

FALFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Special Council Meeting held on 30th March 2016 at 7.30 pm at Falfield Village Hall

Present

Parish Councillors: Mrs J Hathway, Miss E. Jarvis, Mrs M. O'Connor, Mr A. Isaac & Mr K. Fryer.

Clerk: Mrs D. Bramley **Public:** Ward Cllr J. O'Neill and 53+ Parishioners

Cllr Hathway welcomed parishioners to the meeting & informed them about the emergency evacuation procedures.

00619/16 Apologies for Absence

None

00620/16 To Receive Declarations of Interest in Items on the Agenda and Dispensation Requests

None

00621/16 Public Forum

Parishioners raised the following issues: Potholes - There are a number of potholes in Moorslade Lane & Fly Tipping - A bag of garden waste has been dumped by Oakhall Farm. The Clerk will report both items **Action: Clerk**

The Streetlights on Church Avenue & Eastley Close are still not operating. Cllr Hathway informed parishioners that it was still in the hands of the Ministry of justice and would be raising it again when the Parish Council next meets with HMP Eastwood Park.

The meeting was adjourned at 7.40pm for a Public Discussion about the Land at Heneage Farm planning application.

Cllr Hathway thanked all those parishioners who had responded to the Parish Council questionnaire circulated before Christmas. After the submission of the planning application the Parish Council had received further parishioner views but asked that these views were also submitted to South Gloucestershire Council planning department. Using all this information the Parish Council has been able to correlate the information to form an overview of parishioner's opinions and have called this meeting to discuss parishioner concerns.

Cllr Hathway reiterated that this is an Outline application and deals primarily with access and sustainability. Therefore specific areas that needed to be discussed which included: Size of Development, Access, Highways, Public Transport, Flooding, Amenities, Open Spaces, Landscape, Services and the Park and Share. For each area the Parish Council summarised the feedback received from parishioners and then opened the floor for parishioners to discuss and add further comments. Parishioners were also asked if there were other areas they wished to comment on.

Cllr Hathway asked those present if there were any positive comments and if anyone supported the developments.

Ward Cllr O' Neill informed parishioners that the dates of the Development Control (West) Site Inspection Meetings were 6th May, 3rd June & 1st July and the corresponding Committee Dates were 19th May, 16th June and the 14th July. These meetings are open to the public however they ask that at the meetings one person speaks on behalf of supporters and objectors for a maximum of 3 - 5 minutes.

Cllr Jarvis and the Clerk took notes during the public meeting to ensure all comments were recorded for use when the application is discussed by the Parish Council once the meeting is reconvened.

Cllr Hathway also asked everyone present if they could support the upcoming events at the Falfield Village hall and the Big Spring Clean that was taking place on the 16th April.

The meeting was reconvened at 9.15pm, all parishioners left after the Public meeting.

00622/16 Planning Matters

00622.1/16 To Discuss the Following Applications

PT16/0770/O - Land At Heneage Farm, Moorslade Lane – Change of use and development of agricultural land to provide up to 115 dwellings with associated access, parking, hard/soft landscape works, public open space, and drainage, together with development of a 'Park and Share' facility for up to 100 cars (Outline) with access to be determined. All other matters reserved.

Council Response:

The Parish Council went through each area discussed during the public meeting and included any relevant items raised by parishioners during the Public Meeting.

It was agreed by all that Cllr Jarvis and the Clerk will meet to finalise the response and then submit it to South Gloucestershire Council. The Parish Council response is shown in Appendix A. **Action: Cllr Jarvis / Clerk**

Cllr O' Neill left the meeting during the planning application discussion and due to pressing personal commitments Cllr Hathway left the meeting at 10.25 pm. Cllr Jarvis, Vice Chair took over as Chair.

00623/16 Matters for Further Discussion / Information

None

Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 17th May 2016 at 7.30 pm

PLEASE NOTE THIS MEETING IS THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING & ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING

This concluded the business of the meeting, which closed at 10.45 pm.

Appendix A: PT16/0770/O - Parish Council Response

Falfield Parish Council has the following **10 OBJECTIONS** to make regarding the above application.

Size of Proposed Development

There appears to be much speculation about the actual number of houses within Falfield and confusion regarding the total number of houses within the Falfield parish boundary compared to those within the settlement boundary of Falfield Village itself. Errors have been made by the applicant Cotswold Homes in their supporting statements, for example in the Planning Supporting Statement, dated February 2016, paragraph 2.3, they describe the whole parish's population statistics as Falfield Village's statistics. In paragraph 7.21 they inaccurately state the number of existing houses in Falfield Village as 200, which is more than double the actual figure within the village, this is misleading. As a result the figures being quoted by some residents in their consultee responses are incorrect. We therefore start the Parish Council's response with some actual figures based on a recent door to door count to clarify the numbers involved.

