

Minutes of Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 3rd January at the Pavilion, Deep Spinney, Biddenham

Present: Peter Chase, Graham Bates, Jon Gambold, Alan Jacobs, Krzys Osuch, Terry Platt, Joe Warren, Borough Cllr Roger Rigby and the Clerk were in attendance. In addition, there were 43 members of the public.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Cllr Chris Gee & Francina Slade

2. Declarations of interest

None

3. To approve the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 8th November 2017

It was resolved to approve the minutes.

4. Matters Arising from Minutes

None

5. Public Open Session (15 mins)

There was a large turnout from members of the public interested to hear from the parish council regarding the possible proposal for housing west of Gold Lane. Cllr Chase outlined a summary of the proceeding as follows:

The Parish Council had a second meeting with Lioncourt and we have been advised that a planning application will be submitted before the end of March. There has been a robust response from members of public following the public consultation and Lioncourt have produced a revised set of plans. These indicate that the development would not involve any development south of Duck End Lane. There are two options regarding access. One version shows access onto the bypass (this would also involve ground works that could be beneficial to Beds BC who may wish to make the road a dual carriageway in the future) and the second version shows access onto Gold Lane near (but not at) its junction with Deep Spinney. The most suitable option for access would be off Deep Spinney but this would take the development over a ransom strip owned by Beds BC and the developer would incur large fees from Beds BC.

Currently the whole site is protected by Policy AD42 which ensures a green space between Bromham and Biddenham is maintained. Previous planning applications have been overturned because of this policy. The Local Plan for 2021-2035 is currently being consulted on. The local community need to respond to this consultation specifically to object to policy 19 if you don't want development to take place on this land. If Policy 19 is included this would reduce the green land separating Biddenham from Bromham. In addition, there is no local need for additional housing in our parish. Full details on how members of the public can respond to the local plan will be made available on the parish website; the deadline is 5th March.

The Parish Council are opposed to any development on this land. However, we recognise that development could take place, so we will continue to liaise with Lioncourt to submit revised plans in terms of density, numbers, protection of Biddenham pond, access etc.

Ideally, the parish council want Beds BC to retain policy AD42 in the 2021-2035 Plan.

Cllr Gambold re-iterated that as yet there is no planning application submitted for the land off Gold Lane. What individuals can do is to respond to the Local Plan 2021-2035 consultation and specifically Policy 19 (page 50). The parish council will be circulating a leaflet to every household in Biddenham outlining how to object to draft policy 19. The more individual responses the better chance of success to persuade Beds BC to remove this policy and keep policy AD42 which is the current policy applicable to this land. People

should not respond jointly, but as individuals from each household, as every response counts/matters.

Why is the Parish Council discussing this matter now in January 2018 when the proposed sites were put forward as far back as July 16?

The Parish Council have responded to all stages of the Local Plan consultation and has opposed any development on this site. Lioncourt had not submitted any applications or entered any dialogue with the Parish Council and local community until October 2017. Once this matter was brought to our attention we have been actively working on this issue and raising public awareness via our website, notice boards and attendance at the public consultation.

Did the parish council get a response to its letter to the Mayor and Chief Executive?

Yes, Cllr Chase and Cllr Gambold attended a meeting at Beds BC with the Chief Executive and 3 senior planning officers to understand their view on this site. The Borough do not appear to have any strong views on developing this land but have engaged in dialogue with Lioncourt in the same way as they would any potential large-scale development.

Gerry Sansom from the Bedford Branch of CPRE made a brief presentation about the general aims of CPRE and re-iterated that any application for development on this site should be refused as the site is protected by AD42 in the current Local Plan which takes the Borough up to 2020. There was a similar application lodged in Lower Farm Road, Bromham which was refused planning permission and went to a planning inspectorate. The appeal was dismissed, and no planning permission was granted. One key factor is that the Borough have a robust 5 year forward land supply and therefore there is no local need for additional housing. Looking forward, Biddenham may wish to consider producing a Neighbourhood Development Plan. This is produced in consultation with residents and stakeholders who form a group to discuss ideas about development of the village over a period of time. Any plan produced is put to a referendum to the residents of Biddenham and only then would it go to a planning inspector for approval and if agreed it would become a statutory document. All future Local Plans would then need to align with the NDP.

