

Minutes

of the Parish Council meeting held on

Wednesday 04 January 2023, at 7pm, in the Parish Room.

Present: Councillors Vinny Hall, Graham Lee (Chairman) and Norton Mahy (Vice-chairman). Cllr Mark White joined the meeting on Zoom.

Also in attendance: Clerk (Jane Porter), Al Jacoutot (IT support), District Councillor Tom Tyson, County Councillor Steve Jarvis. Thirteen members of the public were present and eleven also joined on Zoom for parts of the meeting. Two representatives for item 67.1 also attended.

Following a request from a parishioner it was agreed that the meeting could be recorded.

- 64 **Apologies for absence from parish councillors.** Gemma Allan (ongoing dispensation due to work commitments), Ian Duffy (personal commitment), Martin Hoffman (ongoing health issues), David Sims (unwell).
- 65 **Declarations of interest.** None.
- 66 **Proposal to approve and sign the minutes of the Council meeting, 07 December 2022.**
- 67 **OPEN FORUM - VILLAGE MATTERS, REPORTS FROM OTHER BODIES, ETC** It was agreed that these be signed.

Standing Orders were suspended to allow members of the public to speak.

- 67.1 Presentation by the agent working on behalf of Manor Oak Homes re their planning application to NHC for residential development on land north of Ashwell Street (between the Ruddy and Lucas Lane known as Hunts Close). NHC ref. 22/03094/FP

Erection of 14 dwellings including creation of access from Ashwell Street, footpath link to Lucas Lane, associated infrastructure, public open space and landscaping.

[On -site meeting scheduled for Saturday 07 January at 10am]. See the link for more information

<https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/parish-council/meetings/planning-committee/>

The representative informed that they had changed the previous planning application to reflect the reasons for refusal and views expressed. This application to NHC included, (i) 14 homes of which 5 would be affordable, (ii) an extensive area of publicly accessible open space, (iii) a design that retained key views and the open character of the site, (iv) additional landscaping including an orchard, additional trees and boundary buffers, (v) a biodiversity net gain of greater than 10%, (vi) pedestrian access to Lucas Lane, (vii) retention of the

viewing corridor towards St Mary's Church, (vii) mainly 2 and 3 bedroom dwellings including bungalows to reflect the policies of the Neighbourhood Plan.

The new Local Plan had now been adopted and Ashwell was identified as a Category A sustainable village with the required services. The extension of the settlement boundary that the plan included allowed for the growth of the village within this.

67.1.1 Following questions and comments from members of the public clarification was given on the following:

- (i) Infrastructure. Any additional infrastructure would be requested by relevant statutory consultees in their responses to the consultation eg school places by the county council, sewerage upgrades by the drainage authority, and would be funded by the developer. Concern was expressed that aspects of village infrastructure were already overburdened and required attention prior to any additional housing.
- (ii) Impact on Ashwell Street (the Ruddery) track and the conservation area. The new entrance to the top of the site, including a footway as well as a road, was positioned adjacent to the existing field gate. The gate was to be retained as a feature and to maintain the existing views. Along the section of Ashwell Street from Woodforde Close leading up to the new access the existing track would be upgraded to highways standards. Concern was expressed that this would encroach on the special nature of the Ruddery. The representative agreed to take this up with the Conservation Officer.
- (iii) Safety concerns on Ashwell Street (the Ruddery) track and the Kingsland Way junction. County councillor Steve Jarvis reported that, following the request from the Parish Council some time ago for the current BOAT status to be changed and bollards installed to restrict vehicular traffic this had been agreed in principle with the Highways authority. This was being progressed through what was a lengthy approval system that included both informal and formal consultations with local residents. There had been some objections and there was a requirement that these had to be responded to. It was noted that there were existing safety concerns re the junction of Ashwell Street and Kingsland Way and the Highways authority had been requested on many occasions to review this.
- (iv) Planning obligations/section 106 funding agreement. This would form part of any planning approval. It was noted that the current 'safer routes to the station' project required significant funding and was a relevant sustainable transport initiative.
- (v) Affordable housing. The application included 5 affordable homes of which 3 were to be rented and 2 intermediate; this was above the Local Plan requirements.
- (vi) Sustainability. All of the dwellings on the site would be built to a standard that met net zero criteria with EV chargers and a fabric first approach to construction. This was in line with Neighbourhood Plan policy.
- (vii) Site layout. The location of the bungalows at the top of the site, ie nearer to Ashwell Street, was questioned in relation to the significant slope and the accessibility for anyone with mobility issues using the pedestrian route to access local facilities. The impact on the existing bungalows in Lucas Lane should also be considered. The representative responded that this had been done to lessen the landscape impact. None of the buildings would be greater than one and a half storeys. The

