

HOUGHTON AND WYTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Parish Council Meeting** held on Wednesday 9 September 2020, 7:00pm.

This was the fourth remotely held meeting of the Parish Council under The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 Using Zoom.

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

Staff present: Lois Dale, Parish Clerk,

There were six members of the public present

ACTION

<p>1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE There were no apologies for absence.</p>	
<p>2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST Cllr Boothman made a declaration of interest in item 10.1 as his property borders the application site. However, his property is not affected by the application. Cllr Gilmour declared an interest in item 12.3 as he is a resident of Victoria Crescent.</p>	
<p>3. PUBLIC COMMENT A resident asked if the Parish Council had any further information on the tenancy of the National Trust custodian of Houghton Mill. They do not.</p>	
<p>4. MINUTES RESOLVED: The minutes of the Houghton & Wyton Parish Council meeting of 1 July 2020 were approved. Proposed: Cllr Boothman, Seconded: Cllr Spearing. All in favour RESOLVED: The minutes of the Houghton & Wyton Parish Council meeting of 12 August 2020 were approved with minor amendments. Proposed: Cllr Bonny, Seconded: Cllr Boothman. All in favour</p>	
<p>5. MATTERS ARISING The Chair thanked all residents who wrote to Stagecoach to express concern about proposed changes to the guided bus service on the A1123. It is confirmed that there are no changes to the guided bus service which will continue to serve the stops on the A1123 and Hartford Marina every 20 minutes. There is also a new hourly service through the village. This does still leave Pine Hill Park and Wyton on the Hill without a nearby bus service. D Cllr Keane will organise a meeting with Stagecoach and will include representatives from Wyton on the Hill Parish Council. A commendation request has been sent to Cambs County Council to recognise the hard work of Lane Thompson and the Timebank during the COVID-19 pandemic response. Cllr Boothman is drafting a response to the planning White Paper in consultation. Cllr Elborn confirmed that she was progressing work on improving the signage through our parish on the Great Ouse Valley Way with the Great Ouse Valley Trust.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">DK</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PB NE</p>
<p>6. CLOCKWINDERS The retiring Clockwinder was thanked for his dedicated 15 years' service and wished a happy retirement. He was asked to collect a gift of thanks from the Parish Council Office. The new clockwinder was welcomed and the Clerk will arrange a convenient time to meet and discuss any issues. It was confirmed that</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Clerk</p>

<p>the retiring Clock winder is happy to cover any absences</p>	
<p>7. DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORTS The District Council is going through its budget cycle. Car Park charges will be reinstated at all HDC car parks from 21 September as more businesses and work places open. This will bring in much needed income. HDC is also looking at the new proposed Planning legislation. D Cllr Keane confirmed that HDC has lost revenue due to closure of income generating services, such as Leisure Centres, but the entire situation is not clear. D Cllr Keane confirmed that HDC is looking at the potential proposals for devolution within local government and this will need further discussion with all those involved; he will report this to the Parish Council.</p>	
<p>8. CLERK AND RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICER'S REPORT 8.1 To authorise payments due RESOLVED: All payments due be authorised. Proposed: Cllr Bonny; Seconded: Cllr Elborn. All in favour The Clerk agreed to cross reference any payments to their approval in the minutes and to close the payments list to new items two days before the meeting. This will mean that some invoices will have to be delayed and some paid before the next meeting so as not to breach the contract terms for payment. A Budget update and bank balances were also noted. It was noted that no contract has been let for a re-cycling bin at the pavilion. The Clerk will get this in place for when the Pavilion can reopen to more use.</p> <p>The Clerk has compared electricity prices for the supply to the Pavilion and instructed a new supplier, this will be repeated for the Clock Tower. Cllr Boothman suggested that at the next renewal the source of electricity be considered to ensure it is as 'green' as possible. It was suggested that solar panel installation could be considered. The office phone and broadband will transfer to a cheaper supplier in a few weeks.</p> <p>Competitive insurance quotes are being sought and this needs to be in place by 1 October. RESOLVED: authority is delegated to Cllr Baxendale, Cllr Bonny and the Clerk to choose the best insurance cover. Proposed: Cllr Spearing; Seconded: Cllr Gilmour. All in favour.</p>	<p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>Clerk</p> <p>RB, DB & Clerk</p>
<p>9. COUNCILLOR VACANCIES AND TREE WARDEN APPLICANTS Tree Warden – there has been one applicant and a few enquires. It was agreed that Cllr Boothman, Cllr Gilmour and the Clerk be delegated to make an appointment. Councillor vacancies –the publicity for the vacancies will be continued. The selection will be held at the Parish Council meeting on 7 October. Applications will be accepted until 30 September.</p>	<p>PB, BG & Clerk</p>
<p>10. PLANNING MATTERS 10.1. Erect mild steel (painted dark grey) railings along front boundary of property. The Manor, Thicket Road, Houghton Huntingdon. Ref. No: 20/01567/HHFUL RESOLVED: Houghton & Wyton Parish Council recommend that this planning application be APPROVED. Houghton & Wyton Neighbourhood Plan Policy 5, Greens and verges, refers. Thicket Road is also a defined Character Area, into which any new design needs</p>	<p>Clerk</p>

