

HOUGHTON AND WYTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Parish Council Meeting** held on Wednesday 1 December 2021, 7:00pm.

Present: Cllr C Spearing (Chair) Cllr R Baxendale
Cllr D Bonny Cllr P Boothman
Cllr N Elborn Cllr B Gilmour
Cllr R Guinea Cllr A Skinner

Staff present: Lois Dale, Parish Clerk and Lane Thompson, Timebank Coordinator

There were 7 members of the public present.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr D Keane.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED: The minutes of the Parish Meeting of 3 November 2021 be agreed as a correct record.

Proposed: Cllr Skinner; Seconded: Cllr Bonny. For: 7 Abstentions: 1

5. MATTERS ARISING

The Action List was reviewed and will be updated.

A columnar Amelanchier tree has been planted at the cemetery in memory of the late Tree Warden Mrs Gilbert.

A risk assessment of the Parish Council assets is in progress, with a projected completion date of 31 Jan 2022. **ACTION: AS & Clerk**

Cllr Skinner contacted CCC Highways about the damage caused to a verge in Thicket Road due to vehicle parking. They have agreed to help with this and options will be discussed. **ACTION: AS & Clerk**

As there has been no update on a revised Code of Conduct, it was agreed that the Clerk should circulate any information that is available. **ACTION: Clerk**

A meeting of volunteers has been arranged to discuss plans to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. Anyone interested in joining can contact the Clerk.

A Smart electricity meter is to be fitted at the Clock Tower on 7 Dec, if possible. After sending an accurate meter reading, the account is now in credit.

The application to restrict parking times at the layby on the A1123 is in progress.

CCC Highways have been contacted again about vehicle use on the Thicket footpath. HDC Planning have been asked to clarify if an application is needed to change use of a field off the Thicket footpath.

The Clerk will get quotes to cut back the cemetery hedge. **ACTION: Clerk**

A Tree Survey on all trees on Parish Council owned or managed land will take place in Jan or Feb 2022.

The enforcement officer looking at the damage caused to trees behind 3 Home Farm Road has been asked for an update.

The Timebank constitution has been reviewed and a draft for a revision will be circulated. Further discussion is needed for any further changes. **ACTION: AS, PB and LT**

The Sports Clubs were asked to clear the lockers in the Pavilion changing rooms. The Clerk will check if this has been done and if not the clubs will be reminded with a deadline after which any contents will be removed and disposed of. **ACTION: Clerk**

It was confirmed that the landowners of the eastern part of the Playing Field are happy for trees to be planted on the land subject to confirmation of the locations.

The Clerk is still waiting for HDC to confirm if the Parish Council can plant trees on Loxley Green or on other HDC owned land.

More bark has been put on the play area surface.

The Parish Council has joined the Homewatch group set up by a resident for Mill Street, Chapel Lane and The Green.

6. DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORT.

No District or County Councillors were present.

7. CLERK AND RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICERS REPORT

7.1. To authorise payments due

RESOLVED: The payments be approved and paid.

Proposed: Cllr Elborn, Seconded: Cllr Boothman. All in favour.

7.2. To approve prepared budget for 2022-23

RESOLVED: The budget was reviewed by councillors and is agreed.

Proposed: Cllr Guinea; Seconded: Cllr Baxendale. All in favour. **ACTION: Clerk**

7.3. To agree proposed precept request for 2022-23

RESOLVED: A precept request for £80,000 will be made to HDC.

Proposed: Cllr Gilmour; Seconded: Cllr Bonny. All in favour. **ACTION: Clerk**

7.4. To approve Parish Council membership of the Institute of Crematorium and Cemetery Management

RESOLVED: Membership of this organisation, at an annual cost of £95 is approved.

Proposed: Cllr Elborn, Seconded: Cllr Skinner. All in favour. **ACTION: Clerk**

To approve meeting dates for 2022

The meeting dates were approved. Parish Council Meetings will be on the first Wednesday of each month, except Wed 12 Jan, Wed 11 May and Wed 8 June. Dates are subject to change if necessary and dates and agendas will be displayed on the Parish Council noticeboard at The Green and on the Parish Council website.