representative agreed to consider the request that the bungalows be located at the bottom of the site, ie nearer to Lucas Lane.

- (viii) Landscape boundary details. consider requests from local residents re the details, eg fencing and/or walls.
- (ix) Public open space. The plans included a grassed area and a small orchard. The area would be protected from any future development by a planning condition. Management of the area would be by an appointed management company or it could possibly be gifted to the Parish Council.

67.2 Items from members of the public and village organisations.

67.2.1 A parishioner raised a query re the December council minute 67.2.

67.3 Items on general village matters from parish councillors.

67.3.1 Ultrafast Broadband installation by Voneus. *See the link for more information.*

<https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/news2/ultrafast-full-fibre/>

Cllr Vinny Hall reported that he had taken up matters of concern with the installers, particularly the very poor state of one part of Ashwell Street. A response was still pending, probably due to their holiday break, and he would chase it up. Al Jacoutot reported that he had chased up Voneus on the dates for the promised community info sessions.

67.3.2 Community Land Trust/Community Benefit Society. *See the link for more information including the minutes of the founder members/directors' meeting.*

<https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/news2/community-land-trust/>

Chairman Graham Lee reported that further information and an invitation to become a member for £1 had been publicised in the Village News, on notice boards, on the website and to sign-ups. A members' meeting was to be scheduled for the end of January.

67.3.3 Village Hall trustees/re their proposal to change to an Incorporated Charitable Organisation and the future involvement of the Parish Council. Cllr Norton Mahy reported that a meeting was to be scheduled with the Chairman of the trustees.

67.4 Items from our district councillor Tom Tyson. He reported on the following:

67.4.1 Bygrave Solar Farm. Land West of Ashwell Road, Bygrave. NHC ref. 22/00741/FP *See also 69.1.1 below.*

The consultation deadline had been extended to 17 January because of various communication issues. The latest amendments that had necessitated the re-consultation seemed to include few changes. There was currently no date set for the Planning Committee meeting at which a decision would be made. The Planning Officer's report would be available two weeks before the meeting. A parishioner expressed their objections and reported their concerns about the lack of documentation to support some claims made by the developer. The Chairman commended the comprehensive nature of her comments and requested that these be put in writing to the Parish Council.

67.4.2 NHC consultation on new ward boundaries.

<https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/have-your-say-new-ward-boundaries-proposed-north-herts-council>

It was proposed, and agreed, that the draft response be submitted. **Action: Clerk**

67.5 Items from our county councillor Steve Jarvis. He reported on the following:

67.5.1 The Ruddery. Update on the request to HCC rights of way for a change of status to improve safety. *See 67.1.1 (iii) above.*

67.5.2 New footway in Station Road as a condition of planning permission for Townsend Meadow. NHC ref. 19/00455/FP. This was still in the hands of the developer's lawyer.

67.5.3 Lucas Lane/War Memorial junction. The faulty light had been reported. It was agreed that the ownership of the overshadowing tree be determined. **Action: Clerk**

The drainage issue was still to be addressed. It was reported that construction barriers were still on site.

67.5.4 West End chicane. The safety audit and the speed and volume data were still pending.

67.5.5 Hodwell drainage issues. Investigations were still ongoing.

67.5.6 Bollards. Funding remaining from this financial year had been allocated to the repainting of 8 of the bollards in the High Street.

67.5.7 Salt bins and gritting. These would normally only be filled once at the beginning of the season but in view of recent adverse weather these were to be refilled. Gritting had included some secondary routes as well as up to three times daily on priority routes. Potholes caused by the freezing weather should be reported on the Herts Highways system.