Cllr Gambold responded that whilst the NDP is a useful tool, it is a professionally produced document which must include development. The plans are expensive to produce and can cost in the region of £15-20K. There are not sufficient sites left to develop in and around Biddenham to justify producing a NDP. Biddenham does not want *any* more development, having absorbed a considerable amount of additional housing in this Local Plan already.

What about all the new developments taking place in Biddenham and surrounding areas? Do these count towards the housing allocation? Yes, but these are already included in the housing allocation for the current Local Plan to 2020.

Biddenham needs to look outward and consider how the Oxford-Cambridge arc will affect us. Bedford is in the middle of this area and a new train link will be provided. What impact will this have? Have we responded to this? The Parish Council are concentrating on responding the Local Plan 2021-2035.

Demolition of Biddenham House

Tony Wood from the Biddenham Society addressed the meeting regarding the application to demolish Biddenham House and replace it with 8 new dwellings. The Society have applied to Beds BC to formally list Biddenham House. The current closing date for objections is 11th January. The property sits within the conservation area which means that more stringent conditions are applied to any proposed development. Whilst the garden used to be a designated protected green space, it appears this has now lapsed. If residents look at the Biddenham Blog there will be outline reasons to assist you in drafting an objection to this application. It is vital that as many individuals object as possible.

Is there a TPO for the large Hornbeam tree on this plot? Yes, but the development is not seeking to remove this tree but to build around it.

Gold Lane traffic and speeding

The parish must not allow any more development which will add to traffic on this already busy and narrow road. There has been an increase in motorists' rat running through the village since the new bypass opened and it is becoming very dangerous for residents turning out of Hampden Court due to the speed of traffic. The Parish Council have raised this matter with Beds BC highways. The Borough have agreed to white lining and slow road markings along Gold Lane which should give motorists the illusion that the road is narrower than it is and slow traffic down. This work was promised over 6 months ago, and we continue to press the Borough to carry out the work.

6. To confirm an agreed leave of absence for Cllr Chris Gee from 1st January – 31st March 2018

It was resolved to approve the leave of absence. It was noted that Cllr Gee would still be able to respond to planning applications for his sub-committee.

Clerk

7. Planning

The report was noted. Members considered their response to the application for Biddenham House and land at the Baulk.

Biddenham House

The following points were considered:

This would have a massive impact on the heart of the village surrounded by historic buildings. It is set within the conservation area and building there would diminish the striking view into the centre of the village. The suggested design is out of keeping with the village's strong historic character and the existing street scene. Gold Lane is already inadequate to accommodate existing traffic let alone 16 extra cars. The development will lead to more highway safety issues on Gold Lane. The development is cramped, and the gardens are too small. There is no adequate off-road parking on the development. Visitors will be forced to park on the Main Road leading to further traffic issues. There is no need for eight extra houses in this part of the village. **It was resolved** to object to this application and the clerk would draft a letter of objection and circulate to all members. The deadline is 10th January. Members asked if the Borough Councillors could request this is dealt with by the planning committee.

Clerk
RR

Land to rear of the Baulk

Cllr Rigby has already asked for this application to be dealt with by the planning committee. The size of the proposal indicates this will have a commercial use and there are issues around the access to the site which is also on a floodplain. It was resolved to object to this application and the Clerk would liaise with Cllr Rigby regarding the content of the objection letter.

Clerk
RR

All members were asked to write their own letters of objection to both applications.

Following the Lioncourt public exhibition, local stakeholders have met informally to consider how best to respond to any application. It was suggested that this group should form an advisory group regarding future planning in Biddenham. Cllr Chase had drafted some terms of reference which had been circulated prior to the meeting and members considered these and whether there was a need for the group to be formalised. Members were concerned that the group should not speak for the parish council who already respond to local planning matters. The group must be advisory to all groups taking part and then it must be up to each group to decide whether to take forward any suggestions. Whilst it is useful to have a group to collaborate and share ideas ultimately these groups respond on behalf of their own groups and not on behalf of the parish council. Perhaps the group should continue to keep going on an informal basis?

It was resolved not to adopt terms of reference and formally constitute the group who would continue to meet informally. The first meeting will take place on Thursday 4th January and Cllr Chase would update members of the parish council.

P Chase

The Local Plan 2021-2035 would be included on the agenda for February.

