



Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 22nd July 2008

Present Alice Wilkinson (Chairman), Jackie Jeffery, Shirley Newman, Chris Drew, John Illenden, Michael Forrer, and John Davies. Three residents were present.

Apologies for absence - Jim Gillett, Nick Ray, Liz Black and District Councillor Emma Hobbs.

4586/08 Open Forum - Mr. Kopacz a resident spoke about the development at 2-4 Old Bath Road which was recently approved on appeal. He explained his concerns because work appeared to have commenced, despite a requirement of the Appeal approval that no work shall take place until the detailed plans (Reserved Matters) have been approved by Wokingham Borough Council. He also believed that a number of trees on the site had already been felled. The Chairman thanked Mr. Kopacz and explained that the points he had made would be taken into account when the item was considered later on the agenda.

Mr Gregory another resident stated his concerns about both a new application, and the appeal against refusal of a previous application, to develop the Sandford Farm site. Mr Gregory was assured that the points he had made would also be taken into account when the item was considered later on the agenda.

4587/08 Declaration Of Interest - Councillor Wilkinson declared an interest in planning application 1518.

4588/08 Minutes of the meeting held on 24th June 2008 - The minutes were approved by Council and signed by the Chairman.

4589/08 Urgent Matters Arising from the above Minutes - There were no matters arising which were not on the agenda.

4590/08 Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 13th May 2008 - The approval of the amended minutes was deferred to the next meeting.

4591/08 PLANNING

a) Applications for Information and Comment:

1282 Outline for 492 dwellings plus village centre buildings at Sandford Farm, Hurst. - Following discussion the Clerk was asked to comment as follows:

Council considers this application to be an unsuitable and inappropriate development for this location, which is in the narrow 'green strip' separating 'Rural' Charvil from 'Urban' Woodley. Council also has concerns about the consequences which this kind of development will have on the area as a whole, which includes Charvil Country Park and Dinton Pastures.

Part A - CHARVIL SPECIFIC CONCERNS

1. Traffic Council notes that unlike the previous application, access onto Beggars Hill Road is now accepted as being "harmful to the quality of life of residents to the north of the proposed development" (Para. 6.39 on page 20 of the planning statement) and has not been included. Council expects this admission to preclude any change of design for this site in the future.

Council was concerned at the impact which the additional traffic to/from the proposed retirement village would have had on Beggars Hill Road and Lands End Lane. These are quiet, narrow country lanes, with natural verges and without footpaths, which are primarily used by pedestrians and cyclists, many of whom are school children journeying to and from Waingels School. Only the occasional vehicle travelling to/from the 14 houses in this area uses these lanes. Because of this concern Charvil Parish Council has tabled an application to Wokingham Borough Council for Beggars Hill Road and Lands End Lane to be designated as 'Quiet Lanes'. Council believes that these roads meet all the requirements for such designation, as stated in the legislation.

It must be repeated that the southern end of Beggars Hill Road was closed to through traffic in 1980's as a result of accidents because of the lane being used as a short cut to and from Woodley through Charvil and beyond. Similarly the part of Beggars Hill Road south of the entrance to Lands End House is restricted to "non-motorised Traffic" **For safety reasons these restrictions must not be lifted.**

2. Green separation strip between settlements. Beggars Hill Road – Lands End Lane area is part of the narrow green strip that separates Rural Charvil from Urban Woodley. Applications to develop new properties in this narrow green strip have repeatedly been refused, some on appeal, citing the need to retain this separation strip. The dismissal of an appeal against refusal of Application 43268 in 1996 to develop on land West of Park Lane stated that in respect of the gap between Charvil and Woodley: -

" Woodley is part of a continuously built up area extending through to Reading so it seems that the gap is of considerable importance in preserving the separate identity of Charvil. Local Plan policy LC1 indicates that development will not be permitted in this area where it would detract from the undeveloped appearance."

This proposed development will extend the urban area of Woodley yet further into the narrow green strip which separates it from the rural parishes of Charvil and Hurst.

Note - It is important that planning decisions are consistent. Application O/2005/5852 (Appeal Ref: APP/X0360/A/06/2016692), was refused for many reasons. Almost every one of which are equally relevant to this site. It failed to comply with the policy requirements WCC1, and WT7 of the District plan.