67.5.8 Road closures. Emergency works by utility companies, eg in Gardiners Lane, were permissible at short notice. The Hinxworth Road closure was due to freezing damage. It was acknowledged that both of these occurring together was unfortunate.

67.6 Items from working groups.

67.6.1 Trees and Hedges Group (leader Cllr David Sims). Further hedge planting at the Rec would hopefully be progressed this season but was dependent on budget availability.

End of Open Forum/Standing Orders reinstated.

68 MONTHLY REPORTS ON PREMISES/OTHER RESPONSIBILITIES FROM PARISH COUNCILLORS.

68.1 Recreation Ground facilities upgrade including play equipment and the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Pavilion. *See the link for more information.*

<https://www.ashwell.gov.uk/news2/fundraising-for-the/>

Feedback following the latest meeting with the NHC officer to discuss funding from planning obligations/section 106 was pending.

69 **PLANNING MATTERS** See summary in Appendix A below.

Full documents are available on the NHC website. Put the NHC ref. no. into the planning search box <https://pa2.north-herts.gov.uk/online-applications/>

69.1 New consultations received from North Herts Council. The following responses were agreed.

69.1.1 Bygrave solar farm. New consultation on amendments. NHC ref. 22/00741/FP

Full Planning Permission: Ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) farm including battery energy storage; continued agricultural use, ancillary infrastructure, security fencing, landscaping provision, ecological enhancements and associated works.

See also 67.4.1 above.

The concerns raised by parishioners, including those posted on the NHC website, were noted. It was proposed, and agreed, that the previous objections would be reiterated along with additional concerns and comments. **Action: Clerk/Graham**

69.1.2 Land to the west of 35 Ashwell Street. NHC ref. 21/02650/FP

Full Planning Permission: Erection of two detached 4-bedroom dwellings and double garages, including alterations to existing vehicular access (as amended by plans received 12.12.2022).

The concerns raised by the residents of no.35 Ashwell Street and those posted on the NHC website, were noted. Cllr Norton Mahy expressed the view that the density was of concern due to the location on the outskirts of the settlement area. Also that the local housing need in line with Neighbourhood Plan policy supported smaller housing not 4-bedroom detached units. The revisions to lessen the impact on the sensitive views across the landscape by setting the houses below ground level was positive. It was agreed that a further site meeting would be arranged before a response was agreed. [07 January 11am]. **Action: Clerk**

69.1.3 59 High Street. NHC ref. 22/02876/LBC

Listed Building Consent: Replace rotten sill beam on left front wall.

It was proposed, and agreed, that the views of the NHC Conservation Officer would be supported. **Action: Clerk**

69.1.4 8 Swan Street. NHC ref. 22/03093/FPH

Full Permission Householder: Apply external wall insulation and replace render to west elevation, cavity wall insulation to north elevation. Replace existing doors. Replace existing timber and Upvc windows with wood-grain effect Upvc windows.

It was proposed, and agreed, that a recommendation for acceptance be made assuming that there were no significant issues raised by the NHC Conservation Officer. **Action: Clerk**

69.1.5 1 Townsend Meadow NHC ref. 22/03261/FPH

Full Permission Householder: Single storey front and side extension.

The following concerns were expressed;

- (i) The landscape plans that formed part of the planning permission granted for the Townsend Meadow development in 2019 included identification of trees and hedges to be retained and their root protection areas as well as additional planting. The proposed side extension would impact adversely on these.
- (ii) Retention of the boundary hedge and tree line that formed the frontage to the site had been a significant factor in the grant of planning permission to preserve the amenity value of the area and lessen the visual impact of the new houses.
- (iii) The side extension proposed would move the built element much closer to the frontage and would thus have a negative impact on the amenity value of the area.

It was proposed, and agreed, that an objection be made on the grounds as above.

Action: Clerk

69.2 Tree consultations (Conservation Area and TPO) received from NHC. None received.

69.3 Updates on previous planning applications, developments ongoing. *See 67.5.2 above.*

70 FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE MATTERS.

70.1 Budget tracking and the monthly summary of accounts up to 31 December 2022.

It was proposed, and resolved, that these be accepted.