<p>to fit. This recognises that Thicket Road becomes more rural as it leaves the village centre.</p> <p>There are other properties with railings in Thicket Road, but it is not known if railings were ever present at The Manor.</p> <p>The Parish Council would like to see the railings slightly lower in height, more in keeping with the height of the current fence. As metal railings could be seen as a more urban design, the Parish Council would not find this design acceptable any further away from the centre of the village. However, the proposed railings will not significantly alter the property and are in keeping with its age.</p> <p>Proposed: Cllr Boothman; Seconded: Cllr Bonny. All in favour</p> <p>10.2. Action plan in response to Homes England proposals for Houghton Grange.</p> <p>A briefing note and questionnaire will be inserted into the village magazine. The article is attached as an appendix to these minutes. The same articles will be made available from Facebook and on the Parish Council website. A meeting of councillors will be arranged to finalise the questionnaire and the Parish Council response. The Parish Council will also meet with District Councillors with the objective of agreeing a co-ordinated response to Homes England.</p> <p>Homes England have asked for a meeting with the Parish Council and it was agreed this needs to be held before they arrange any public meeting. A response will be drafted to arrange a meeting before the next Parish Council meeting.</p> <p>10.3. Other Planning Matters</p> <p>It is noted that work has been carried out on the pasture field at the end of Thicket Road. The land has been levelled, the pond dredged and dug out. The situation will be monitored. This is a designated Green Space in the Neighbourhood Plan.</p>	RB
<p>11. RIPARIAN RIGHTS</p> <p>A meeting will be arranged to discuss this with representatives of the Environment Agency, potentially at or before the next Parish Council meeting.</p>	Clerk
<p>12. PROJECTS IN THE PIPELINE</p> <p>12.1. Cemetery Extension</p> <p>Plans are being prepared for consultation with the Parish Council.</p> <p>12.2. Cemetery Lych Gate and War Memorial</p> <p>Quotes are being obtained for both these works. The Clerk will check if there are any time constraints on the grant. It is unlikely that work can be completed before Remembrance Day, so work will be commissioned for after this.</p> <p>12.3. Parking restrictions at Victoria Crescent junction</p> <p>The scheme plan has been agreed and the consultation period will run from 16 September to 7 October. Notices will be posted locally.</p> <p>12.4. A1123 – appointment of independent Highway consultant</p> <p>A consultant has been asked to provide a scope and indicative budget for assessing the suitability of the A1123 through the Parish as 40mph speed limit.</p> <p>12.5. Bowls Club fence</p> <p>Contractors will be asked for quotes and different options to replace or repair the fencing around the Bowls Green.</p> <p>12.6. Priority actions from Tree Survey</p> <p>Tree surgeons will be asked to look at the work required and provide quotes. It is hoped this can be tied in with the appointment of a Tree Warden.</p>	Clerk CS BG RB Clerk Clerk
<p>13. NEW PARISH COUNCIL WEBSITE</p>	