8. PLANNING MATTERS

8.1. G1 Ash: Reduce overhanging branches to boundary up to 4m lateral reduction. Over-extended limbs overhang the garden and the site of a new garage building. Proposed work will reduce the risk of branch breakage and damage to the new building The Elms Thicket Road Houghton Ref. No: 21/02489/TREE

RESOLVED: Houghton & Wyton Parish Council recommend that this application be REFUSED for the following reasons:

The trees are in the garden of The Elms, within a conservation area and subject to a tree preservation order.

The trees have been subject to previous pruning and the Parish Council does not object to the pruning of these trees again, if it is done professionally and with the utmost care to safeguard the trees.

However, the planning application is related to the construction of a new garage building for which planning approval was granted on 22 January 2016 (Ref. No. 15/00586/HHFUL). This did not include any necessity for pruning but was granted with several conditions attached to it which need to be checked to ensure they have/ are being carried out correctly.

We refer to two conditions in particular:

1. Construction should be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of permission.
2. The development needed to be carried out and completed in accordance with the approved 'Arboricultural Report for Development', dated 11 September 2015, compiled by Christopher Overbeke of OMC Associates, and the information

received from the applicant by email on 23.09.2015, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

The reason given was to ensure the protected trees are adequately protected during the construction process.

The Arboricultural Report states that trees along the boundary and within The Elms comprise extremely tall, 21m and over, extended ash trees approximating 140 years that have been crown lifted over The Russets to approximately 13m with the remaining crowns extending significantly over the property. Though as individual trees these would be etiolated, asymmetric specimens prone to windthrow, as a group they form a notable element in the landscape.

The arboriculturist recommended extensive measures to protect these trees during construction, establishing Root Protection areas; a construction exclusion zone; guidance on root pruning; maximum depths and construction of the new concrete slab; ground protection requirements; as well as the sequence of construction for the driveway (in advance of the new garage and using no-dig methodology).

It stated that the Tree Officer should be informed and given the opportunity to inspect tree protection measures prior to commencement of the development. And these procedures must be followed and liaison with the arboriculturist be maintained.

When the application for the new garage was made, there existed a row of conifers along the driveway which the officers report described as not indigenous trees but they are considered to provide a green buffer between this site and the adjacent listed building, The Elms. This buffer is to be retained.

However later in 2016 approval was granted to have these trees removed (Ref 16/01059/TRCA) and hence since this time, the Ash trees subject to this current application have taken on a greater significance as the buffer between this site and the listed building.

Therefore, before considering approving the application for pruning, we would ask that the construction of the new garage is checked and that the trees have been/are being adequately protected in accordance with the conditions laid down by the council.

Proposed: Cllr Boothman; Seconded: Cllr Gilmour. All in favour.

8.2. Demolition of the existing conservatory and then replace with a single storey extension 4 Wessell Houghton Huntingdon PE28 2DG Ref. No: 21/02296/HHFUL

RESOLVED: Houghton & Wyton Parish Council find there is insufficient detail in this application to make an informed decision. There is no Design and Access Statement, the drawings are too small to examine and the conversion of the garage to living space is not directly mentioned. It is unclear if the garage conversion, which will lead to a loss of valuable parking space, is permitted development for this property.

Proposed: Cllr Skinner; Seconded: Cllr Gilmour. All in favour.

8.3. Removal of the existing roof of bungalow. First floor extension to whole property.

Ground floor single storey extension to north-east corner of house. Conversion of existing storage barn and renovation into a guest suite. Alteration to an existing summer house with re-cladding and re-roofing. New timber frame car port structure. Associated soft and hard landscaping works and drainage to the site. Removal of existing trees & replanting of replacement trees. Change of name from 'Arkady' to 'Thicket Hollow'. Arkady Thicket Road Houghton Huntingdon PE28 2BQ Ref. No: 21/02515/HHFUL

Members of the public and the applicants agent were permitted to comment and respond to councillor's questions during this item.