Part B - WIDER AREA CONCERNS

1. General This site is a covered-over landfill site, which is claimed to have included clinical toxic waste. Any kind of development would therefore require the disturbance of the toxic waste. It is noted that there is a previous approval for development of a training centre with hotel accommodation still in existence. This should not be used as a precedent for this proposed extremely dense residential development, which is totally out of character with the location.

2. Sensitive location This proposed development is in a sensitive area between Charvil Country Park and Dinton Pastures Country Park. The views from locations within the parks will be blighted. The development will be visible from many of the beauty spots within the Parks, and indeed from parts of the Parishes of Charvil and Hurst and from the residential area of Woodley. Policy DP6 of the Structure Plan states: "... that land outside settlements should only be used for purposes which contribute to the economy through activities which can only be undertaken in rural areas": **The proposed development will urbanise a large area of the countryside.**

3. Density of proposed development The density and height of the proposed development is out of keeping with the location and appears to exceed the requirement of 325 dwellings in WDLP. It is denser than any previous proposal including the training centre, which had attractive well spaced-out buildings with appropriate landscaping. **This proposal is a high-density urban residential estate with minimal space around buildings. The cost of removing the toxic waste should not be allowed to result in an exceptionally high-density development in this location in the centre of the Country Park.**

4. Flooding This proposed development is on the edge of an area prone to flooding. According to the Environment Agency Report the land immediately to the east this site has flooded many times in the last 10 years. The report suggests an increasing risk of flooding where in the most recent years part of the proposed site was flooded and in 2005 half the site was flooded. It is therefore the view of this Council that this site must be considered to be in the 'high probability to flood' risk category. According to PPS25, areas where the flood risk is greater than one in a hundred years should not be used for dwelling houses, unless there is an overwhelming reason why development should take place. There is no such reason for developing this site. Indeed there is every reason why this contaminated site should not be disturbed. The inclusion of this site in the 'land for housing' list was made before the extent and concern of flood risk was fully realised. **With PPG25 and more recently PPS25 having been published and having excluded development of dwellings on such sites, this site should be removed from the list.** There is also concern about the removal of large quantities of soil. Will this lower the land level and make flooding more likely?

To add to this is that laying of extensive areas of concrete can only add to the risk of flooding in adjacent areas. **This too is precluded by recent legislation.**

Charvil being on the edge of the flood plain has experience of poor decision making on flooding issues. There are three areas of the village where PPG 25 was highlighted at the planning stage by this Council, but was regrettably ignored, and development allowed. All three areas now flood regularly each year. In the past there had been this tendency not to implement PPG 25, and other legislation. **With recent experience of Flooding and Contamination the public expects this issue to be taken seriously.**

5. Toxic waste The removal of toxic waste is disruptive, dangerous, and extremely expensive particularly in an area subject to flooding, and should not be undertaken without there being an essential need. No development of any kind (be it commercial or housing) should be allowed before the contamination is removed. This should be a significant planning concern. **Given the dilemma between the need to remove the waste before any development can take place, versus the danger from disturbing the toxic waste in an area prone to flooding, it is this Council's view that the only safe option is to leave the site untouched and to refuse any form of development.**

6. Ecology This is an area of ecological interest being close to two Country Parks. The information provided by the developer raises a number of issues: -

- a. The application accepts that this is an area of significant biodiversity, but still they intend to build over it. Any interruption to the normal flows of migrating species along the Loddon Valley Corridor will cause severe losses including some on the Red-Data list.
- b. The 150 Veteran Trees on the application site and 50 on the development site with the many species reliant on these as habitats will be put at risk by the excessive construction proposed.
- c. There are clearly many species of Bats (sometimes resident), Barn Owls (specially championed by the biodiversity aims of Wokingham Borough Council), Kingfishers along the Old River, and the valued reptile population including Great Crested Newts. All these species would be affected; some lost from the area forever by the proposed mass of buildings.

The proposed development will create a large hole in the Loddon Valley corridor, which would result in adverse sustainability.