<p>Cllr Bonny has set up a test site on Spanglefish. This will keep the same domain name. Cllrs Bonny, Keane and Spearing will meet to discuss this. It was noted that the photos on the website could be updated, and maybe some that have been entered to the Feast Week and Calendar competitions could be used. It is important to keep the information up to date, and the type of information contained will be decided.</p>	<p>DB, CS, DK</p>
<p>14. CORRESPONDENCE The relatives of a late resident of the village have asked if they can provide a Memorial bench for the village. Cllr Spearing will meet with their representative to find a suitable site and style. A resident has suggested that the Bus Stops on the A1123 should have a consistent name, as Stagecoach has used several different names for this stop in recent communications. This will be taken to the meeting to be arranged with Stagecoach. The resident was thanked for their suggestions.</p>	<p>CS DK & Clerk</p>
<p>15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS Cllr Keane agreed to look into the equipment needed to hold hybrid Parish Council meetings, which would allow the councillors to meet in a suitable room and the public could join the meeting via a remote platform. It was confirmed that the regulations that allow remote meetings are in force until May 2021.</p>	<p>DK</p>
<p>16. DATE OF NEXT MEETING The next meeting of the Parish Council, will be on Wednesday 7 October 2020, 7:00pm. The venue and arrangements for this meeting will be decided in line with legislation and guidance and will be publicised nearer the date.</p>	<p>Clerk</p>

Signed:..... Date:

'Save Our Gap'**Latest developments at Houghton Grange and next stages during 2020 from Houghton & Wyton Parish Council****1. Background:**

Homes England¹ have confirmed they are developing proposals for what they call Phase II development on land east of the Houghton Grange estate, which would result in 120 homes, open space and supporting infrastructure.

This builds on Phase I, the development of Houghton Grange itself, which was already approved for development by Morris Homes, and consisting of 107 homes including conversion of the main house to 5 flats.

The Phase II development is particularly sensitive and needs very careful planning as it will inevitably reduce the extent of the 'gap' between the village and St. Ives and which is protected in law through the District Council's Local Plan, and our very own Neighbourhood Plan.

The next steps involve engagement with local councils to consider what would be acceptable prior to the submission of a planning application at the end of this year. This will obviously kindle interest and set alarms ringing for residents in Houghton & Wyton. Hence the aim of this note is to put the proposal into a local planning context for everybody's information, both in terms of what has already been achieved, the resulting planning guidance and to outline how your Parish Council responds.