70.2 Budget and precept proposals for 2023-24.

70.2.1 Budget setting options. It was noted that following receipt of the taxbase figures from NHC two options had been drafted. Option 2 included an additional expenditure of £6,000 and would provide more certainty in funding the ongoing maintenance of village assets in the face of significant increases in the rates charged by suppliers. It would avoid the Parish Council depleting reserves and risking the ability to fund unforeseen maintenance issues. The proposed increase in expenditure vs 2022-23 would be spread over an increased number of households. Following an effective 0% increase in the Ashwell council tax in 2022/3 it would mean that a 'Band D' household' would be asked to pay only £10.74 extra per annum compared with two years ago in 2021/2.

70.2.2 Budget for 2023-24. It was proposed, and agreed that option 2 be accepted.

70.2.3 Parish Precept for 2023-24. It was proposed, and agreed, that the Ashwell parish precept be set at £96,350 [inclusive of the Council Tax Reduction Scheme grant of £1426].

Action: Clerk

Meeting closed at 9.50pm

Forthcoming meeting dates:

Planning Committee on-site meeting on Saturday 07 January at 10am (see item 67.1 above)

February Parish Council on Wednesday 01 at 7pm.

Signed

Date

Appendix A: Planning summary

Summary of consultations on recent planning and listed building applications received from NHC up to 04 January 2022				
To view all the documents relating to an application put the NHC reference number into the planning search box https://pa2.north-herts.gov.uk/online-applications/				
Address	Application ref. Number	Brief description	Ashwell PC response to NHC consultation (see also minute reference)	North Herts Decision
Land Between Hunts Ridge And Ashwell House no 5, High Street (known as Hunts Close)	22/03094/FP	Erection of 14 dwellings including creation of access from Ashwell Street, footpath link to Lucas Lane, associated infrastructure, public open space and landscaping	January Council meeting AND On-site planning meeting (Sat 07 at 10am)	Pending
Land West of Ashwell Road, Bygrave SG7 5EB	22/00741/FP	<u>New consultation on amendments</u> Full Planning Permission: Ground mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) farm including battery energy storage; continued agricultural use, ancillary infrastructure, security fencing, landscaping provision, ecological enhancements and associated works.	Objection. January Council meeting 69.1.1 <i>Previous response to NHC: Objection</i> <i>See June Council 2022,</i>	Pending
Land to the west of 35 Ashwell Street	21/02650/FP	<u>New consultation on further amendments</u> Full Planning Permission : Erection of two detached 4-bedroom dwellings and double garages, including alterations to existing vehicular access (as amended by plans received 12.12.2022).	On-site planning meeting (Sat 07 at 11am) <i>Previous response to NHC: Objection</i> <i>See July council 2022, 25.1.1</i>	Pending
59 High Street	22/02867/LBC	Listed Building Consent : Replace rotten sill beam on left front wall	No objection. January Council meeting 69.1.3	Pending
8 Swan Street	22/03093/FPH	Apply external wall insulation and replace render to west elevation, cavity wall insulation to north elevation. Replace existing doors. Replace existing timber and Upvc windows with wood-	No objection. January Council meeting 69.1.4	Pending
1 Townsend Meadow	22/03261/FPH	Full Permission Householder : Single storey front and side extension.	Objection. January Council meeting 69.1.5	Pending
8 Philosophers Gate	22.02699.FPH	Retention of detached outbuilding for use as a garden office.	December Council 62.1.7 No objection.	Permission granted
5 Swan Street	22/02966/FPH and 22/02967/LBC	Erection of front entrance canopy and side elevation porch to include conversion of existing shed into habitable accommodation following demolition of front brick wall. Additional for Listed Building Consent: Internal alterations consisting of replacing existing attic staircase and re-tank the basement.	December Council 62.1.6 No objection. Lack of off-street parking noted.	Pending
6 Springhead	22/02780/LBC	Listed Building Consent: Replace two pairs of single-glazed doors and single glazed window on rear elevation of later addition with similar timber, double-glazed doors and window.	December Council 62.1.5 No objection.	Permission granted
Slip End Farm <i>see also below</i>	22/02888/PNQ	Prior Approval Class Q Agric to Dwelling : Class Q: change of use of one agricultural building to four dwellinghouses (2 x 2-bedroom dwellings, 1 x 3- bedroom dwelling & 1 x 4-bedroom) together with associated building operations and the formation of private gardens and car parking associated with the proposed dwellinghouses.	December Council 62.1.4 No objection.	Permission granted
Slip End Farm <i>see also below</i>	22/02889/PNQ	Prior Approval Class Q Agric to Dwelling : Class Q: change of use of one agricultural building to one two-bedroom dwellinghouse together with associated building operations and private garden and car parking associated with the proposed dwellinghouse.	December Council 62.1.3 No objection.	Permission granted
High Acre, Partridge Hill	22/02796/FPH	Full Permission Householder : Single storey rear orangery extension and side dormer with clock tower; replacement front porch and addition of covered front and side veranda; alterations to the roof by removing the existing hip end to the gable roof and continuing gable end to top of roof; alterations to fenestration and addition of external white timber cladding; alterations to existing garage including enlarged front dormer window and rear roof lights; external landscaping including installation of a swimming pool following demolition of existing single storey rear extension; erection of electric timber gates.	December Council 62.1.2 No objection on the assumption that the fenestration was to be amended.	Pending
Ashridge Farm Cottage, 7 Ashwell Street	22/02795/FPH	Full Permission Householder : Single storey front, single storey side (north west elevation), two storey rear and first floor side (north west elevation) extension, enclosure of existing carport to form a garage and partial conversion of existing garage to habitable accommodation. Alterations to external wall finishes.	December Council 62.1.1 No objection.	Pending
Slip End Farm, Royston Road	22/01541/FP AMENDED	Replace existing entrance gates with acoustic gates, decommission existing vehicular access and install protective landscape bund to boundary.	October Council 46.1.3 No objection	Pending