Part C - SUMMARY It is the view of this Council that this proposed development is dangerous and damaging in respect of flooding, disturbing dangerous waste, and extending the urban area of Woodley (destroying even more of the green gap around parish settlements). It is clearly contrary to many policy requirements in respect of building in the green gap between settlements and **not** building in areas susceptible to flooding. Because it conflicts with so many of the Borough Council's Planning Policy requirements there would seem to be no alternative but for you to refuse this application. **This Council believes that despite previous approvals (made at a time when there was less concern with contamination and flooding) this site should be removed from the 'Land for house building' list and retained as public open space.**

1269 Industrial B2 use building at Grove Service Station. Old Bath Road. - No Parish Council Comment

1402 Two storey side extension at 117 The Hawthorns. - No Parish Council Comment

RM/1385 Reserved Matters for erection of 4 dwellings re: Access, appearance, landscaping for O/0474 at 2 & 4 Old Bath Road. Following discussion the Clerk was asked to comment as follows:

Council is concerned that extra care be taken with a number of aspects of this development.

It is firstly understood that work on site has begun despite a requirement in the appeal decision that no work should be commenced until these reserved matters have been approved.

You will be aware of the problem currently being resolved at 25 Park View Drive South. In order to avoid a repeat, the layout, positioning and dimensions of the proposed houses must be fully in accordance with the requirements that were approved on appeal. It is understood that some of the dimensions on this application are different from those that were approved on appeal. If so these must be corrected before approval is given.

A number of mature trees may have been felled on the site despite a request from this Council to Wokingham Borough Council some time ago that all the trees on the site be protected. A check should be carried out to see if any of the felled trees were protected. Council would like to see any felled trees replaced by specimens of similar stature.

There is also concern that the entrance road width should be as approved on appeal. Council expressed concern about the access and the necessity for vehicles to be able to pass, so as not to block the entrance and so cause cars to back up onto the highway.

We also note that no assessment of the presence of landfill gas, and no assessment of possible archeological interest have been carried out.

- 1266 Two storey side extension, front porch and single storey extension to enlarge garage at 39 Chiltern Drive. - No Parish Council Comment
- 1518 Two storey rear extension at 19 The Hawthorns. - No Parish Council Comment
- 1428 Amended Application re proposed erection of paved terrace at rear of dwelling at Herons Creek, Thames Drive. - No Parish Council Comment
- 1186 Retrospective for front porch and convert garage to habitable room at 32 Park View Drive South. - No Parish Council Comment

b) Appeals- The following refused applications have been appealed:-

- 2239 Rear paved terrace at Herons Creek, Thames Drive. - No Parish Council Comment.
- 2755 Two and single storey rear extensions and replacement Garage at Rose Cottage, Lands End Lane. - No Parish Council Comment.
- 1690 Outline for industrial/commercial buildings and retirement dwellings. Land at Sandford Farm, Mohawk Way, Woodley. Following discussion the Clerk was asked to comment as follows:

All the points made in the comment report that we made at the time of the application (copy attached for convenience) still apply. However since writing the comment report on the refused application, further information has come to light on three important aspects of the proposed development: -

1. Council is concerned at the impact that the additional traffic to/from the proposed retirement village would have on Beggars Hill Road and Lands End Lane. These are quiet, narrow country lanes, with natural verges and without footpaths, which are primarily used by pedestrians and cyclists, many of whom are school children journeying to and from Waingels School. Only the occasional vehicle travelling to/from the 14 houses in this area uses these lanes. Because of this concern Charvil Parish Council has tabled an application to Wokingham Borough Council for Beggars Hill Road and Lands End Lane to be designated as 'Quiet Lanes'. Council believes that these roads meet all the requirements for such designation, as stated in the legislation. The legislation - DfT Circular 02/2006 states that: "The aim of Quiet Lanes is to maintain the character of minor rural roads by seeking to contain rising traffic growth that is widespread in rural areas". You will be aware that another application (O/2008/1282) to develop this site is currently being considered by Wokingham Borough Council. This too incorporates a retirement village of the same size and in the same location but here the developer clearly states that an exit on to Beggars Hill Road has been excluded in order to: "...ensure that the quality of life of the residents to the north of the development would not be harmed and that the highway network would not be adversely affected". This developer has reinforced this Council's claim that there is a potential for harm and danger in opening up an access into Beggars Hill Road. The additional traffic generated by any development in this sensitive area, which has to include service vehicles, would set a precedent. The prejudice to highway safety will occur in the single track Beggars Hill Road and the many hazardous junctions into Charvil. This point is well defined by the Inspector in report APP/X0360/A/06/2016692 : "Prospective residents would be reliant on their cars for most journeys. There would also be an increased number of delivery and service vehicles using the lane. It is too narrow for two vehicles to pass and pedestrians and cyclists would be particularly vulnerable... Due to its restricted width, I conclude that the additional vehicle movements generated by the proposal would have an adverse impact on highway safety".