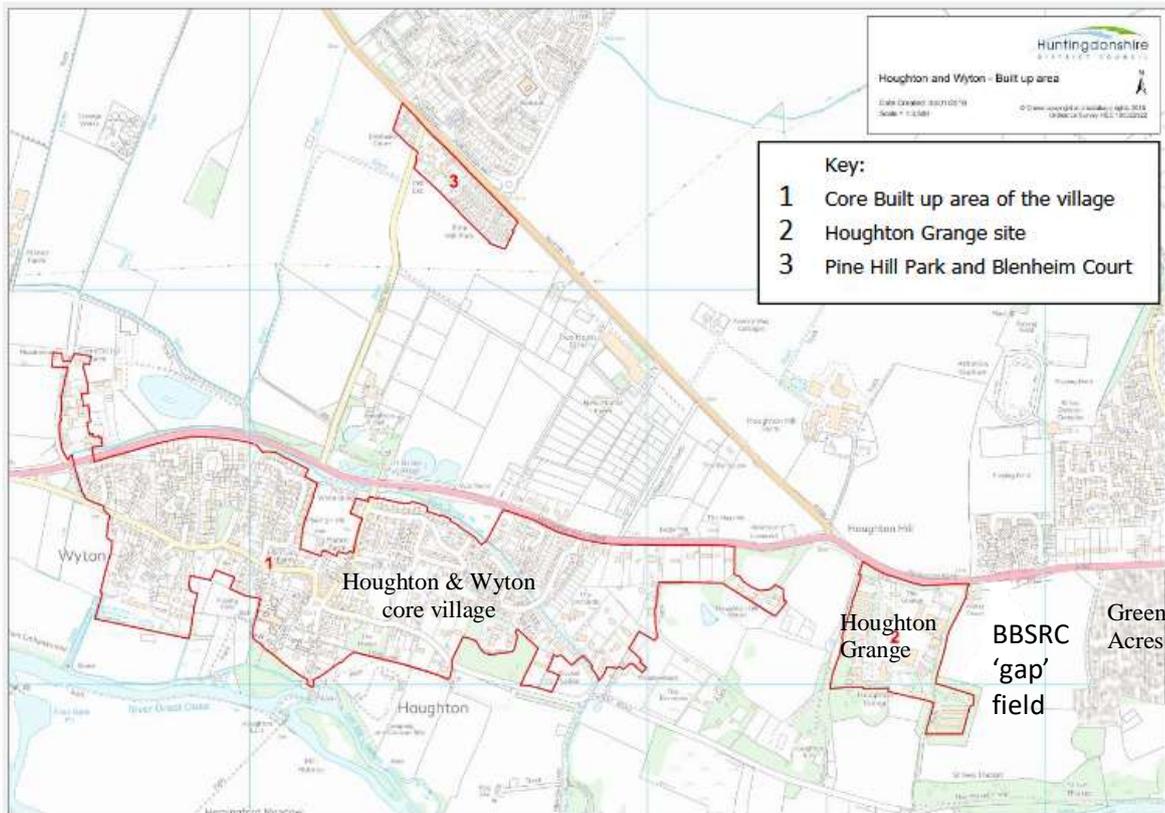
2. The Gap - A brief History of Time**Figure 3 Houghton and Wyton built up area**

Fig 1: Extract from The Houghton & Wyton Neighbourhood Plan 2018 adapted to show the gap field.

¹ Homes England is an executive non-departmental public body, sponsored by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government.

2.1 Where is the gap?

The character of village and market town is very different – one more rural and related to the countryside, the other more urban. Houghton & Wyton has always been separated from St.Ives by what is locally known as 'the gap'.

This area is defined in planning, and comprised mainly of a field owned by a government body called *The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC)* which is part of UK Research and Innovation, a non-departmental public body funded by a grant-in-aid from the government. The BBSRC field being a carryover part of the Houghton Grange estate when taken over as a poultry research laboratory in the 1960's.

2.2 How is it protected by the planning system?

Recognition of the need for a gap existed for decades until new district planning guidance was produced by way of a suite of documents called Local Development Documents in 2009. Sadly and for spurious reasons, production of this set of strategic planning documents was never finished but has left a lasting legacy.

One of the set that was completed was a document called the Core Strategy 2009 – a pure policy document but again with lots of controversy surround it. As a document it only covered half of what proper Local Development Documents should do and importantly didn't include any site allocations for where housing in the district should be built.

Hence it could only go so far and whilst establishing that approximately 500 homes could be built somewhere west of St.Ives, it couldn't say where. It didn't include a gap or green wedge policy either which would help protect settlements from merging, and through a vague direction of growth arrow on a map pointing westwards, left confused messages regards building on the BBSRC field (previously protected as our 'gap' field). Not completing the Development Framework properly led to years of problems, confusion, fighting battles, complaints and arguably mistakes.

During this period and in an attempt to fill the document gap a Supplementary Planning Document was put forward by HDC called the St.Ives Urban Design Framework (UDF). This supposedly justified building across the entirety of the hillside between St.Ives and Houghton Grange.