RESOLVED: Houghton & Wyton Parish Council recommend that this application be REFUSED for the following reasons:

The planning application would be in conflict with the Development Management policies outlined in section C of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan - policies **LP11, LP12, LP14, LP17** and the Houghton & Wyton Neighbourhood Plan policy **HWNP17**.

Reasoned justification

Section C: of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan covers Development Management policies and in section 2. states: *NPPF in planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Planning Portal advises that material considerations can include (but are not limited to):*

- *Overlooking/ loss of privacy*
- *Loss of light and overshadowing*
- *Layout and density of building.*

LP11 Design Context requires that *a proposal will be supported where it is demonstrated that it responds positively to its context and has drawn inspiration from key characteristics of its surroundings.*

The Parish Council can see little/no evidence that the proposal has drawn inspiration from key characteristics of its surroundings which typically consist of low-rise buildings, with traditional sloping pitch roofs, and therefore feel it will be incongruous to its immediate surroundings.

LP12 Design Implementation requires *new development to be well designed based upon a thorough understanding of constraints and appraisal of the site's context.*

The Parish Council feel that the constraints around privacy, avoiding overlooking neighbouring properties, protection of amenity, avoiding overbearing and massing the largely open sky line, protection of views from the lanes running north west of the site, obtrusive light from first floor windows, and noise from the positioning of the carport building on the boundary next to the neighbour's bedroom, have not been adequately understood or addressed.

The policy also states under Response to context that a proposal

- Contributes positively to the area's character and identity*
- Successfully integrates with adjoining buildings. the routes and spaces between buildings, topography and landscape.*
- Creates attractive and appropriately scaled built frontages to positively enhance the townscape, avoiding the introduction of incongruous and/or intrusive elements into key views and vistas.*

The north west corner of the site where the proposed conversion of an existing timber clad building is situated, adjoins the Character Area in the Houghton & Wyton Neighbourhood Plan known as The Lanes, an unspoilt, natural, rural footpath with no street lighting.

The site also contributes to the Thicket Road Character Area by means of its entrance.

The west facing elevation of existing bungalow roof is shielded by vegetation but still visible from The Lanes and becoming more so as the leaves fall and winter takes over. The existing bungalow roof line extends horizontally for some 5.6m at its highest ridge point before sloping away on both sides in a traditional manner.

The roof of the proposed building would be much more extensive. Not only would it be taller across its two sections by between 0.8m and 1.3m, but also extending horizontally by some 13.5m. The roof is square in appearance producing an imposing rectangular block structure on this west elevation, far more visible from the Lanes and incongruous to the small number of other roof lines and buildings that are visible. Unlike the existing bungalow, the proposed house would also have numerous large windows at first floor level which would reflect and draw attention to the structure, particularly when lights were on inside.

We do not feel that this would contribute positively to the area's character or identity.

LP14 Amenity requires *that amenity is maintained for occupiers of neighbouring land and buildings.* It states that a proposal will be required to ensure:

- the physical relationships arising from the design and separation of buildings are not oppressive or overbearing, and in particular will not result in overlooking causing loss of privacy.*

The proposal includes a large balcony extending over a flat roof extension and which would look over, and directly into, four properties positioned north, east, and west of the site. This would adversely affect the amenity of neighbouring land and buildings to a degree that in our opinion would be unacceptable.

C. The predicted noise impacts, including internal and external levels, timing, duration and character, will be acceptable.

The proposal locates a car port for 3 vehicles directly on the boundary and within 3m of the main bedroom used by the residents of Woodcroft. The potential for noise and even fumes from the positioning of this is of great concern to the residents and ignores the constraints and limitations of this site on development.

