

Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council

MINUTES of the Whitchurch On Thames Parish Council Meeting held in “The Old Stables”, Tuesday, 9th October 2018, commencing at 8pm

PRESENT:

Chairman- Jim Donahue

Vice Chair- Rachel Hatcher

Councillors- Dave Bowen, Keith Brooks, Sarah Hanfrey.

Clerk- not present

Public: Ian Pratap (Ross Healthcare), Hilary Jensen, Diana Smith, Diane Brookes, Will Barclay, Tim Suiter, Graham Pierce, Anne Lewis, Neil & Julie Huntington, Richard Wingfield, Laura and David Lucas, Diana Hanson, Shirley Hutchings

1. Apologies for Absence

Cllr Bulmer, Cllr Simister, Felipa House

2. Declarations of Interest

Declaration of interest - None

3. Public Forum

Public Forum - Eastfield House

- i. Graham Pierce - Little Eastfield - Objecting to Eastfield House planning application. He engaged a planning company to draft a formal objection to this 7th application. How is this different to the previous applications that were refused? The current building is important and should not be allowed to be demolished.
- ii. Anne Lewis - This application is distressing and is larger than before. Concerned about disturbing the water table, which is already an occasional issue.
- iii. Shirley Hutchings - 2014 saw her basement flooded and took a lot of work and time to repair. When the water floods away where does it go?
- iv. Neil Huntington - Ross Healthcare have claimed to meet with residents and take into account their thoughts. He believes over 80 people have objected online - people want to keep the house as a protected building within the conservation area. The house has been left standing unused for an extended period of time. What has changed? A 30,000 square foot property has now been proposed in a location with a narrow access road, that is used by parents walking to the local school, in an area with water table issues and the village has spoken to say that this proposal is not acceptable and ask the parish council to support that view and reject the proposal. Ross Healthcare said

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- they needed at least 43 bedrooms to make it viable. Then it was 44, 45 48. Other places survive with 12. If they cannot make it work, maybe they should sell it.
- v. Tim Suiter - the PC should be standing up to preserve our village as an area designated for conservation. Concerned that this application is to knock down the existing building - feels it highly likely that a new plan would come after to have a taller, bigger building etc.
 - vi. Diana Smith & Will Barclay - AONB, Drains, etc. - completely agree. Also, traffic should be considered. The village has an increased problem all ready - further cars and service vehicles will add chaos.
 - vii. Julie Huntington - believes OCC have taken Traffic out of consideration.
 - viii. Laura Lucas - Points out that Thames Water have not yet been consulted. Ross Healthcare have been advised to submit a travel plan before 1st occupation - this should be required before application is approved. 15 spaces have been provided - is this really enough for the planned number of rooms? Other care homes have been under supplied and this caused many problems. Believes no allowance has been made for visitors. Ross Healthcare's other site where they have under provisioned spaces and there are now parking and traffic issues and have applied for further space. If there are no spaces there is no additional space. The size of the new plan is so vast now that they will actually be neighbours even though they are on road behind! Noted 2 trees have been noted as low value. Highlighted a section of the 2009 Village Plan and suggested it be included in the objection.
 - ix. Cllr Hanfrey - worried about traffic parking in Eastfield Lane.

4. Parish Council review of Eastfield House Planning Application P18/S2965/O - 76

Cllr Donahue proposed that the application be rejected and provided a proposed list of reasons for the objection for discussion. Some of the comments discussed included:

- i. Historical merit of this building and its inclusion in the conservation.
 - a. Cllr Hatcher pointed out that the conservation areas means keeping the current look and feel of the area. Removing and replacing is not the same thing and we have a responsibility to preserve one of our oldest parts. Cllr Hanfrey agreed and said that Ross Healthcare knew what they were purchasing in such an area and should respect the feelings of the village. Cllrs agreed with the statements in the document.
- ii. Exacerbation of traffic on a narrow, single track lane used for the school run as well as impacts to the High Street traffic, which is already a problem at peak times
 - a. Cllrs suggested a few changes to include volume of service vehicles.
- iii. Concerns about the applications flooding, groundwater and sewage assessments
 - a. Cllr Hanfrey felt that the flood report is careless, does not show concern for the villagers, surrounding homes and it is missing information. Cllr Hanfrey suspects that we would not get the current design.
 - b. A member if the public pointed out it neighbours on Flood Zone 3.
- iv. History of planning application scope creep made it likely that future application would request further increases beyond 48 units.
- v. Overlooking of houses in Swanston Field properties from balconies and first and second floor in the rear of the building is unacceptable
 - a. Include the phrase "un-neighbourly"
- vi. Risk of parking overflowing onto Eastfield lane and other areas of the village.