Signed

Date

Appendix B: Accounts summary

ACCOUNTS - Summary for 1st to 31st December 2022					
RECEIPTS				£	
52	Nevilles Funeral Services	Rent for Chapel of Rest (December)		68.75	
53	Bluegates Farms	Rent for Fourth Quarter at Ashwell Cemetery		0.05	
54	Santander	Reserve Account Interest		8.68	
			Total	£77.48	
PAYMENTS			£ less VAT	VAT	£ inc VAT
175	Duo Creative Services Ltd	Website monthly fee (Dec)	25.00	5.00	30.00
176	Eon Next	Toilets electricity 01Nov-15Nov	10.36	0.52	10.88
177	Eon Next	Toilets electricity 01Oct-15Nov	12.46	0.62	13.08
178	Castle Water Small Gains	Small Gains water	331.60		331.60
179	Sigma Office	IT support	62.50	12.50	75.00
180	Ashwell Housing Association	Office rent Oct 2022 to March 2023	475.20		475.20
181	HCC Pensions-LGPS Account	Clerk & Deputy Clerk Pension to LGPS	987.50		987.50
182	HMRC accounts ref 321PF00003624	tax&NI to Inland Revenue	841.39		841.39
183	Eon Next	Pavilion electricity 06 Sept-30 Sept	37.90	1.90	39.80
184	Eon Next	Pavilion electricity 01 Oct -20 Nov	60.46	3.02	63.48
185	Eon Next	Pavilion electricity 21 Nov -30 Nov	13.19	0.66	13.85
186	Eon Next	Toilets electricity 16 Nov-30Nov	15.12	0.76	15.88
187	Horne Builders	Pavilion repairs	70.00		70.00
188	Grounds Officer	Grounds Officer salary	175.80		175.80
189	ECO	Environmental Cleansing Officer salary	256.80		256.80
190	Clerk	Clerk salary	1,527.69		1,527.69
191	Deputy Clerk	Deputy Clerk Salary	1,354.99		1,354.99
		Sub-totals	6,257.96	24.98	
				Total	£6,282.94
MONEY AT BANK					
		Current Account 31/12/2022	20,392.86		
		Reserve Account 31/12/2022	52,833.63		
		Total cash	£73,226.49		