present, but two Councillors. On Election Day you will therefore be given the opportunity to cast two votes for your elected representatives on the Council. It is not yet clear who all the candidates will be (closing date 9th April) but we understand on good authority that all three of the current incumbents are likely to run for the two seats in the new Ward.

So, why should RYDA members be interested in all this? Well, in our view probably THE most important thing that our elected representative has the opportunity to do on our behalf is speak at District Council Planning Meetings. When we are fighting an unpopular planning application on your behalf, we may be given the opportunity to address the Planning Committee ourselves. We speak first (on behalf of all opponents of the application) and we are given exactly 3 minutes and no more. Then follows the applicant or his representative. Finally our Ward member is entitled to speak for as long as he wishes just before a vote is taken. So this opportunity can be absolutely key in how members decide to cast their votes.

So when you cast your votes on 7th May we would ask you to consider who it is that has both the interest and the ability to represent our views most effectively in the debating chamber in Totnes for the next 4 years. Admittedly, this does assume that you have not lost the will to live before 7th May.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Our AGM will be held at 7.30pm Tuesday 14th April in the WI Community Hall. We are sure that you will want to support your Committee but if you need any further persuasion, we do ask you to come along as we will be distributing the new 2015 edition of the Village Directory to our Members. It of course remains free to all Members. If that isn't enough incentive for you to come, we will also be offering a glass of wine at the beginning of the evening.

VILLAGE TELEPHONE DIRECTORY

As already mentioned, the new 2015 Directory will be available at the AGM on Tuesday 14th April. We hope that you will make a particular effort to come as it is our chance to publicly thank Eric Rodmell who is stepping down as the editor. His successor is John Tighe. You may already know that we ran a competition for the children at the Primary School to design a painting for the front cover. In addition to the winning design, we will have all the class entries on display for you to see.

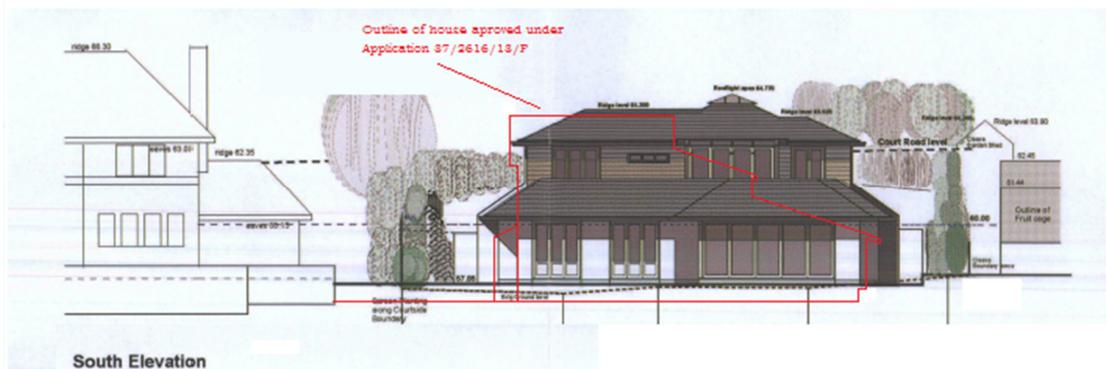
PLANNING APPLICATIONS

New Applications

Land East of 85 Court Road

You will probably recall that an application was passed for a new house on this site after a struggle with the developer which goes back well over 30 years. We thought it appropriate to draw your attention to the fact that the same person has now applied again, for a larger house on the same site, showing what we regard as a degree of contempt for the planning process.

The latest house has an extra bedroom, is approximately 2.5 metres wider, 0.75 meters higher and when viewed from across the river will present a south elevation, the surface area of which is 25% greater than the last one. To add further insult he now proposes to take down the trees that he previously agreed to leave in order to shield the house from public view. A comparative drawing shows just how much larger this house would be than the last one.



It is our view that the application should not be approved on the grounds that to do so will cause even greater damage to the AONB. In this we are encouraged by the fact that very recently SHDC turned down a similar application nearby in Lower Court Road on exactly these grounds (see below). If you wish to object to the application you may do so quite simply by going to

<http://apps.southhams.gov.uk/planningsearch/default.aspx?shortid=37/0355/15/F>

and clicking on the Comment link. You will also find full details there. The reference to quote is 37/0355/15/F and please note, you have only until next Friday 13th to make your comment.