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- vii. TPOs - Sarah Hanfrey suggested we put threat to trees that are a strong character element of the area and it should be noted where they are threatened by the plan.

Resolution: The Council voted unanimously to Object to the application. *The agreed wording for the objection is provided as Attachment I.*

There was a proposal that we have an extraordinary meeting to make future plans for how we can manage this on-going issue - e.g. forcing Ross Healthcare to maintain the building so that it does not continue to deteriorate.

5. Approval of Minutes

Cllr Brooks raised that last month minutes about the Village Hall support should read "£1000 this year and £1000 next year." This change was agreed.

6. Other Planning Matters

- i. Other Planning
 - P18/S2918/HH, ‘Lane End’, Eastfield Lane - Cllr Bowen pointed out that there were two objections that the first floor extension is overlooking the neighbours garden. This was deemed unneighbourly.
 - **Resolution:** The Council voted unanimously to object to the planning application with the following comments: overlooking neighbours; excessive scale & bulk, out of keeping with the character of the village.
- ii. Parish council assignment of planning application responsibilities

Resolution: It was agreed that each Cllr would be on point to review planning requests for specific locations in the village - this is confirmed as follows:

Street	Lead Councillor	Alternate
High Street	Cllr Hatcher	
Manor Road	Cllr Hatcher	
Eastfield Lane	Cllr Hanfrey	
Hardwick Road	Cllr Brooks	Cllr Donahue
Hillside	Cllr Donahue	
Hartslock Bridleway	Cllr Donahue	
Hardwick Estate	Cllr Donahue	
Swanston Field	Cllr Hanfrey	

7. Finance

- i. Approve payments & note receipts for the preceding month:

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- Clerk monthly salary paid
 - Clerk Salary (temp new clerk) - £103.01
 - Env Agency for the Slip annual rental - £58.68
 - Owens Galliver Architects LLP, for Pavilion Planning Design - £1,080.00
 - Moore Stephens - External Auditors - £288.00
 - Tessa Allen for Village green fence contribution - £400
 - Revenue received from Bulletin Advertising + £40
- ii. It was noted that the Parish Council's external audit was passed.

8. Village Green

The Parish council has paid £400 towards replacement of the portion of fence for the paddock in the area by the football pitch. The PC agreed to pay for this at the September meeting.

9. Village Green Pavilion Project

Cllr Brooks Update – planning application has been submitted. It was more cost that initially thought (£900 instead of £750) due to additional work to include showers and relocation within the plot. Now that the application is submitted, we should allow £500 contingency to address any additional information requested as part of the process to ensure continued forward motion on the application. Members of the public are invited to comment if they wish. They can support as well as object.

Resolution: Budget: £500 for Architect fees for miscellaneous costs to address comments as part of the planning review process.

Action: Neil Huntington will send round a paper to advise of future costs for Architecture and other fees that we should prepare for before any work can commence on the pavilion.

Cllr Donahue asked when we can get quotes to establish how much money we need to complete the build so that we can start raising funds. Neil Huntington advised we wait until we get a view on approval, then the architect can work with key stakeholders for overall specification that will allow us to request full costs from suppliers. We would not likely have good cost estimates before the end of first quarter 2019.

10. Village Environment/Maintenance

Salt bins have been filled and repaired.

Resolution: The Parish Council voted to replace the stolen village sign at the Hardwick Road entrance using secure nuts identified by Cllr Hanfrey to prevent it being stolen again. Councillors voted 3 vs 2 to replace it.

Action: Clerk to order the sign and coordinate with Cllr Hanfrey who will need to identify special secure nuts required for installation.

11. Village Plan

No update this month.

12. Parish Council Owned and Managed Buildings

- i. Review security and agree measures to mitigate risk of vehicle gaining access to the Village Green.

Cllr Hanfrey has investigated ways to prevent unwanted access to land in the village. A bar to prevent high vehicles is deemed too ugly. Cllr Hanfrey attended a recent safety meeting and a recommendation was made to weld the nuts on the gate. Our gates could be lifted off - so we should re-hang our gate so it cannot be lifted off. There is a person in the village who is willing to quote a small amount to do the work.

- **Resolution:** It was agreed that Cllr Hanfrey should come up with a plan to secure the Village Green gates to run past the experts at SODC and see if it is reasonable.
- **Action:** Cllr Hanfrey to get cost estimates and feedback from SODC security experts.

PC agreed that access to the Village green or Maze via Muddy lane was not a likely threat so is not a priority to address.