The parish of Falfield is a small rural parish which is located each side of the A38 stretching from the South Gloucestershire and Gloucestershire county border at Stone through Falfield, Eastwood Park and Whitfield up to Buckover and Milbury Heath. Falfield Parish has approximately 228 dwellings in its remit, of which **92 dwellings** are located within the **Falfield Village settlement boundary** itself. The remainder are rural dwellings in the open countryside, of which at least 12 dwellings are known to be currently unoccupied.

There are 22 potential new dwellings, already with valid planning permissions, planned for the parish which are currently under construction or pending construction imminently which are not included within the above figures. Therefore Falfield Parish is already committed to expand in size by about 10% over the next three years.

The proposed development is on agricultural land adjoining the settlement boundary of Falfield Village, it is not within it. At a recent Parish Council meeting parishioners expressed that they still wish to keep the settlement boundary as it is which is in line with Falfield Parish Council's Polices, Sites and Places response. The number of dwellings proposed is larger than the current number within Falfield Village; at 115 dwellings it represents a **125% increase on the existing size of Falfield Village** and a **50% increase on the size of the whole of Falfield parish**.

Most of the feedback the Parish Council has received from parishioners has been to express concerns about the size of the development, which is larger than the current village itself, and will have a significant impact on the village. The addition of 115 dwellings in a single development is not appropriate and is disproportional to the existing size of the Falfield Village settlement. It will have a significant adverse and detrimental impact on its character. The village has gradually expanded over the years and has embraced varying styles of housing, however all of the previous estates have been modest in scale and have been less than a quarter of the size of what is now being proposed.

The Parish Council has seen no justification as to why this amount of housing is being proposed for our parish, it is not in a particularly sustainable location, it is out of scale with the village and it is not a scheme being driven forward by our local parish community or by specific local demands.

Therefore, the Parish Council must object to the proposal as it is clearly over development.

Highways

This proposal for 115 dwellings and a park and share scheme is of a size and scale that will adversely impact on the local roads and Junction 14 of the M5 motorway because of the amount of vehicle movements that will be associated with the scheme. The existing agricultural field generates few vehicle trips in comparison. More vehicles will pass through Falfield as a result.

The M5/A38 junction is a known "*bottleneck*" in this area. There are problems with traffic congestion on the B4509 for traffic crossing the motorway bridge and queuing traffic backing up onto the A38 from the motorway junction. As a result the traffic lights at the motorway junction have to be turned off at peak times to try and keep the B4509 flowing and prevent gridlock.

The Parish Council is aware that Highways England, in their consultee response dated 21st March 2016, has expressed serious concerns over the existing issue of traffic queuing on the slip roads leading to Junction 14 of the M5 which leads onto the main section of motorway and has flagged this up as a significant road safety risk. The Parish Council agrees with their assessment and recommendations that junction improvements would be necessary if vehicle movements are to increase; however this would be costly and the Parish Council are unaware of any imminent improvement plans.

The proposed site at Heneage Farm it is not a sustainable location due to poor public transport provision. The majority of its potential residents will be commuting to work by car, predominantly in the Bristol or Gloucester hubs. Major developments already approved for the nearby towns of Thornbury, Charfield, Kingswood, Cam, Stone and Sharpness will have already made the situation worse for a junction which is already operating over capacity.

Therefore, the Parish Council must object to the proposal on highway safety grounds.

Access

Site access is via the busy A38 or single track country lanes without any footpaths.

Moorslade Lane itself is a narrow country lane and is not suitable to handle the demands of the quantity of vehicles this type of application will introduce. The widening of Moorslade Lane and the removal of the hedgerow is likely to have a significant effect on the landscape character in the vicinity and on the setting of the housing and buildings alongside it.

The location of the entrance into the proposed Park and Share site, which is close to the A38 junction may hold up other traffic with the potential to back up traffic onto the A38 itself.

This access is already well used by lorries and agricultural vehicles associated with the businesses and farms along Moorslade Lane. This would cause further conflict when accessing either the housing development of Park & Share.

The proposed emergency access on Sundayshill Lane needs further consideration to ensure that it is not used as an alternative shortcut as there is a contradiction between making it a pedestrian and cycle only route to one which can accommodate large emergency services.

Therefore, the Parish Council must object to the proposal due to site access concerns.