Briar Hill Farm

In November 2011 the owner of Briar Hill Farm submitted an application to build 2 holiday homes and a third house for his own occupancy in place of the barns that currently lie to the right of the entrance to Briar Hill Camp Site. This would have placed all 3 buildings outside the village development boundary and as a consequence there was considerable opposition from members, the Parish Council and (we suspect) SHDC themselves. The application was withdrawn before a decision was made.

However it has now been resubmitted, which is likely to be a reflection of the owners perception of how much easier it has become to build practically wherever one pleases in the wake of the introduction of the Localism Act in 2012.

Members will be aware that since 2011 a significant number of holiday homes have been erected on the camp site. They too are outside the village development boundary. We have been powerless to make any representations about them for they are classified as temporary holiday accommodation and do not have to have planning permission. They are covered by the legislation pertaining to camp sites and since Briar Hill Farm holds a camp site license we did not get the normal opportunity to register our views on your behalf.

This will not apply to the 3 houses though and we will be sending you further details shortly. Unfortunately the SHDC website is currently experiencing technical difficulties and the plans are not therefore available. As soon as they become available we will send you details. The closing date for comment is 1st April.

Updates

Collaton

It is now almost a year (11th March 2014) since the application for 70 houses at Collaton was first received by SHDC. It is clear that SHDC are having some difficulty with this application and a number of subsequent documents have been submitted in order to aid them with their task. A legacy study was undertaken which, in the event proved nothing other than the fact that the proposed development would have no adverse effect on any of the historic buildings in this part of the South Hams! We, for our part, assisted the Collaton residents in the production of an 'intervisibility map' which showed all the (many) places from which the development would be visible. This is now in the hands of both SHDC and the Parish Council. We understand from SHDC that a decision will not now be made before Their April planning meeting at the earliest.

Waterside

Members will remember that we objected to the replacement of a single storey chalet building in Courtwood with a 4 storey house. We expressed the view that the building should be moved further back from the road in order to maintain the building line in its present location. Unfortunately we went unheeded and the application was approved subject to submission of a landscaping plan and a construction management plan. No doubt concerns expressed about damage to the AONB and disruption to other residents during the demolition and rebuild were at least in part responsible for these conditions. Let's hope they work.

Beacon Hill

We have written and objected to an application for the construction of a single storey house located outside the village development boundary on the left side of the private road leading up to Beacon Hill. The justification given for the build included the fact that many years ago a chicken shed was located there. All that remains now is the concrete pad on which it rested. (You would be forgiven for never having noticed it from the road.) Our objection was based on the principle that building 'in the countryside' for such a spurious reason was setting an unacceptable precedent.

We apologise for the fact that we did not have time to consult members before writing. For this reason we made it clear that the views expressed were those of your Committee only on this occasion. Should you wish to see the application or our letter you should go to:

<http://apps.southhams.gov.uk/planningsearch/default.aspx?shortid=37/0176/15/F>

The Sheilings

Members will recall that The Sheilings in Court Road was bought by a developer with a view to knocking it down, replacing it and building two more houses in the garden, one on Lower Court Road and the other in place of the detached garage on Court Road.

This latter house was actually to be two buildings – the house itself and a separate studio with garage. On 9th March SHDC Planning Committee held a site meeting, having previously been unable to decide whether to approve or not. Unfortunately we were unable to attend. However we have been reliably informed by an RYDA member that Cllr Keith Baldry from Yealmpton (standing in for Suzie Cooper) spoke most eloquently on our behalf. Likewise Alison Ansell from the Parish Council, who was also allowed to address the Committee, was strong in her opposition. So we must now await a decision, pending the next District Council Planning Meeting.

Meanwhile a separate application for the house on Lower Court Road has been turned down unconditionally on the grounds that it would have damaged the AONB. This is exceedingly good news, not only in the context of the application on Land East of 85 Court Road (mentioned above) but also in support of our ongoing battle to have protect this particularly important part of the river valley above the Pool.

ANNUAL HARBOUR CLEAN-UP

The annual harbour clean-up is on Saturday 21st March. This year it is very low water (0.1m below chart datum) at 12.44pm so it should be possible to really clean the river bed. The clean-up could not happen without the support of all the volunteers. For those who have turned out before, please contact your regular leader to confirm your availability. New volunteers are always welcome and so you are invited to contact Andrew Beveridge on 873351 or beveridgeandy@gmail.com for further details.