



Ashwell Parish Council

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Dr Martin Hoffman`s Jottings

From the Ashwell Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday March 3rd 2021
(full minutes on www.ashwell.gov.uk)

Approximately 30 members of the public attended the meeting and a high number of others had written in to express their opinion regarding the future of Dixies Meadow (affectionately known as Donkey Meadow!)

The meeting started with information regarding the background of the site by **Cllr Martin Hoffman**, who had attended a two-day appeal in the Village Hall some 30 years ago, following the refusal by NHDC for housing. This development was rejected by a national inspector. More recently a developer had held a pre-application consultation of plans for retirement housing and some extra car parking, but this was progressed no further, apparently due to problems in securing adequate finance.

He also raised the following points to be noted, (i) the site would be outside the settlement boundary under the new District Local Plan, (ii) the landowner was not under obligation to accept any bids made to Savills by March 12 under the informal tender (iii) the Ashwell Neighbourhood Plan, although on schedule, was not yet in

place and neither was the new Local Plan (iv) many local people had noted a lot of development recently in the village while on extra walking due to the "Lock in"!!

The Chairman confirmed that the NHDC New District Plan consultation had been with the Inspector for some time. It was now at a stage where it carried more weight and greater consideration should be given to the views of the village.

The site, however, is in private ownership. It had been bought some years ago with a view to its development potential and the owner would be looking for a significant sum. If the landowner was willing to consider an agreement with the Parish Council it might be possible for the village to have greater control over the future of the site.

Comments from members of the public present varied quite widely. Some suggested that the whole site should be protected as a green space for the benefit of the community. Others supported a selective development for the benefit of Ashwell residents, and perhaps retirement accommodation for locals as an alternative for those (? most!) unable to access Wolverley House.



- Planning applications for the site had been rejected in the past and it should be preserved as an open space.
- The village had seen lots of building recently, but this has not been in line with identified needs particularly for the elderly and those wishing to downsize.
- This was an ideal site for retirement accommodation. The ID products site was perhaps the only other alternative in the village that might be available.
- The site's potential value is difficult to determine depending upon the landowner's action and what purpose the land would be used for - a member of the public at the meeting said it could be valued at anything from £75,000 to £3 million!
- Fundraising in the village should be considered. Other funding options should be explored.

The Chairman requested a show of hands as to whether the Parish Council should pursue a dialogue with the landowner with a view to seeking common ground. This was universally endorsed.

I have tried to summarise the broad spread of the above comments without showing any bias. (Not easy!!).

Our **District Councillor Tom Tyson** is still chasing action on the damage to the wall in Swan Street.

Our **County Councillor Steve Jarvis** gave an update on the street lighting installation and Station Road pedestrian safety improvements.

Road safety was discussed and yellow lines are shortly to be installed for the corner of Gardeners Lane. Parking is still an issue and various suggestions were forthcoming, but where do you put the cars that don't have allocated parking? Those that have off-street parking should use them but frequently complain that they are then blocked in!

A parishioner suggested the Parish Council should provide more parking but was unable to suggest where!

The proposal to link the 90/91 bus service with the 127 South Cambridgeshire service would not progress "due to contractual issues with the latter". (I thought these services were for the benefit of the passenger!).

Miscellaneous topics (limited by space).

By the time you read this the Yearbook should be distributed. Well done to the many people involved in its production and distribution.

Covid vaccination indications. The Parish Council continue to post updates on the website and Facebook. Local progress is good and those involved should be commended.

The local Police have now endorsed the parking restriction cards for placing on vehicles badly or illegally parked and copies of these are now being produced.

The St Mary's Churchyard biodiversity project is ongoing, supervised by Kate Haddock.

Litter Pickers working group. It is hoped to recommence this later in the year when legal and safety issues revert to a more normal state.

Apologies for omissions of certain issues, but as you can see item one was "quite busy" at the meeting!

With very best wishes.

Please look after yourself and others as you have all been doing so well.

Dr Martin G Hoffman