In 2013, the Parish Council and community pressure group SHED raised the funds for and won a judicial review to challenge this approach in the High Court. The judge decided that with an incomplete Development Document the process used to push through this proposal was illegal – there was no strategic planning policy justification to support it, and fearing it would be misused ordered it quashed immediately.

Several attempts by HDC/ developers to rekindle the St.Ives UDF and to have the so called gap moved westwards from the BBSRC field, to be made up of peoples gardens between Houghton Grange and the village, were all successfully dismissed.

Meanwhile without a robust Development Framework to fall back on and in order to protect and shape development in our own area, the H&W Neighbourhood Plan (HWNP) was developed.

HDC were slowly persuaded to give up trying to move and relocate the main gap away from the BBSRC field west of Houghton Grange. Likewise, Houghton Grange (excluding the BBSRC field) had already been approved for outline planning permission back in 2014, and given this, HDC slowly started to show support for its development to be seen as an extension of the village, thereby helping satisfy our own housing needs as well as that of St.Ives.

Many attempts to define the gap more precisely by mapping and even achieving a high level of protection by defining it in law as 'local green space' were tried, but rejected by the first examination of our plans.

Appendix

We subsequently made changes and exercised our right to have our plan re-examined, this time by a different examiner. Whilst still not achieving a 'mapped', rigid definition, through this approach we were able to gain acceptance for an anti-coalition policy (something rejected by the first examiner) along with a lengthy description of what constitutes the gap and where it must be located. The re-examination was successful, our plan was supported in a referendum by over 96% of the voting public and approved, attaining full legal planning status in 2018.

The policy is particularly strong as, rather than state as is usual in planning policy that that given certain circumstances, development could not be 'supported', in recognition of its importance, our policy goes further to state simply that development will not be 'permitted'.

Policy

Policy HWNP3 – Anti -coalescence

Development proposals should respect the individual and distinct identities of the village of Houghton and Wyton and the town of St Ives. Development will not be permitted if, individually or cumulatively, it would result in the loss of the visual and physical separation between these two settlements, or would lead to their coalescence.

Fig 2: Taken from Houghton & Wyton Neighbourhood Plan 2018.

Whilst this was going on, HDC were also busy producing a new, and this time complete, Development Framework for the district (the new name for Local Development Plans). The most important part of this is the so called Local Plan document which the Parish Council were heavily engaged with, providing the built up area criteria from development of our Neighbourhood Plan work and even taking an active part in a 3 day inspection hearing last year.

Hard fought battles were fought to reduce the number of houses to be built between village and town and to ensure it reflected the position taken in the Houghton & Wyton Neighbourhood Plan in terms of where the gap should be. This was achieved by the inclusion of an illustrative drawing of the area and gap or open, non-developed space within the site allocations section of the Local Plan and clearly stating '*A substantial band of greenspace should be retained through the portion of the BBSRC field to the east of the derelict buildings (old chicken sheds belonging to Houghton Grange) and up to the western edge of the residential development at 'The Spires'.*

Whilst the term 'substantial band' isn't defined as an measurement of area and therefore open to interpretation, combined with the illustration and backed up by our own legally binding Neighbourhood Plan, we are satisfied that this offers as much protection as we could reasonably expect.

