

THE CLERK'S COLUMN

October 2013

Apples

Your Clerk is almost knee-deep in eaters, cookers and crab apples. This isn't helping him to clear his desk and his overflowing inbox before making a dash (wrong phrase, as his route passes Stonehenge) to Devon, where, no doubt, he will be drowning in cider apples. Parishes in Devon have been pioneering Community Orchards, and this is something which the Parish Council wants to know more about, now that the acquisition of the Manor Close field is imminent. So there might be some useful information to pick up. More about this later maybe – after you've all enjoyed our Apple Day. Meanwhile shortage of time means a short column.

Applications

Each month our tireless editor publishes a Planning Summary; I suspect most readers eyes slide rapidly down to make sure that no-one is applying to open a pig-farm or a fracking plant just over the garden fence. But the bald summary is often the result of an interesting and important amount of thought and discussion. This month's row of ditto marks may look as if a whole stack of applications was just nodded through. Not so. Simple decisions are delegated to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, though their load will surely lighten soon, when every single house in Burghclere Down has a conservatory. Every application to fell, crown-lift, pollard or prune a tree is closely scrutinised by Dr. John Moon and the Chairman.

Plans for anything less simple are circulated to all Parish Councillors before the meeting at which they will be discussed; applicants and/or their architects are welcome to address the meeting as are neighbours and anyone else affected by the plans. It can get quite exciting if someone feels that the proposed development will overshadow their garden, wake them up at cock-crow or trap them in a magnetic field. Architects can go away deep in thought if they were hoping to plant a glass and concrete box on Cattle Lane. But there is often much to encourage. This month's list included the very sensible idea of neighbours in identical semi-detached houses in Blueberry Gardens to put up a pair of identical semi-detached conservatories. The new owners of Manor Farm House are busy putting it back in its place as a Georgian gem. Lots of good Victorian barns have been allowed to collapse from neglect; not so the barns at Down Farm, an increasingly rare E-shaped structure, which is to be converted to provide compact homes. And a new fence at Ash Cottage will make quite a difference to Duck Street.

Thought for the day

Parish Councillors are often tempted to think that people would only notice what they do if they had never done it or suddenly stopped doing it. True?

Adrian Stokes, Clerk