Flooding

According to the Environment Agency, part of the site is within Flood Zone 3, this category has the highest probability of flooding. The Parish Council regularly witnesses saturated ground due to the dense impermeable "Falfield" clay ground type, flooding issues affecting this site and the road infrastructure serving it. We are concerned that this proposed new development may exasperate the situation as it relies on draining into a stream in a high risk flood zone. There is photographic evidence of recent flooding of nearby roads, gardens, fields and houses. Currently the Park and Share Site, after the recent rain, is saturated and under water.

The stream running alongside the length of the proposed site regularly bursts its banks. When this area floods, the implications downstream as well as at the site are significant with the runoff affecting Moorslade Lane, Lower Stone, Rockhampton, Peddington and into Berkeley. Emergency Services have been unable to access parts of Lower Stone and cars have had to be rescued from flood water down these lanes and the surrounding road network. The effects of Climate Change have been evident with the change in weather patterns over the last 5 years as a result flooding in Moorslade Lane and Sundayshill Lane being particular bad.

It is not clear who will maintain the attenuation ponds or the stream as any debris blockages will cause significant flooding. If the foul sewer pumping station is close to the surface water attenuation ponds it will be at risk of flooding and could result in cross contamination. The Parish Council is concerned by the proposal to locate children's play areas in an area which floods and close to the attenuation ponds as they may be hazardous to children and encourage midges.

Therefore, the Parish Council must object to the proposal on the grounds that it will be detrimental to an already problematic flood situation.

Public Transport

Falfield has limited public transport provision and journey times to nearby larger town centres are lengthy. Parishioners regularly report difficulty in using public transport to go to and from any place of employment, further education, extra curriculum school activities or transport hubs including train station. The bus operators are reluctant to operate the routes through Falfield which has resulted in the bus routes being regularly being amended or stopped. This has caused a service which is unreliable, infrequent during the day and non-existent in the evenings.

The A38 and B4509 are already very busy roads and parishioners have to cross them in the vicinity of a congested junction to catch a bus to school or elsewhere. If the traffic levels increase, due to this development the parishioners will be put at further risk.

Therefore, the Parish Council must object to the proposal on the grounds that there is inadequate public transport to sustain this development.

Amenities

Falfield Village has some useful facilities, including a small shop, post office, church, public house and village hall. There are few opportunities for local employment so most parishioners travel outside of the parish to their workplaces, predominantly by car.

There is no school or preschool provision within the parish. Tortworth Primary School is the nearest primary school and preschool. It is not physically possible to walk to this school due to a lack of footpaths and road safety issues such as the need to cross the busy M5 motorway junction 14. Given the steep incline of the B4509, the narrowness of the lanes and the speed of the traffic coming off the motorway cycling to school is not an option especially not for children of primary age. All journeys to this school rely on vehicular transport. Castle School is the nearest

secondary school but the route to school is classed as a hazardous route, so all journeys to this school rely on vehicular transport.

Access to Healthcare services is limited and again relies on vehicular transport. The demand for these services is already increasing due to the increase in the population in the area as a result of other major developments.

Therefore, the Parish Council must object to the proposal on the grounds that it is not a sustainable location.

Services

There is no mains sewer currently serving dwellings in the parish. Most dwellings are reliant on their own sewage treatment plants or the HMP Eastwood Park network where houses are on Home Office Land

The submitted Foul Drainage Assessment, dated February 2016, states an intention to connect into the existing foul network serving HMP Eastwood Park. This is a recent link connecting HMP Eastwood Park's sewer to HMP Leyhill Sewerage Treatment Works (STW) resulting both from a need to expand the women's prison and of dire foul drainage problems for the prison and dwellings on HMP's own land in the Falfield village. The submitted information indicates that Wessex Water have not confirmed to the developer that a sewer connection for the proposed housing is feasible however, so this proposal is premature. An alternative fall-back foul drainage solution has not yet been tabled but would not be straightforward for a development of 115 houses in a field with heavy "Falfield" Clay, poor drainage and flooding.

Should the connection to Leyhill STW be accepted by Wessex Water, Falfield Parish Council reiterates Tortworth Estates response, dated 29th March 2016 raising serious concerns about the resulting environmental impacts on Tortworth Brook downstream of the STW which also runs through our parish and into the Little River Avon and beyond and we would expect effective mitigation measures.

There is no mains gas supply serving Falfield parish. We have safety concerns over the proposed presence of the buried LPG gas storage tanks and their proposed location under the allotment car park. We also note that the Environment agency requested a bund around the tanks against flooding which is incomparable with its proposed location.