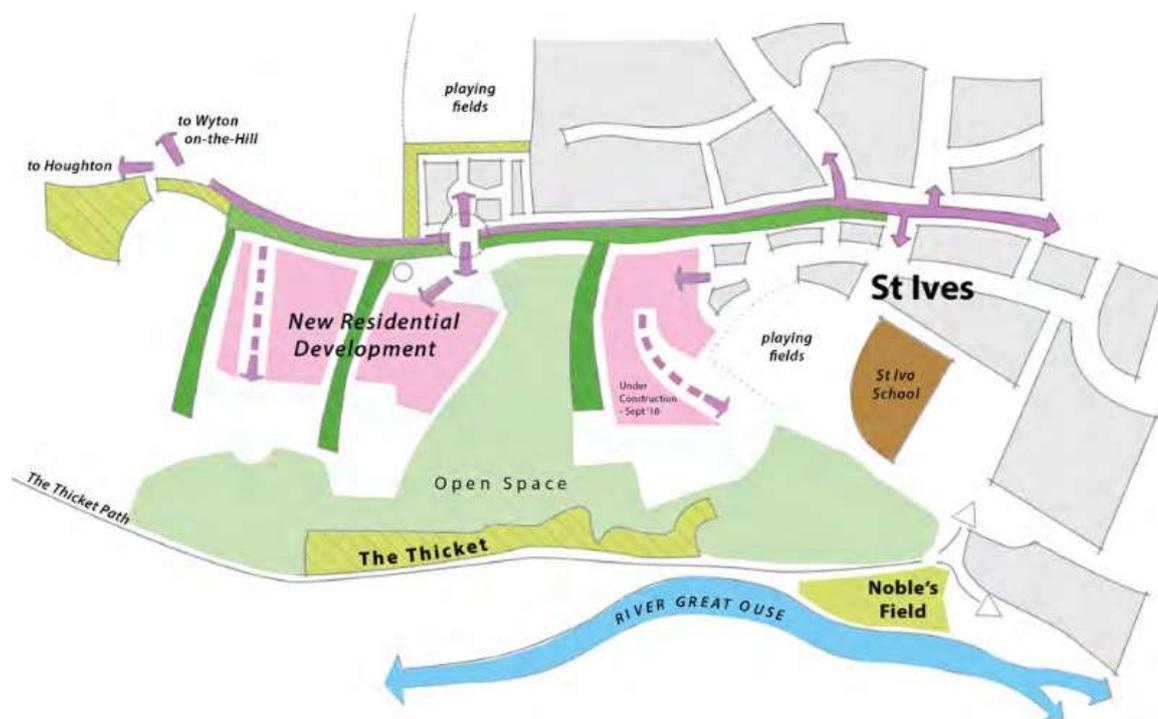


Fig 3: Extract from Huntingdon District Council Local Plan 2019.

3. What happens next?

Moving to present day, we are now aware that an application is due to come forward by Homes England. This is not a surprise, but whilst respecting the need to maintain a separation of village and town, we do expect their application will try to push the number of houses beyond the limits of what might be acceptable to us and justified by the Neighbourhood and Local Plans (The Development Framework).

We need to ensure it is compliant with planning policy, that the remaining gap is meaningful and relevant. Hence we now need to focus primarily on influencing and negotiating the size of the gap and what it looks like.

This involves agreeing the numbers of houses that can be accommodated; where they sit; their density; aspects of design; how this new extension to our community is connected to existing and new infrastructure requirements; how the impact on climate change and any increased risk of flooding can be mitigated; how we minimise the visual impacts from the meadows, the Hemingford's and when viewed upstream from St.Ives; how it can deliver real public benefit and a biodiversity net gain (now a key legal requirement); and establishing how the remaining gap will be managed and used (e.g. extending tree cover in the area). It also means negotiating a position whereby the remaining gap is protected thereafter.

Homes England are expected to reflect on our discussions and submit a full planning application towards the end of this year followed by a period of public consultation.

4. How to get in touch and express your opinions?

Complete the questionnaire enclosed in this magazine or follow the link to the on-line version on Facebook.

Appendix

This proposal will form the basis of a special Parish Council meeting which at the time of writing is still to be arranged for October, when we can share the responses (keep a look out for details).

In the meantime please submit any other views, comments or questions to the Parish Clerk (Lois Dale) by emailing clerk@houghtonwytonpc.co.uk; or by letter to St. Mary's Centre Chapel Lane Houghton.

We knew this day would come and look forward to your input as well as your continued support for what we all as residents agree to accept.

DRAFT