Tree Warden - Comments on planning application DC/26/0281/FUL

The proposal is for 6 dwellings.

Existing features:

Site is flat, with free draining sandy soil not very fertile. Was formerly part of an agricultural field including the Church Field and adjacent field sloping towards the river, which is still arable.

In 2003 Dr Tom Waller gave the part of the field known as Church Field to the village but retained the smaller flat area adjacent to Church Meadows now referred to as the paddock. The houses of Church Meadows were built following demolition of one larger house called White Gables. The boundary of White Gables consisted of tall conifers.

If the paddock site is to be developed I would make the following suggestions.

As there is a need for more smaller affordable homes eg 2 bed homes, make 3 or 4 of the new houses 2 bed and the remainder 3 bed

The area described as 'biodiversity area- is on the plan all placed at the west end and it is not at all clear what it is or whose responsibility it will be.

I suggest that part of the biodiversity zone is relocated along the existing boundary with Church Field' perhaps as a 5m wide strip. The row of oak trees along the boundary will not then be compromised. The houses proposed can be positioned further from the boundary to avoid future problems with home owners objecting to proximity of trees, leaves in their gutter etc. These houses could anyway be relocated further from the boundary utilising some of the 'biodiversity' area.

The houses should be divided between the whole plot with some light woodland screening separating them to allow wildlife corridors where possible, linking the gardens to the north (Church Meadows), across the site to the Church Field boundary to the south, with hedgehog highways throughout.

This would be easier to achieve if the total number of houses is reduced to 5, which would leave more room for biodiversity.

All the houses need to be provided with efficient soakaways as drainage for rainwater so that rooftops may drain into rain gardens (see below) and rain water is retained on site. This may lead to temporary shallow ponds appearing which all adds to biodiversity. The surface water will then not end up on the road (Mill Road).

Needless to say the lighting should be downward orientated, motion activated and minimal in this dark area.

In my view a group of integrated low rise houses of similar traditional materials (brick and tile) will make much less impact on the landscape than many recently constructed large brightly lit houses with large glass windows that are seemingly impossible to mitigate in any way, sited within the AONB and with lighting visible from the river and all around, detracting from our dark skies.

q.v. from RHS website

What are rain gardens?

The idea is to make the most of rain in the most creative ways you can.

Put simply, a rain garden is a shallow area of ground or dip which receives run-off from roofs and other hard surfaces. It is planted with plants that can stand waterlogging for up to 48 hours at a time. More drought-tolerant plants are used towards the edges. Storm water fills the depression and then drains.

A rill or channel of some kind will connect the roof downpipe to the dip. You can include other linking elements such as a **water butt**, rain chain, stormwater planter, or **pond**.