- ii. Motion from Cllr Bowen regarding ongoing and timely risk assessments on property we are responsible for. Cllrs agreed that we should prioritise a Fire Risk assessment on the village hall.
 - **Action:** Parish Clerk to investigate which assessments are required and how we can get fire risk assessment completed quickly.
 - **Action:** Cllr Brooks to check if there are Terms of Reference for Village Hall Management Committee and share this to the Council or work to create a proposed draft for review if one is not available.
 - Once we have a clearer view on what risk assessments are required, we need to create a view of what regular checks are required and who is responsible for carrying these out and what cost we should include in the annual budget.

13. Updates From WGs

i. TAPAG

- 2 more traffic surveys have now been completed – Hardwick Road & Eastfield Lane.
- TAPAG will meet before the next PC meeting to review the info gathered in these surveys and what this means for our plans.
- Further updates at the next PC meeting including recommendation on consultant to be used.

ii. Village Hall Management Committee

- Cllr Brooks has checked in with all users of the hall and they are now happy with the new windows, apart from the Bridge Club which had some concerns about the light and that there were fewer windows that opened, so may be hot in the summer.

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- **Resolution:** The Parish Council agreed that we should address problems with over heating if/when this is actually the case and look at options such as fans or air conditioning that may be more appropriate measures.
- Cllr Donahue and Cllr Hanfrey have also reviewed the windows and have deemed them all fine and a significant improvement over the previous windows.
- Representatives from the Estate Agent representing Coombe Park have agreed to cut back trees overhanging the Village Hall, which should improve the light through the back windows as well.
- All works planned for the next two years are planned to be carried out using money from grants.
- The Village Hall Management Committee is putting together a bid to apply for a community fund to support additional improvements. The Village Hall Management Committee plan to apply for these grants in the May 2019 application window. So far informal feedback has been positive that we will get support.
- We need to coordinate grant applications with those for the Pavilion also so we are not competing with ourselves.

14. Recruitment of new clerk

Recruitment of New Clerk & Refilling Councillor Vacancy

- **Resolution:** Put Clerk job advertisement on Indeed and in Henley Standard again.
- **Action:** Clerk to advertise in Henley Standard and Cllr Donahue to put on Indeed.
- **Action:** Cllr Donahue to reach out to other PCs to see if their Clerks would be interested.

Discussed putting current Councillor vacancy on the Village Website again.

- **Resolution:** Agreed to put parish council vacancy on web-site.
- **Action:** Richard Wingfield agreed to put on web-site this with closing date of end of October.

15. Other matters for Chairman & PC to consider

Cllr Hatcher raised a concern that we do not have a plan currently for how we will spend CIL money that has been received.

- **Action:** Cllr Hatcher to investigate the details of these funds and bring a motion to the next PC meeting.

Date of next meeting – Tuesday 13th November

Attachment I: Parish Council Objections of Eastfield House Planning Application P18/S2965/O – 76

The Parish Council has voted to **Object** to Planning Application P18/S2965/O – 76 for the following reasons:

We count over 80 objections provided to SODC on the planning application portal, which appears to be unprecedented for an application in the village in our experience. This includes residents in nearly all of the homes in Eastfield Land, Swanston Field, and High Street that are most impacted, as well as others in the village and surrounding villages including Whitchurch Hill, Pangbourne, Reading, and even a former resident living in Australia.

- There is no objection to the provision of Health Care facility in the village in principle. It has co- existed well in the village since 2002 as a 27-room facility.
- The objections are in relations to demolition of an important feature of the Conservation area in the village and the considerable impact to the village of the excessive size of the plans for 48 units.

There appear to be 6 areas where concerns have been consistently raised, in roughly the following order of importance:

1. The historic merit of the existing building and its inclusion in a Conservation Area
 - Without this house, the namesake of the lane, the conservation area would be much less.
 - The building is an important feature in our village
 - There are more appropriate uses for the building which can preserve its Heritage
 - This also aligns with the objections the SODC Planning Officer has previously cited, including Policies CON6, CON7 as well as likely several others.
2. Exacerbation of traffic on a narrow, single-track lane used for the school run as well impacts to the High Street traffic, which is already a problem at peak times.
 - Traffic congestion is even more of a problem since the pre-application was submitted in April and particularly since the last traffic assessment performed for the 2013 application. A detailed updated assessment should be required.
 - The application also assumes a bus service in the village, which is no longer available.
 - Concerns raised about large lorries including an increasing number of service vehicles visiting the facility which us already a problem with traffic on High Street.
 - Danger to pedestrians, particularly parents and children on the school run.
 - We note that OCC does not appear to object to the application on traffic grounds, but request that SODC consider the planning implications of the traffic this facility would bring to the village.
3. Concerns about the applications flooding, groundwater and sewage assessments