Despite recent upgrades most of Falfield parish, including the village on this side of the A38 still does not have access to superfast broadband and band width speed is poor.

Therefore, the Parish Council must object to the proposal on the grounds that services available are limited and there are flaws in the strategy.

Landscape

There are many views towards this site which will be affected, these being residents whose gardens adjoin the site, visitors passing through the village along the A38 and from elevated positions to the north.

The indicative drawings submitted show some suggestions of landscape buffer planting on some boundaries however there is some concern that this planting now appears to be significantly reduced from what was tabled at the community consultation display to the parish. There are also contradictions between a number of the plans and the landscape strategy plan submitted which need to be rectified as the supporting documents use different base plans.

The ION Acoustics Residential Planning Noise Assessment, dated 23rd March 2016 advises that mitigation measures will be required to address the impact of excessive noise levels from the nearby A38 road and that some sound insulation measures will be required to south eastern gardens facing the A38, in light of this the addition of acoustic fencing, walls or earth bunding is recommended by the consultant. Again there is a contradiction with the master plan as this is not illustrated. The Parish Council have concerns about the visual impact of this acoustic screening, as this sort of enclosure is not typical of the local landscape and may also result in the separating of the existing and proposed new community.

The Parish Council has concerns about how the landscaping, footpath and cycleway will be arranged around the historical horse pool, which is a designated archaeological site alongside the A38 and how this integrates with the acoustic buffers.

The Parish Council also has concerns that the Park and Share is located on top of a designated archaeological site known as Turnpike Cottage which is not reflected in the master plan.

Therefore, the Parish Council must object to the proposal on the grounds that the landscape proposal is unresolved.

Open Spaces

It is not clear whether the developer intends to provide the outdoor facilities illustrated, or whether they are leaving it for others to sort out at a future date.

There has been no discussion with Falfield Parish Council over who will adopt or maintain the open spaces for the lifetime of the development e.g. cutting the grass, safety inspections. Will this be done by a resident's management company, by a separate maintenance company, or by South Gloucestershire Council? There is currently no capacity within the Parish Council to take on these areas.

Parishioners have raised concern that the proposed play areas are within a part of the site which floods, that the play areas are too close to houses and that the communal areas may generate anti-social behaviour particularly in close proximity to an unsupervised Park and Share car park.

Therefore, the Parish Council must object to the proposal on the grounds that unresolved financial, location and maintenance issues relating to open spaces.

Park and Share Facility

The Park and Share facility for 100 cars offers little benefit to the residents of Falfield, our parishioners have no need to use it and it is likely to have a more negative than positive impact on the parish.

The Parish Council has serious concerns about the potential for anti-social behaviour occurring in this quiet part of the parish. The site is not positioned where there is natural surveillance. No information on how it will be policed and by who has been provided or discussed with the parish. There are significant issues raised in the Avon and Somerset Constabulary Crime Prevention Design Advisors report, dated 21st March 2016 which are of serious concern to the Parish Council.

The Park and Share's remote location will not encourage commuters to use it as users may feel their cars will not be safe there or feel safe in person particularly at night. Given a choice commuters will probably still prefer to park in more visible locations such as outside parishioners houses near the junction, in the busy lay-by off Tortworth Hill or on the A38.

There is no gate proposed to lock the Park and Share facility at night to prevent it becoming a venue for anti-social use after hours by a variety of groups, legally or not, be they boy racers, travellers or rogue traders etc. These are not activities we want to encourage in our small quiet rural parish.

There is currently just one house near the proposed Park and Share site positioned on the opposite side of Moorslade Lane which may end up bearing the brunt of reporting concerns about the facility which is unfair and potentially intimidating for them.

Southbound traffic from the M5 would have to navigate 3 sets of lights to get to the Park and share facility and then another 3 sets of lights to re-join the M5 motorway. A peak times this could add half an hour to the journey time and would discourage people from using it or result in commuters waiting at the M5 junction slip roads for their lift, having walked from the Park and Share to avoid the detour.

The Parish Council feels that South Gloucestershire Council should explore other sites for locating a Park and Share facility, including on the eastern side of the Junction 14 motorway junction before the southbound M5 motorway junction where most demand is already displayed. Tortworth Estate has also offered land to South Gloucestershire Council in this location for a Park and Share. A Park and Share development here would complement the existing highway maintenance compound by the B4509.

Therefore, the Parish Council must object to the proposal on the grounds that the Park and Share offers no benefit to the parish and will encourage anti-social behaviour in the area.