

Minutes

Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Rodney Stoke Parish Council held in the Draycott Memorial Hall, Latches Lane, Draycott on Thursday 29th February 2024 at 7pm

Present: Cllr Sealey (Chairman) and Cllrs Bullen, Daynes, Dearden, Dollins, Dudden, Gladman, McGovarin, Ward. Also present were Somerset Cllr R Wyke, Richard Greenwell constituency Support Officer to James Heappey MP and the Parish Clerk. 128 members of the public were present including a member of Cheddar Parish Council and representatives from the Rev Cobley Playing Field Committee, the Memorial Hall Committee.

The Chairman welcomed everyone and introduced himself and the Councillors and the parties represented at the meeting. It was noted that Colbolt Consultancy had declined to attend and they hoped the discussion would be more open without them.

262.1 Apologies for absence: Cllr Williams, who is out of the country. Tessa Munt also sent apologies.

262.2 Declarations of Interest: None

262.3 Introduction The Chairman reviewed the proposal including the following matters: It was noted that there is no information or detail on the development itself; The conceptual drawings of the access have been published along with Colbolt Consultancy Limited's responses to the questions submitted by residents; The proposal as received was outlined; It was noted that the Parish Council are the custodial trustees of the hall and car park, the hall and car park are managed by the Memorial Hall Committee who are a charity and are managing trustees; The field is protected as a Field in Trust; The land known as the overflow car park is registered to the Parish Council; A request from a resident at the previous meeting for more signage on Westfield Lane had been actioned and Somerset Council will be adding more signage to Westfield Lane and some other areas of the village, The Wells police beat team have also been asked to include this area in their rounds; The Parish boundary runs through the playing field and hall; As the development land is in the Mendip area the Planning East team will be dealing with any application in consultation with Planning North; It was noted that at the moment the Parish Council is information gathering and decisions will be made in public meetings.

Standing order 3f was suspended to allow extended public participation time.

262.4 Public Participation: To provide for an open discussion on the potential proposal for an access via the Memorial Hall drive and Latches Lane to land to the rear of Cross Farm Road, the playing field, the Memorial Hall and Westfield Lane

An often heated discussion took place, which included the following matters:

- A copy of the freehold and leasehold title register documents for the hall and the Fields in Trust Deed of Dedication were provided by a resident who discussed the covenant 'to use the property for agricultural allotment, equestrian or recreational purposes only and for no other use whatsoever.' Charity law, court orders and the degree of legal risk to all parties involved were raised.

It was noted that the Parish Council will take legal advice and that there would be a cost.

- The Fields in Trust deed of dedication: including potential replacement land, equivalent quality and how that will be measured.

- How will the views of parish will be collated.

It was noted that views would be listened to when making decisions.

- How will it be a transparent process, a vote should be taken

It was noted that ultimately the Parish Council will make the final decision. Decisions will be made at Parish Council Meetings.

- Why is there no development in Rodney Stoke.

The discussions in 2014 regarding land allocations in the local plan were reviewed including arguments to include Rodney Stoke and the decision by the Mendip planning team that there would be no development in Rodney stoke.

- Ethical considerations for the Council as custodians
- Support will be from those the access will not affect.
- Difficulty of access by vehicles such as recycling lorries on narrow lanes such as North Close
- Lack of facilities for existing residents
- Lack of doctors
- Facilities for new residents and the statutory duty to provide facilities
- The local plan was reviewed by Cllr Wyke at the request of a resident including that the current local plan runs until a new local plan is in place, which would be within five years of vesting date (2028); The existing local plan housing figures are a minimum not a maximum; The land allocation recognises the access problem.
- The natural dip in the environment on the site and the problem of the glut of water.
- How would the developer help farmers who use the lane as a drove
- Does the land have services.
- Why haven't you taken legal advice

It was noted that legal advice will be taken, the first step was to hear from residents

- Replacement land for Fields in Trust agreement: where would it be and why

Noted that it could be behind play area.

- The lack of doctors
- One potential access is through Cross Farm Road which is used by all the local school children. It needs to be a safe access to school.
- The access through Cross Farm Road would not be good for anybody
- (School children) also go through the lane into north close

- The additional amenity value of the driveway for alternative uses (examples as a bike track and as pollution free land for users of the playing field were given)
- The Council should take the plan to Somerset highways for their opinion and input.
- What guarantees are there that the road will be maintained
- More comprehensive drawings should be requested to consult on
- Using the land other than specified in the covenant between Somerset Council and the Parish Council. Breach, releasing the covenant and transferring the covenant were also discussed.
- Considering residents feelings on the proposal and having a non-binding vote or survey
- The Council may be subject to criticism if they don't have a survey/vote
- The large financial gain and what would be done with the money. Would this be considered at a meeting.
- The impacts to the A371 if it closed, and what would be done.
- Problems with the refuse collections, creation of a one way system and impassable lanes during construction.
- Access for residents during construction and previous issues with other roadworks.
- That there are too many vehicles in the village already. A further 200/240 cars will be a huge problem.
- Parking problems in the village and the impact of further vehicles. The lanes must be investigated as a priority.
- Speed limits must be reviewed. Traffic calming measures for access to the first school and arrangements for travel to secondary school must be considered.
- Fast moving vehicles on Wells Rd must be addressed.
- The roads in the village aren't suitable (for the development)
- Once a decision has been made legal advice should be taken.
- In the letter from Colbolt Consultancy Limited regarding future development – could they afford the access road if additional land isn't allocated for development.

Somerset Cllr Wyke reviewed the recent call for sites and that there was no further allocation of land in the Parish; Any further allocation would not be until the next Local Plan; That you can apply for planning on any (unallocated) land; the current consultation on the limited update to the Local Plan.

- Has the developer stipulated when they want a decision

The Chairman noted that no decision will be made until the Council is ready.

- There is little information how will the decision be made.

The Chairman noted that they are not making a decision and need as much information as possible before decisions can be made.

- Advice should be sought on legal conditions to prohibit development
- Can you stipulate that you would want the access done first as part of any agreement

The Chairman noted that we could request it and ask that it is a legal stipulation.

There was a discussion about infrastructure and poor completion of stipulations in nearby local developments.

There was a discussion about falling birth rates in Somerset, spaces in primary schools and the need for families.

- The impact of traffic movements up and down the drive on users of the playing field
- What will happen to farmers who run their cattle up and down the lane
- The next generation and fumes from the traffic
- Can the Council supply printed information

It was agreed that the Clerk will ask if the shop will hold copies of the Minutes for the meeting

- It was again requested to seek everyone's views
- The legal position still applies
- What are the views of the hall committee

It was noted that their responses and comments were included in the questions submitted to the consultants.

It was noted that a comment had been received verbally that it might be good for the village.

- The village doesn't need 90 more houses to increase profits for landowners
- The roads are not built for 600 + movements a day, with deliveries etc and movements to The Laurels. The response should be for the good of the residents.
- The junction of Westfield Lane cant cope with the traffic. It is not feasible to increase traffic particularly with heavy machinery.
- The access for emergency vehicles is poor
- On the access on Westfield lane 99% of the traffic will head towards Draycott

The Chairman noted that during the 2014 consultation it was agreed that the access to the site was awful. The Council has been approached by the consultants and are seeking the residents views. Legal investigations will be undertaken on whatever decision is made.

- Will there definitely be a planning application

It was noted that if the Council refused the request to sell the land the agent may still go ahead with an application and the usual process of planning consultation would be followed.

Cllr Wyke noted that the key thing would be to talk about the difficulty with the access; Any of the accesses will impact the community; more housing is needed in Somerset, numbers of young people and homeless; smaller homes are needed over 4/5 bedroom homes.

Draycott does not have an issue with phosphates to slow the planning system.

It was also noted that with regard to the consultants answer on social housing, of the 30% of affordable housing provision 80% is social housing and 20% is affordable shared ownership.

- There was a request to publish an explanation of the planning system.

Cllr Wyke is to investigate

- Development impacts to pollution of water courses and Draycott's unmonitored pollution.

- The land itself is agricultural ground - the field should be protected

- There could be an anonymous vote – if the result was against it we don't go ahead

The chairman noted that everybody needs a chance to put forward their views and this access may not be the end to the development of the land

- If the houses are knocked down to use Cross Farm Road, the chicane on the main road becomes extremely dangerous (from additional traffic at junction of Cross Farm Road)
- This meeting should be about the access by the hall

It was discussed that the Council are trying to take a balanced view as, if the land is not sold to create this access, they may try a different access.

It was discussed that they may not succeed with the other accesses.

It was discussed that the development may be reduced to smaller parcels of land.

- The importance of land to grow food on

262.5 Date of next meeting: Full Parish Council Meeting March 21st, 2024

Time of closing meeting: 9.36pm