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- The Flood Risk assessment doesn't appear to take into account the impacts on surrounding homes.
 - They have not consulted Thames Water on sewage capacity.
 - We request a through analysis by SODC as high water table of the location which is adjacent to a Flood Zone 3 area, and flooding is a clear risk that residents in the area are concerned with.
 - The flooding report doesn't refer to the flooding from run off water via the culvert that happened in 2014.
 - The SODC Flooding Officer states that there is insufficient information available in several areas of the report.
4. The large scale of the proposals with 48 rooms and a history of steady scope creep in planning applications and there is a justifiable concern that Ross Healthcare will further increase planning applications in to future beyond even 48 units.
 5. Overlooking of houses in Swanston Field properties from balconies and first and second floor in rear of the building is un-neighbourly and unacceptable.
 6. Risk of overflow parking onto Eastfield Lane and other areas of the village
 - 15 parking spaces will unlikely be sufficient
 - The front of the site will look like a car park from the lane making the whole front unattractive.

Other concerns that were raised include:

- Concern that TPO's in the conservation area appear to be threatened by the plan.
- Support for the sale for redevelopment as flats, which are in demand in the area.
- Currently planning application for 45 should be economically viable – report justifying 3 extra houses doesn't seem credible.
- SODC recommendation that investigation should be made into endangered bats.

Finally, the 2009 Village Plan support these concerns in highlighting the importance of the Conservation Area, risks to pedestrians, traffic speeding and congestion problems, and risks of flooding in the area.

Whitchurch-on-Thames Parish Council

MINUTES of the Whitchurch On Thames Parish Council Meeting held in “The Old Stables”, Tuesday, 30th October 2018, commencing at 8pm

PRESENT:

Chairman- Jim Donahue

Vice Chair- Rachel Hatcher

Councillors- Dave Bowen, Sarah Hanfrey.

Clerk- not present

Public: Graham Morphey, Margaret Morphey, Allan Scriven, Neil Huntington, Laura Lucas, Diana Hanson, Shirley Hutchins, Denise William, Keith Williams, Tom Hoskin, Will Barclay, Gill Goodwin, John Bradon

1. Apologies for Absence

Cllr Bulmer, Cllr Simister, Felipa House, Keith Brooks

2. Declarations of Interest

Declaration of interest – None. There was a discussion that all Councillors live in the village so there is an inherent interest in the outcome of Eastfield House, but no pecuniary interests have been identified that needed to be raised.

3. The future of East field House (Discussion to be concluded by 10pm)

1. How can we best proceed with an updated Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA)?

Cllr Hanfrey and Laura have arranged a meeting to meet with SODC Conservation Officer, Samantha Allen, to discuss the process for renewing the CAA. Samantha said that a recent local village CAA update cost them about £5000 (Purton?). Many building are not listed but CAA provides generic control of development within the Conservation Area. We think the Whitchurch-on-Thames Conservation Area was initiated in early 1970's but it was never updated.

A CAA defines the architectural or historic interests of the area including boundaries and any noteworthy buildings, and includes recommendations of what to do going forward.

The goal is to ensure houses and other assets worth conserving are properly documented to protect against future changes like the Eastfield House application to demolish it. We understand that it would not likely apply to this application as it has already been submitted, but could be used for future applications in the Conservation Area.

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Action: Cllr Hanfrey and Laura to prepare a recommendation on how to proceed with the CAA, including indicative costs for the December PC meeting.

2. Is an Urgent Works Notice a viable option to continue pursuing?

An urgent works notice was requested by Laura to SODC requesting urgent repairs to stop the building from falling into more dilapidated state. SODC's response that the Consideration Officer involved said that there is no need to take any action and the issue won't be put forward to secretary of state. Although it is in a conservation area, the way it has been left currently is not seen to be damaging to the property.

The Viability Condition survey prepared for Ross Healthcare's Eastfield House Application states that the building is falling into a dilapidated condition and shows numerous photos of holes in the roof and other areas being deteriorated. This appears to conflict with the statements from SODC on this matter.

The PC can raise a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request asking for SODC's information used to reject an Urgent Work's Notice as the building was viable. It is unlikely that we will not get a response until after the current planning application is decided, but it would be good to get it submitted and then SODC can decide if they want to reply.

Action: Ask Clerk to raise FOIA request for details in the viability assessment related to the rejection of the Urgent works notice, including any photographs they used to make the assessment. This should including the state of some of the finer heritage features such as the stained glass windows, and front façade.