LP14 goes on to state: *D. That predicted adverse impacts from the following sources will be made acceptable: i. obtrusive light*

The proposal is for a house with large windows, some being floor to ceiling atrium style having sharp angular glass sections following the contours of the roof gables. Upper floor windows will inevitably shed light onto the neighbouring properties and especially that of Woodcroft which being situated close by has the potential for its house and garden area to be lit up by the proposed building.

We are not convinced that proposed vegetation will sufficiently screen the light, or that blinds would be sufficient to shield the light or indeed always be closed at night - especially for the more difficult upper triangular sections of glass.

It bears repeating that all of the surrounding properties as well as those frequently using The Lanes will be affected by the view of light where currently there is none to be seen.

LP14 para 5.26 states that *more intensive forms of development make more efficient use of land and buildings, but have greater potential to impact on their surroundings. A key role of the planning system is to ensure that new development does not have an adverse impact on the amenity of existing properties*

As described earlier and having visited the properties in the vicinity, we are sufficiently convinced that this proposal will have an adverse impact on existing properties.

LP14 para 5.27 states: *must ensure that new developments do not materially alter the light levels outside the development and/or have the potential to adversely affect the use or enjoyment of nearby buildings or open spaces.*

The effect of light at night has been covered earlier and we believe will adversely affect the enjoyment of those living in neighbouring properties as well as impacting upon the dark, unspoilt and rural nature of The Lanes.

LP 14 para 5.28 Requires *minimisation of disturbance through obtrusive light*

The potential light spill onto the garden and into the bedrooms and conservatory of Woodcroft is not to be underestimated. The first floor of the proposed building will be hard to screen even with planting a substantial hedge which may have to be grown above the acceptable hedge action height - so creating another issue that of loss of light into the garden and rooms of the dwelling.

LP17 Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement

A proposal will be supported provided it takes account of

e. The amenity of existing and future occupiers and users of the development and nearby property

The residents of Woodcroft are justifiably concerned about the proposed three vehicle car port being positioned so close to their bedroom and do not consider that the proposal has taken sufficient consideration to the loss of amenity that would result.

Houghton & Wyton Neighbourhood Plan policy HWNP 17 states: *New development will be supported where it can demonstrate that the following criteria are all met:*

- *It responds positively to the heritage and distinctive features of any Character Area in which it is situated and pays particular attention to the sites topography and height, scale, spacing, layout, orientation and materials.*

- *Where the development is located at the edge of the settlement it takes account of and respects the character of adjacent countryside by providing landscaping and or/developing at lower height as appropriate to reflect its fringe location.*

Whilst not at the very edge of the settlement, the village does start to blend into the countryside even before one reaches this site. Pavements disappear and merge into grass verges without kerb stones, low density street lighting takes over, houses become more spaced and set back from the road.

The properties immediately surrounding this site to the north, east, and south pay attention to this and are single storey whilst to the west are positioned further away and closer to the main settlement.

Whilst we generally like the design and internal layout of this proposal, we feel the height, scale, and position particularly in relation to neighbouring properties and seen from The Lanes fails this policy as it does not sufficiently respect its setting.

We are also concerned that an existing, functional property has to effectively be demolished in order to provide the footprint for it and the environmental impact of this. In summary, we feel it is a well-designed building but not suited to be built on the footprint of the current bungalow and where a lower density construction would have far greater merit.

Proposed: Cllr Boothman; Seconded: Cllr Gilmour. All in favour.

8.4. Houghton Grange phase 1

There is no update.

8.5. Homes England – update

A meeting to present the proposed planning application for Houghton Grange phase 2 to the Parish Council will be arranged for the third week in January. It is likely that neighbouring parishes will be consulted prior to this. This parish council has asked, that as the development is in this parish, the application is not submitted until after the January meeting

It has been confirmed that no more information will be released in relation to the Freedom of Information request made to Homes England. The Information Commissioner Office have been informed.

RESOLVED: Following an initial free consultation with a specialist solicitor, £1,240 be approved for a review of information and provision of advice regarding the Parish Council situation at Houghton Grange phase 2.