8. Clerk’s report

The report was noted. It was resolved to approve the cost of the replacement hot water heater for the downstairs changing room toilets – PJB Heating to undertake the works at a cost of £698 + VAT. In addition, members approved to fund 50% of the cost of a mobile PA system for St James’s Church – total cost to the parish council £85.00.

Clerk

Clerk

Bidwell’s have confirmed approval to install paving slabs for bus stop users near the Old Vicarage, Main Road. In addition, they have instructed their contractor to put in a planning application for tree works and to cut back the vegetation on the land behind the war memorial.

9. Accounts for approval –

(i) It was resolved to approve the accounts for payment as follows:

Chicheley Farms Ltd £150.00 for Village Christmas Tree

Williams Flooring £1555.00 balance for Pavilion hall floor refurbishment

(ii) To agree the budget for the Parish Council and the Pavilion for 2018-19

Members agreed regarding a combination of undesignated reserves, earmarked reserves and the Precept to fund the roundabout feature and the replacement footpath.

It was resolved to agree the budget for the Parish Council for 2018-19 at £61,628.

Clerk

The Pavilion now included 1/7th of the Clerk’s salary which should be included in the running costs. This seventh reflects the estimated 2 out of 14 hours worked each work on Pavilion business. This additional expenditure was included in the year end forecast for 2017-18. There would be no increase in hire fees or car parking charges for 2018-19 and this would be reviewed next year.

It was resolved to agree the budget for the Pavilion for 2018-19 at £21,666.

(iii) It was resolved to set the Precept for 2018-19 at £43,000.

10. Parish Council governance

Cllr Warren re-iterated that the parish council should meet according to its published dates and not alter these unless exceptional circumstances occur. If the Chairman cannot attend, then the default position should be that the Vice Chairman would stand in, in place of the Chairman to run the meeting. All members agreed but felt that January’s meeting had exceptional circumstances and re-iterated support for the Chairman’s request to move the date of the meeting.

11. Matters in progress

White Lining on Gold Lane

This is now 6 months overdue. Cllr Gambold to press the Borough for a completion date.

JG

Bromham Road/Biddenham Turn traffic lights & road junction

Cllr Gambold reported that the phasing of the traffic lights at the junction of Biddenham Turn and Bromham Road had been altered. It is now much easier for traffic turning out of Biddenham Turn. A sign showing left and straight-ahead arrows has been added, but no road marking changed. There are no plans for any further alterations at this junction.

Roundabout feature

Cllr Platt had circulated a brief report following his recent site meeting with Boden & Ward and Borough Highways. It appears the project is not as difficult as anticipated in terms of traffic and lane closures and lorries would be able to drive onto the roundabout. Incidental costs should be no more than £1000. Cllr Platt sought confirmation on the agreed location for both pillars and this was agreed in accordance with the map presented. The pillars will be set back from the roundabout edge the same distance as the chevrons which will mean the overall appearance is much neater. The clerk would contact the Borough Council regarding insurance. The works would take place during the spring/summer when the ground would be hard enough for the lorries to drive onto the roundabout. All members agreed that Cllr Platt and the Clerk can progress this project.

Clerk
T Platt

Parking provision at country park

Borough Cllrs Gambold & Rigby attended the first meeting of the management committee for the Biddenham Country Park Sports complex. There is an informal arrangement with the Borough that the car park will remain open for users of the country park. If there are any problems regarding anti-social behaviour or illegal encampments, then this may need to be revised.

Flooding on Kings Corner

Cllr Rigby reported that Anglian Water have acknowledged there is a problem with the Biddenham drain and this has been escalated within the organisation. They continue to work with Bedford Borough Council to alleviate the problem.

Village Green – no response from BT yet but the Clerk would continue to pursue.

Clerk

Biddenham Turn

New road sign installed – remove from matters in progress.

Clerk

12. Parish Concerns

Cllr Chase reported that the bridge on Bromham Road over the railway line between Biddenham and Bedford is going to be demolished and rebuilt when Network Rail electrifies this part of the railway. Cllr Chase suggested there should be a representative from the Parish Council to liaise with Borough highways regarding this project. The work will take place (or at least start) some time this year, after the works to the Ford End Road bridge in Queens Park are completed. Cllr Chase had been advised Andrew Prigmore will be leading planning for these works, and will liaise with him and Borough Cllrs Rigby and Gambold.

P Chase

13. Date of next meeting: Wednesday 7 February

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Approved by Chairman 7th February 2018