Action: Clerk to raise a request to see how many times SODC has issued an Urgent Works notice in the past 10 years if any.

3. Should the new Village Plan include a non-exhaustive list of the village's heritage assets/local landmarks?

John Bradon, Chairman of the Village Plan Committee, stated that he was happy that they include a list of village heritage site/assets in the upcoming Village Plan. He will work with other residents to put this together. It was noted that other documentation on heritage should be available from SODC, including conservation policies stated in the Local Plan.

The village plan is unlikely to be issued before the end of first quarter 2019 but a draft could be made available earlier.

Cllr Bowen recommended that we review the arguments in the appeal from last time as the decision is likely to go to appeal even if SODC rejects it.

It was agreed that we shouldn't pursue the capacity of the sewage pumping station on Eastfield Lane with Thames Water as Ross Healthcare was already asked to work with them on.

It was noted that the Village Plan is not a legal document relating to development matters, but it can recommend the development of a CAA and state what the village priorities are related to the Conservation Area.

4. How do we ensure there are adequate measures to prevent fire risk to the current site?

It was agreed that we should we ask Ross Healthcare if they have done a fire risk assessment and how recently it was reviewed. In the event of a fire, how would the fire company get through the locked gate? Is there a local key holder to the gate in case of a fire? Should the Parish Council hold a key?

Action: Ask Clerk to write Ross Healthcare if they have done a fire assessment and if they can provide it and if it was reviewed since some of the recent deterioration of the building and fencing added. And ask about how the fire company would get through the gates in the event of a fire.

Action: Clerk to ask SODC if they have any record of fire risk assessments for Eastfield House.

Action: Cllr Hanfrey to contact the Pangbourne Fire Brigade their view on the fire risks of Eastfield House. Are they aware it is empty, know how to access it, etc.

5. Does SODC have a Heritage Champion for this site? If not, can we persuade them to appoint one?

Laura has confirmed that there is no Heritage Champion for the Whitchurch Conservation Area. Laura saw on Historic England's web-site that over 70% of conservation areas have a Heritage Champion.

Action: John to contact the Chiltern Society about our concerns about the Conservation Area.

Action: Jim to ask Cllr Simister if he knows what the process is for appoints a Heritage Champion. Is he willing to request that one be appointed?

6. Can we provide evidence of traffic and parking concerns to SODC?

TAPAG is looking at some data and will be working with a consultant and they will ask to provide a view of the impact from Eastfield House.

Laura has provided Cllr Donahue with some benchmarks on parking with comparable facilities that appear to show Eastfield House being under provisioned with parking.

Cllr Donahue contacted County Councillor Bulmer requesting further rationale about OCC's assessment that the traffic and parking impact from this proposal is. Cllr Bulmer's response was that the assessment was made by trained highway officers who made similar assessments on new facilities in Goring that proved to be accurate. Resident Tom Hoskin said that the Whitchurch comparison to Goring is not accurate as Whitchurch has bottlenecks at toll bridge plus at the upper narrows and lower narrows as well as the Eastfield Lane single track bottleneck.

Action: Cllr Donahue to ask OCC to provide an explanation of how they came to the conclusion that traffic and parking will be acceptable with the new facility.

7. Should we commission a feasibility study of alternate uses for the facility?

It is clear that there are a number of alternate uses that could be viable, but it seems that a care home with 48 units at £1500 per week is much more viable from an economic perspective.

Laura and Sarah can discuss this with SODC Heritage Officer if an alternate use study would be useful to provide evidence against the application approval.

Several people agreed that the calculations showing economic viability with 48 units compared to 45 units as unconvincing.

Action: Jim to ask SODC how important is the 48 units economic feasibility to justify the size of the facility.

8. Is there anything that can be done to protect some of the building's finest features such as the stained glass window?

Stained glass windows are covered by external boards, but there is no internal protection and access to the building has been made in the recent past.

It was agreed that we raise this question with the earlier question requesting information on the state of the building under Urgent Works Notice.

9. AOB (issues or ideas raised by residents)

There is still no date for the SODC meeting to decide on the Eastfield House planning application, but it is likely to be by the end of November and we agreed that it would be go to have a good showing from the village.

Action: Clerk to request an article be published on the web-site requesting the names of people interested in attending a planning meeting for this application likely to happen towards the end of November. Ask them to:

- They are happy to drive and offer a lift to others
- Would like a lift
- Would be interested in a mini Bus if one was available.

Consider asking Goring Community Bus (Going Forward Buses) if there are available for hire.

Date of next meeting – Tuesday 13th November