Proposed: Cllr Boothman, Seconded: Cllr Baxendale. All in favour

8.6. Community Land Trust (CLT)

Cllrs Baxendale and Boothman had a meeting with the MP Jonathan Djanogly to ask for his support in setting up a CLT and encouraging Homes England and HDC to take community housing initiatives into consideration. Letters will be drafted for him to approve and send.

Initial talks have been held with Laragh Homes in relation to building community housing. This will be progressed.

An application will be made for a grant towards setting up a CLT.

8.7. Other Planning Matters

An appeal has been submitted by the applicant to the Secretary of State following HDC's non-determination of an application to develop the former photo factory on Sawtry Way, Ref 19/02106/FUL.

Residents have submitted an application to reduce the crown of an Elm tree on the playing field by 25%. This tree is on Parish Council land and is covered by TPO 04/68.

9. HOUGHTON CEMETERY

The proposed regulations were accepted. This includes amending any unbought ashes

plots to 2 foot by 2 foot, but allowing double depth. The fee increase will apply from January 2022. **ACTION: Clerk**

The application for the discharge of condition 3 on the planning approval for the cemetery extension has been submitted.

Cllr Elborn and the Clerk will meet a representative from the Wildlife Trust Churchyard Conservation award scheme to discuss work needed on the land. **ACTION: NE & Clerk**

10.TREE PLANTING IN THE PARISH

There is no further progress.

10.PARISH COUNCIL VISION

Parish Councillors and the Clerk met to discuss potential actions and projects for the future. Notes of the meeting have been circulated and actions allocated to councillors. It is asked that these are completed by the February Parish Council meeting.

11. PROJECTS IN THE PIPELINE

11.1. Land West of Houghton Cemetery

The landowner intends to submit a planning application soon.

11.2. A1123 Speed Reduction Local Highway Initiative 2022/23- update

CCC Highways have asked for traffic speed data. The data from the report has been submitted and Joanna Read at SLR Consultants has agreed to help if needed.

11.3. Mill Street Local Highway Initiative 2021/22

There is no update.

11.4. HDC CIL application for Pedestrian / Cycle way A1123

A meeting with the CCC Highways project manager is still awaited. **ACTION: DK & RG**

12.CORRESPONDENCE

- The Bowls Club are planning on installing an irrigation system for the Bowls Green and have asked the Parish Council to pay for a new water tank and pipes. A meeting will be arranged to discuss further. **ACTION: DB**
- There have been reports of anti-social behaviour, drug taking and vandalism around the playing field car park, scout hut and tennis courts. The Tennis Club will be advised that they can install lights and camera for their hut if they feel it is necessary. **ACTION: Clerk**
- A resident had complained about the large step up to a bridge on footpath 3, past the campsite. It was noted that work was being done here.
- Cllr Boothman attended a meeting of the Great Ouse Valley Trust focussing on tourism. The discussion emphasised the need for groups and areas to work together to both promote and protect the area. The Regional Manager for the National Trust, including Houghton Mill spoke about the need to manage the activities there to protect the site. She confirmed with Cllr Boothman that she would like to involve the Parish Council in their 3 year strategic planning and to learn about Parish Council vision ideas. A meeting will be arranged in January. **ACTION: Clerk**

13.ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Daffodils have been planted on the triangle of land at the entrance to Wyton. CCC will be informed and asked to not cut them.
- It was agreed that the Clerk should apply for a 30-day trial of Parish Online; a user-friendly mapping system design for local councils.
- The Clerk will ask the resident at Walden House, Laughtons Lane to cut back ivy that is growing out into the road, causing some cars to move into the middle of the road on a dangerous bend and also resulting in scratches to vehicles. **ACTION: Clerk**

- It was noted that the Houghton & Wyton Community Flood Group was featured in the Hunts Post. The Parish Council congratulated the group for all its work so far. A copy of the Flood Plan will be obtained to go on the Parish Council website.

ACTION: Clerk

14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be on Wed 12 January 2022, 7pm.

Signed:..... Date: