

## GREAT CHESTERFORD PARISH COUNCIL

### *MINUTES OF A MEETING OF THE GREAT CHESTERFORD PARISH COUNCIL HELD ON WEDNESDAY JULY 16<sup>th</sup> 2014 AT 8:00PM IN THE COMMUNITY CENTRE, GREAT CHESTERFORD*

**Present:** Sharon Tricerri  
Neil Gregory  
Julie Redfern

Matt Rowan  
David Hall  
Tom Newcombe  
Howard Rolfe

Louise Gregory – Minute Taker

Members of the public

Cllr. Gregory welcomed visitors to the meeting and explained that the meeting was constituted as a formal Parish Council meeting in order to allow the Council to pass resolutions for action if necessary. The objectives of the meeting were to present facts, hear opinions and establish any working parties which might be deemed necessary.

#### **14/124. Apologies for Absence**

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr. Bevens and Whitney.

#### **14/125. Declaration of Interests**

Cllrs. Redfern and Rolfe declared themselves members of Uttlesford District Council.

#### **14/116. Minutes of the Last Meetings**

The minutes of the meeting held on July 9<sup>th</sup> 2014 were approved and signed as a correct record of events.

#### **14/127. Public Forum**

This item was included as part of 14/128 and 14/1129

#### **14/128. Possible development on land to the north of the village.**

*Slides were presented at various points throughout the meeting; these are included as a separate appendix to these minutes.*

Cllr. Newcombe stated that the proposal was still in its very early stages, and that the terminology and law were complex. The UDC local plan was adopted in 2005 and formed the basis of all local planning decisions. The latest plan has been submitted to the Secretary of State for adoption. An inspector will be appointed to examine the plan for soundness and take representations into consideration. (S)he will then make a recommendation to the Secretary of State .

Slides were presented showing maps and details of the Local Plan

The proposed site at Stump Cross was not allocated for 2005, it was outside the settlement boundary and any proposed development would be contrary to the local plan. It would therefore be unlikely to be approved as per local and national policy.

Government policy states that if a 5 year land supply cannot be shown, a local plan will be out of date. Sites are therefore likely to come forward and be approved on appeal. The supply for the district is currently is 6.2 years and delivery rates are deemed adequate.

As part of the pre-submission consultation in respect of the draft Local Plan, a last-minute submission was made by the land owner. This was considered to be “putting a marker down” and as it could potentially involve hundreds of houses it was appropriate that it should be brought to the attention of the village.

In the absence of a formal planning application, no immediate response is possible but several questions are raised.

- Should we comment to UDC and the Inspector now before the oral examinations?
- Whether and how to attend the examinations.
- Should we instruct professionals?
- Will UDC have our best interests in mind?
- What are the cost implications?
- Will it have support from others such as WAR?

A slide was shown detailing key points.

Cllr. Redfern suggested that the PC might like to write to the Inspector to ask for representation if Chesterford is to be discussed. We had worked hard for good results in the Local Plan, were disappointed by the late submission and would fight our corner if necessary.

Points and questions raised by the public included

- Do we want development on this scale?
- There are groups who will fight hard to defend Saffron Walden’s interests.
- Could information be sought under FOI legislation?
- A defence plan is needed.
- Can a limit be set on the number of houses?
- Development should be proportionate and sustainable.
- There is no line to be drawn – Elsenham is an example. We need to think what we want>
- Infrastructure needs to be considered.
- We need to establish doubt in the Inspector’s mind
- The development needs to be financially viable.
- Consideration needs to be taken of the impact on the village’s character
- The submission is unlikely to go away – we need to engage with it and see a vision for the village
- A lot of time and money has been spent on the proposal – we need to consider the worst case.

Points made by councillors included

- A neighbourhood plan would be neither cheap nor quick.
- The PC cannot pre-judge the matter and is obliged to be objective
- Villagers were entitled to organise themselves if they see fit with PC support where appropriate.
- The submission was not a breach of process and not uncommon
- The landowner was also owner of the Stanley Road site.
- The submission would not form part of the Local Plan
- We should comment as individuals and as a Council to ensure a seat at the table of the oral hearing.

A member of the public commented that the village questionnaire showed that residents were very happy with the character of the village as it is and we need to organise ourselves against other highly organised local pressure groups.

The likely cost of a Neighbourhood Plan was estimated to be £20k - £30k. There are grants available, and the PC could assist in facilitating this, but the village would need to be prepared to undertake a large amount of work themselves.

It was commented that there were few places within the village for extra houses. If the caravan park or development north of the ditch were to go ahead it would be difficult to stop. The community would be split north and south of the ditch, and if the proposal were to go ahead it should be a standalone village with its own centre, school etc.

Further comments included

- We need reassurance on how to go forward
- Chesterford is becoming an area of rapid growth, fuelled by the demand of commuters to Cambridge and London
- How should development proceed taking account of the flood plain?
- There are errors and omissions in the Bidwells submission – these need to be addressed.
- There would be a need to expand the school

It was observed that the school is an academy; there is no intention to move it and ECC could not fund it.

Cllr. Rolfe made the following comments

- It is a high priority to have the current plan adopted and we should do all we can to ensure this
- The Inspector will only consider the Plan as presented. It will only be rejected if he believes it is not fit for purpose or the numbers are not adequate based on National Statistics Office population projections.
- We need to register to speak and be on hand to observe
- We need to pursue a Neighbourhood Plan and make our own proposals for development beyond the ditch
- The current plan is big, so not as many houses will be required next time around unless there is a population explosion. There are other sites available in Uttlesford, so a large expansion here is not inevitable.
- There may be political mischief ahead – we need to be prepared to fight a battle, but we should not become obsessed or alarmed.

It was questioned whether a separate village would affect the quality of life in the village and whether the village needed to work so hard to resist it.

In answer to a question about the role of the PC it was stated that this was to look after the best interests of the village and to liaise with the relevant authorities. The PC would be removed from a campaign process, but would welcome reports and would offer appropriate support to a campaign group. The PC would lead a neighbourhood plan proposal, but would need support from residents.

In response to a question of the membership of such a group, Andy Dunlop offered to convene a meeting and asked for contact details of interested parties to be left after the meeting. Cllr. Redfern offered to join as District Councillor.

#### **14/129. Uses of community land**

Cllr. Rowan gave a presentation illustrated by slides which form an appendix to these minutes.

Questions and responses included:

Q. Will this area be included in the Neighbourhood Plan?

A. This will not be necessary.

Q. If a preschool is located here, will this not indicate that we are ready for expansion and will support the aims of campaigning groups?

A. There are restrictions on the use of the land under the stipulations of the S.106 provision and we are obliged to provide an educational facility. There are time constraints which conspire against waiting for a Neighbourhood Plan, but we would not be permitted to build residential housing on it and we cannot change the covenant. Ownership is currently with UDC and will pass to the village.

Q. What will happen if the land is not used?

A. We will have failed to comply with the covenant and the land will revert to its original owner.

It was commented that we had requested the land, but the owner did not have to give it; the Stanley Road development would have proceeded anyway.

It was suggested that if there has to be an educational establishment on the land, we should be creative and consider all options including the possibility of it being non fee-paying, without age restrictions and not necessarily a school at all.

It is a requirement that work has to be started within fifteen years.

It was suggested that villagers be consulted via the Google group.

Other suggestions for use included an athletics track and beehives.

Cllr. Tricerri has a waiting list for allotment holders which may be out of date. Those interested were requested to leave their details after the meeting and to indicate if they would be willing to help set up an allotment association.

Cllr. Rowan asked for any further suggestion for use to be emailed to the Parish Clerk.

The PC undertook to keep the village informed of developments via the Google group and the village Broadsheet.

**14/130 Date of Next Meeting.**

The next meeting of the Parish Council is to be held on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> August at 7:30pm in the Community Centre

The meeting closed at 9:45

**Signed (Chairman).....**

**Date: 10<sup>th</sup> September 2014**