2. This proposed development is on the edge of an area prone to flooding. According to the Environment Agency Reports provided with application O/2008/1282 the land on the east of this site has flooded many times in the last 10 years. The report suggests an increasing risk of flooding where in the most recent years part of the proposed site was

flooded and in 2005 almost half the site appeared to have flooded. It is therefore the view of this Council that this part of the site must be considered to fulfil the criteria for inclusion in the 'functional flood plain' and that the remainder of the site must be in the 'high probability to flood' risk category. According to PPG25 (now PPS25), areas where the flood risk is greater than one in a hundred years should not be used for development unless there is an overwhelming reason why development should take place. There is no such reason for developing this site. Indeed there is every reason why this contaminated site should not be disturbed.

There is the added concern about the removal of large quantities of soil for remedial work. Will this lower the land level and make flooding even more likely?

Council is also concerned that laying extensive areas of concrete can only add to the risk of flooding in adjacent areas. This too is precluded by recent legislation. Charvil being on the edge of the flood plain has experience of poor decision making on flooding issues. There are three areas of the village where PPG 25 was highlighted at the planning stage by this Council, but was regrettably ignored, and development allowed. All three areas now flood regularly. In the past there had been this tendency not to implement PPG 25, and other legislation. With recent experience of Flooding and Contamination the public expects this issue to be taken seriously and for developments of this kind not to be allowed.

3. Two Tree Preservation Orders have been made on behalf of trees on the site - a field maple - one of the largest in the country, and an oak.

Comment on 'Grounds for Appeal' document

1. There are no clear benefits. It is doubtful and not proven that this kind of industrial / commercial premises are needed or are appropriate at this location at the heart of the Country Park. Council would draw attention to the reasons given by the inspector for refusing another application in this green gap between settlements in report APP/X0360/A/06/2016692. "The proposal would be a visual intrusion into the countryside...the proposal conflicts with local and national policies to protect the countryside". In addition in respect of access onto Beggars Hill Road this site is not sustainable. This point too is well defined by the Inspector in report APP/X0360/A/06/2016692: "Prospective residents would need to rely on private cars and the proposal conflicts with Planning Policy Statement 7 – Sustainable development in Rural areas".

2. This statement appears to assume that a health risk in places of work is acceptable. This Council strongly disagrees.

3. This Council believes that public concern about pollution has been heightened and decisions made in 1999 do not reflect current concerns.

4. There is currently no indication that additional warehousing is needed in this immediate area. Industrial / commercial development at this location at the heart of the Country Park would not be sustainable.

5. This proposed development is in a sensitive area between Charvil Country Park and Dinton Pastures Country Park. The views from locations within the parks will be blighted. The industrial buildings will be visible from many of the beauty spots within the Parks, and indeed from parts of the Parishes of Charvil and Hurst and from the residential area of Woodley. Policy DP6 of the Structure Plan states "..... that land outside settlements should only be used for purposes which contribute to the economy through activities which can only be undertaken in rural areas".

6. Concern at the potential for harm from treating/disturbing this waste is a serious local issue. As stated previously there is no evidence that there is an essential need for this development to be on this site in a rural area on land which is an important green separation strip between settlements.

7. The whole area is currently a 'managed country side amenity area' in the form of a managed Country Park. The developers are offering nothing, they are taking away a major area of 'country side amenity'.

It is this Council's unanimous view that this proposal is damaging and dangerous and above all it is neither essential nor appropriate to the location. In these respects it does not comply with many policy requirements and this council would recommend that it be refused.

