

**Minutes of Meeting held on
15 September 2026 at 18:30pm
at St Marys Church, Church Road, Shapwick, Bridgwater, Somerset, TA7 9NH**

26/27/38 Present: Cllrs, Croucher, Rogers, Anderson & Lockyer, along with 6 members of the public

26/27/39 Apologies: Cllr Gaskell, Steve Polden, Rev Richard Tweedy & Jon Wood

26/27/40 Planning Application: 43/26/00008, Works to Trees in Conservation Area
Location: St Marys Church, Church Road, Shapwick, Bridgwater, Somerset, TA7 9NH
Proposal: Crown raise low canopy of 1No. Cedar of Lebanon (T1) to 2.4m above ground level over gravestones to allow for mowing access. Fell group of 5No. Monterey Cypress (T2, T3, T4, T5 and T6) and replace with more suitable species. Reduce lateral branches extending towards the church of 1No. Cedar of Lebanon (T7) by 3.6m as practicable. Crown raise low canopy of 1No. Cherry (T8) to 2.4m above ground level to allow for mowing access. Remove 1No. dead unknown species (T17).

26/27/41 Discuss proposal: Graham Croucher (Chair) summarised the document and what the Consultant, Ian Chedgy recommended from the survey and discussions were held.

General consensus was the villagers agreed with the need for a survey.
Some also agreed that it was clear the Monterey Cyprus trees at the edge of the churchyard before the footpath to the allotment were deteriorating.

It was agreed that small works to the various trees in the form of expected and normal pruning were fine and the removal of the dead tree at the front of the Churchyard was necessary.

There are small works proposed for the majority of trees to manage them better and clear areas a little to allow mowing of the grass and better access to gravestones. All of which was agreed to be necessary and appropriate.

A member of the public was very passionate about the Monterey Cyprus trees. These are located at the corner of the churchyard near the footpath entrance for the allotments and near the compost heap. They said that removing these trees would be a detrimental act for the village, the trees are a haven for wildlife, are rare in their species and a habitat for all sorts of creatures, insects and birds. He also pointed out (having experience in this field) that the Monterey Cyprus trees were shielding and protecting the extremely old, valuable and magnificent cedar tree.

The member of the public pointed out that any complete removal of the Monterey Cyprus trees and to replace them with a more suitable species would be disastrous and the majority of people here at the meeting would never see the benefit of the replaced trees as they take so long to establish.

26/27/42

Decision to Support or object to application: After several discussions it was concluded by the Councillors present to respond/make a comment on the planning portal to the following effect and Cllr Croucher to upload to the portal.

Having listened to the views of the villagers present at the planning meeting on Tuesday 15th of September 2026. It was:

Proposed: Cllr Rogers

Seconded: Cllr Anderson

Unanimously agreed

that we as a Parish Council need further information (as below) from both Somerset Planning, Rev Richard Tweedy and his Consultants and at this stage we could not make a FINAL decision regarding either to support or object to the application.

1. Should we recommend option 1 regarding the group of Monterey Cyprus trees, (T2, T3, T4, T5 and T6), which is to significantly reduce the sail area to reduce the likelihood of limb shed, we would need clarification on the exact works proposed. To what degree would these trees be reduced in height and width.
2. If we agree to either option 1 or 2 and not to oppose the work on (T2, T3, T4, T5 and T6) the Monterey Cyprus trees, what potential effect will this have on the magnificent and very prominent cedar tree (T1), There are concerns that removing any of the Monterey Cyprus trees or reducing them in size could leave the cedar tree exposed to the elements and in fact destroy this tree. What reassurances are there from the consultant and Somerset Council's expert team that this would not be the case.
3. Should work be carried out on the T2, T3, T4, T5 and T6 Monterey Cyprus trees, there is concern that this will leave the churchyard exposed to the harsher winds and winters that climate change will bring in the future.
4. Do the Monterey Cyprus trees have significant value historically? Are they a rare species as Jerome Hayes suggests? Have they reached their end of life or is their life left in them if managed correctly?

Meeting closed

Signed: Date: