

**Minutes of Withersfield Parish Council meeting held at
7pm on Tuesday, 16th November 2021 at the Epicentre, Withersfield.**

Present: Cllrs Terry Rich (Chairman); Ian Kinloch (Vice-Chair);
Sheila Horton, Julia Korona, Indunil Wijenayaka; Clerk: Laura Crump;
County Cllr: Bobby Bennett; District Cllr: Peter Stevens;
3 x Taylor Wimpey representatives; and 5 parishioners.

1. Apologies for absence

Received from Cllrs Eve and Lord.

Chairman to open the public section of the meeting

2. Public Forum for parishioners

Parishioners were invited to raise items of interest and/or concern

Representatives of Taylor Wimpey East Anglia present their draft layout and ideas for the proposed development at Weaver's View, Three Counties Way, for up to 155 dwellings

Three representatives of Taylor Wimpey gave their presentation explaining and showing the plans of the proposed layout of 148 houses for which they had gained outline planning consent on appeal. They were keen to hear feedback from parishioners which they can then consider as they finalise their plans prior to applying for detailed planning consent. They intend on submitting their plans at the end of January 2022 therefore would like to attend at the next PC meeting in January to go through any changes made in response to comments made this evening.

The following queries and concerns were raised by parishioners and responded to as follows:

1. One parishioner expressed her concerns over a section of the site where the proposed houses would overshadow her and other existing homes at the Arboretum.

The representatives explained that the new houses have been placed sideways on to the existing homes with trees in between in the hope to avoid any overlooking.

The resident also pointed out the raised land was said to include compacted building spoil from the Arboretum development and may not be stable. Taylor Wimpey said that they will conduct site investigations to trial the ground to see if it is strong enough for the new buildings.

2. The question of whether there would be any improvements made to the pond area including to the water quality, was asked by a parishioner.

It was stated that the pond shall be being looked into and any issues found would be resolved.

3. It was pointed out by a parishioner that the 'Haverhill Research Park' signs ought to be removed. The signage has caused confusion for many lorry drivers who then have the difficulty to turn around to get back out of the estate.
4. Another parishioner shared concerns over the control of construction traffic going onto site, the volume of traffic and the impact on residents.
5. A parishioner highlighted that the bus stop has no traffic lights to enable pedestrians to safely cross the 40mph limit road.

It was believed by the Taylor Wimpey representatives, that they have no responsibility in resolving some of these highways' problems.

6. It was asked whether there would be a play area, which was promised with the current Arboretum development but never implemented.

A play area was shown on the plans near the pond area, placed here as a central point on the estate. It was thought that the play area would be built in one of the earlier stages of the development.

7. Concerns were raised that the traffic movements generated by a further 148 homes would make an already pressured road junction between Three Counties Way and Cambridge Road, extremely hazardous. Residents asked what measures Taylor Wimpey proposed to deal with this.

They responded that the Outline Planning Consent did not require them to make any changes to the highways and that Suffolk Highways had not raised any concerns when they applied for the original planning consent

There was considerable concern expressed by all parties at this response. Cllr Stevens restated the District Council's opposition to the scheme which they had rejected. He reminded the meeting that it had been granted consent on appeal.

Cllr Bennet was dismayed that the Highways Department had not raised any concerns and indicated that she would be raising the matter with officers and the Portfolio Holder.

The Taylor Wimpey representatives assured the meeting that they had listened carefully to the points raised. They said they can look into managing the timings of construction vehicles and have plenty of mitigation methods they can use.

Not satisfied with the lack of acknowledgement about the highways' issues raised, Cllr Bennett declared she would be arranging a meeting with Suffolk Highways to discuss the issues further and find out what responsibilities Taylor Wimpey need to adhere to.

The PC thanked Taylor Wimpey for attending and hope that they will be looking into facilitating the parishioner concerns discussed.

3. District Councillor's report

Cllr Stevens shared that he had just come from a meeting at the District Council, briefing Councillors on the new draft Local Plan. The issues and options are being considered by officers and it is planned for a report to be published in March 2022 for public consultation. Cllr Stevens said he would be keeping a close watch on how the options will affect Withersfield. He stressed that the importance of having a Neighbourhood Plan is being built into the new Local Plan.

The grant for the village hall was touched upon and Cllr Stevens will talk to Cllr Horton about making the bid more specific.

Planning permission has been granted for a new recycling centre in Haverhill. This will hopefully be operational in 2023.

4. County Councillor's report

Cllr Bennett circulated her report for the PC to read. The full report can be found on the PC website.

Cllr Bennett added two points being:

1. The Suffolk Resilience Forum has launched a new public safety campaign which aims to get people to consider what small acts they can do to keep safe. This comes as Suffolk becomes an Enhanced Response Area due to high covid rates.
2. The vegetation problem affecting a resident at Hanchett End, which was spoken about at the previous PC meeting, has now been resolved.

Chairman to close the public section of the meeting

5. Declaration of members' interests for any agenda item at this meeting

None.

6. To approve the minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 14th September 2021

These were approved. Proposed by Cllr Kinloch and seconded by Cllr Horton.

7. Matters arising - updates from previous Parish Council meetings

a) Land adjacent to Barsey Close

The PC still had received no correspondence from the officer who originally wanted to discuss the maintenance of the land back in May. The Chair requested that Cllr Stevens ask the officer to outline what the Council's maintenance cost to the PC would be for the upkeep of the area. The PC had previously investigated and found that their own maintenance contractor does not have the specialised equipment to maintain this land. The Clerk had also contacted the Environment Agency who maintain the flood park opposite, however, they were also unable to help.

b) Chestnut tree on Burton Green – Cllr Wijenayaka

Cllr Wijenayaka had been in communications with the parish tree warden and confirmed the tree needs removing. The tree warden is going to apply for planning permission on behalf of the PC.

c) Permissive footpaths – Cllr Wijenayaka

No further progress has been made. Cllr Wijenayaka has been informed that Tim Barling has another meeting in a few days' time with the Vestey brothers and will bring up the item then. Cllr Wijenayaka awaits their response for reporting back to the PC.

8. Update from the Traffic Working Group

The meeting notes from the Parishes Traffic Working Group had been circulated to the PC prior to the meeting for perusal.

Cllr Eve also sent the following update in advance to the meeting:

Buffer Zones - still with contractors awaiting implementation.

Double Yellow lines extension - Graeme Mateer has emailed David Chenery and there may be a way of reducing cost to make it an emergency safety implementation. Cllr Eve will follow up.

9. Update from the Neighbourhood Plan Working Group and to consider their draft proposal

Cllr Kinloch shared the results received from the survey sent out to all residents. The results from the consultation have been taken forward to be used as a direction in which to take the Neighbourhood Plan. Together with 'Oneill Homer', the working party have come up with an action plan which was shared to the PC. Four meetings have been arranged between now and March for the working group.

In his absence, Cllr Eve had sent his thoughts over particular wording in the documents shared, prior to the meeting. These were discussed and in response to this it was proposed by the Chair to accept the action plan advice note with the following clarification to be stated in the minutes; the PC does not endorse determining sites for future developments. This was seconded by Cllr Wijenayaka.

Cllr Kinloch was thanked for his work leading this project.

10. Graveyard control – Cllr Kinloch

Cllr Kinloch stated that the rules for the graveyard need to be looked at and made clear as there have been a few enquiries lately regarding different aspects such as trees/plants and headstone designs. It was suggested and agreed that a few ideas for rules need to be considered and brought to the next meeting for endorsement.

The Chair drew attention to the decision taken by the Parish Council some years back that no further trees should be permitted on grave plots and that all planting should be restricted to small plants and shrubs.

In the meantime, the Clerk has written to the representatives of the owner of one plot where a tree has become obstructive to the neighbouring plot and will have to be removed.

11. Village Hall update – Cllr Horton

Cllr Horton shared the following updates:

1. The grant to refurbish the kitchen in the village hall has been secured.
2. Quotes have been obtained for the painting of the village hall.
3. Plans are being drawn up for the extension.
4. A new village hall warden has been appointed.

12. To consider supporting the PCC in their bid for restoration funding – Cllr Horton

It was explained by Cllr Horton, that she is working with the PCC to put in a bid to the Heritage Lottery for funding to help repair the church tower and install water and a toilet. It was suggested that a letter of support from the PC recognising the Church as an asset to the village would help the application.

It was agreed amongst the PC that the Church is seen as a very important asset in the village therefore the PC are happy to show their support for any bids which would improve the site facilities.

13. Broadband update from Cllr Wijenayaka

After communications with OpenReach confirming their installations, Cllr Wijenayaka asked Cllrs to check the broadband speeds which are available to them. Cllrs who checked discovered that superfast broadband is now available.

14. West Suffolk's Green Infrastructure Strategy and green ideas for Withersfield – Cllr Wijenayaka

Cllr Wijenayaka expressed his desire to start up a working group in the new year to look at being a greener community and improve our carbon footprint. He hopes to look into grants to help with this aim and enlist other members of the PC and parishioners onto the working group.

It was agreed for a working group to be established by Cllr Wijenayaka, who will write a piece for the parish newsletter to get the word out to residents.

15. Suffolk lorry routes review

Cllr Bennett urged the PC to respond to the review. She explained the map shows what the roads current grades are and if the PC believe a road is graded incorrectly, a more suitable grade needs to be suggested.

The Chair proposed that Cllr Eve respond to the review as the PC's highways lead, which was agreed. Particular attention should be paid to the problematic HGV traffic on Silver Street in the response.

16. Finance

- a) Presentation of monthly accounts – Income and Expenditure and Bank Reconciliation
- b) To note payments made since last meeting
- c) Quarterly report of expenditure and comparison to budget

All reports were accepted and approved. Proposed by Cllr Horton and seconded by Cllr Wijenayaka.

- d) Draft budget and precept submission for 2022/2023

The Chair briefed the PC on the draft budget which had been circulated to the Councillors prior to the meeting and included a 0% council tax increase. It was proposed by Cllr Horton to accept the draft budget and precept submission which was seconded by Cllr Wijenayaka.

- e) Approval of Risk and Asset Registers for 2022 and insurance renewal

These were considered and approved as an accurate record of the current risks and assets. As there has been no change to the assets, the insurance policy has not needed to be amended and the insurance has been renewed to reflect this. Proposed by Cllr Kinloch and seconded by Cllr Wijenayaka.

17. Correspondence

- a) Letter – Queen's Platinum Jubilee Beacons

Noted.

- b) Email - WEBNOS Site Check notification

Noted.

- c) Email - DEFRA Consultation on Amendments to Burial Regulations

Cllr Kinloch is currently looking into this further - he explained he had been in contact with the local funeral directors and the Environment Agency. He is awaiting a response from the EA to confirm what the water level is in relation to the parish graveyard.

- d) Email – Headway Suffolk

Noted.

- e) Email – Clare Division Report

Noted.

18. Planning

- a) Borough notifications since last meeting

These were noted.

- b) Applications received since last meeting

All applications were discussed and noted.

19. Agenda items for meeting to be held in January 2022

- Graveyard rules

20. To determine meeting dates for 2022

The following dates were accepted:

January 18th

March 15th

May 10th

July 12th

September 13th

November 15th

The meeting closed at 21:05.