- c) **Aggregate Extraction - Report for consultation.** – Councillor Jeffery explained that the report required comment on which of several options for deciding on gravel extraction should be used. Council agreed that the option requiring environmental issues to be used should be supported and Councillor Jeffery was asked to respond to that effect on behalf of the Council.

There being no other Planning Business the Planning Meeting was closed.

FINANCE COMMITTEE

In the absence of the Councillor Ray, Councillor Davies took the Chair.

4592/08 Finance Reports – Council reviewed the monthly financial reports which were noted.

4593/08 Authorisation of Payments - Council considered the cheques report. One additional deposit refund cheque was added at the meeting. Cheques as detailed were then approved and signed.

4594/08 Internal Audit report for 2008 – The internal audit report was considered and the reference to risk assessment was noted for future action.

4595/08 Donations - There were no new requests.

4596/08 Multi -Sport Area – A response from Paul Turrell is awaited.

There being no other Finance business the Finance Meeting was closed.

REPORTS

4597/08 Village Hall Management Committee, Notes of a meeting held on 15th July were noted.

Matters arising:

20 Year Celebration - The Clerk is awaiting the final accounts including receipts.

4598/08 Amenities Committee Report

Matters arising:

i) **Action on St Patrick's Playground Safety Report** – The recently received quotes for replacement equipment which meet the new standards are still being considered

ii) **Replacement bench at St. Patrick's** - The Assistant is in contact with Waitrose to negotiate provision of a sponsored bench. Should this not be forthcoming Council will consider funding a replacement.

iii) **Clerk's Note:** The Clerk had omitted to mention that Wokingham Borough Council had been asked to get the hedge at the corner of Old Bath Road & Park Lane cut back. A response indicating that the hedge is not overhanging the footpath and that it is therefore not possible to enforce it being cut back further.

iv) **Travellers at East Park Farm** - Council considered the recent and ongoing incursion into the sports facility. Again entry had been obtained by breaking the overhead bar and sawing through three wooden bollards. The Clerk was asked to contact Wokingham Borough Council and to repeat last years request for all the wooden bollards to be replaced with concrete .

4599/08 District Councillor's Report - Councillor Hobbs had sent her apologies.

ENVIRONMENT

4600/08 Country Park Management and Fishing Rights – Hand-over still awaiting land registration.

HIGHWAYS AND PUBLIC TRANSPORT

4601/08 Quiet Lanes - Council reviewed a response from Theresa May MP. Councillors expressed disappointment at the lack of support. Following discussion the Clerk was asked to hasten the promised further response from Keith Baker.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

4602/08 Landfill in The Hawthorns - In response to a question raised at the Annual Parish Meeting the Clerk was asked to establish from the Environment Agency precisely where the land fill is located and how to get the designation removed if there is no evidence to support it.

4603/08 Parish Conference - Nothing further has been heard from Wokingham Borough Council who have been asked to put the issue of 'Quiet Lanes ' on the Agenda for the 8th October 2008 meeting.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

4604/08 CCB Annual Meeting & Conference July 15 – John Illenden attended. A short report will be available before the next meeting.

4605/08 W B C & Parish/Town Charter - Councillor Gillett to review.

4606/08 Village Fete –

Due to rain a reduced profit of £51 was made on the BBQ.

Councillors expressed outrage at Wokingham Borough Council charging the Charvil Village Fete Committee for use of the Hawthorns Park, which was given to Residents of Charvil as a planning gain for the Hawthorns Estate. It was pointed out that the Annual Village Fete is a free non profit making street party for the residents of Charvil. The Parish Council provides the Village Hall, grounds and car park free, as was the Hawthorns Park by the Borough Council until this year. The Clerk was asked to seek an explanation from Wokingham Borough Council why this charge is now deemed necessary.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION (Documents circulated after the meeting) - Wokingham Borough Council Meetings Agendas, & Minutes, Staff Bulletin, Town & Parish News, Local Council Review, Clerks & Councils Direct.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

4607/08 The Clerk was asked to add a Village footpath walk to the next agenda.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 10.00pm

.....Signature
Chairman of the Council

Signed on 26th August 2008

Chairman's Initials.....