

## HOUGHTON AND WYTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Parish Council Meeting** held on Wednesday 6 September 2023, 7:00pm.

**Present:** Cllr P Boothman - Chair  
Cllr N Elborn  
Cllr R Guinea  
Cllr D Keane  
Cllr Baxendale  
Cllr B Gilmour  
Cllr Z Hunter  
Cllr A Skinner

There were three members of the public. D & C Cllr Dew could not attend.

### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

### 2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllrs Skinner and Elborn declared an interest in item 9.1 as neighbours of the application.

### 3. PUBLIC COMMENT

The Parish Council would like to pass their condolences to the family of Robert Anderson, who passed away in August. As well as being a lifetime resident of the village he was involved in the cricket and bowls clubs and had helped with many of the village clubs and societies. The funeral was very well attended by family, friends and villagers with both inside and outside the church. Rob will be sadly missed.

In response to a public question, it was confirmed that the Houghton Grange phase 2 application will not be heard at the HDC DMP in September.

### 4. MINUTES

RESOLVED: The minutes of 2 August 2023 were approved as a correct record.

Proposed: Cllr Guinea; Seconded: Cllr Gilmour. For: 6 Abstentions: 2

### 5. MATTERS ARISING

All matters to be updated from previous meetings are covered on this agenda.

### 6. DISTRICT & COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORTS

D Cllr Keane reported:

Details of the Green Bin Charge can be found at

- <https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/bins-waste/garden-waste-subscription-service/> £57.50 for the first bin and £30 each additional bin from April 2024.

Huntingdonshire District Council - Council Tax Support Scheme 2024/25

Consultation <https://www.smartsurvey.co.uk/s/HUNTINGDONSHIREFINALCTR/> closes 10<sup>th</sup> September.

The Huntingdonshire Leisure and Sports Facility Strategy can be seen at:

<https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/leisure/leisure-and-sports-facility-strategy/>

The plans for investment in Hinchingsbrooke Country Park are published at

<https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/news/investment-in-hinchingsbrooke-country-park-plans-published/>

There is a Flood Action Conference on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> Sept Burgess Hall 10.15 – 4.30pm

Huntingdonshire District Council confirmed the appointment of Michelle Sacks as the District Council's new Chief Executive at a Full Council meeting on Wednesday 19 July.

C Cllr D Dew was unable to attend the meeting but sent the following report:

'I'm aware of growing complaints about weeds in various parts of the district and across the county. The County Council's current Highways Operational Standards state that the Council will apply weed killer using a targeted approach at agreed locations identified on the basis of risk, rather than cyclically as before. This policy affects about 30 per cent of the highway network in Cambridgeshire, as only kerbed urban areas were previously cyclically treated for weeds. The County Council's policy remains to remove hazardous weeds, or weeds causing safety issues or nuisance. Where the use of

chemical weed killer is part of wider maintenance activity it is still carried out—for example weeds should be cleared before slurry sealing footways or surface treating carriageways. A mid-season review of the policy has already been programmed in, and I will certainly be reporting back residents' concerns.'

The Parish Council agreed not to support a campaign from some County Councillors asking the Council to review its policy as the campaign material contained some inaccuracies and had a political slant,

There was a concern that weeds growing in gutters and drains may impede water flow and could contribute to local flooding issues. Concerns can be reported to CCC who will take appropriate action.

## **7. CLERK & RESPONSIBLE FINANCIAL OFFICERS REPORT**

7.1. To authorise payments due and paid and note financial reports and bank balances

RESOLVED: Payments now due are authorised:

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

The budget report and bank balances were noted.

The Clerk reported that the Annual Audit had been returned with no issues and this will be posted on the noticeboard and website. The Clerk was thanked by councillors for delivering another 'clean bill of health'. **CLERK**

7.2. Barclays Bank account – change of accounts status and change of mandate. Barclays have realised that many Parish Councils have been given the wrong type of account. This has meant extra paperwork to be completed and it is hoped when this issue is resolved funds can be moved to another account.

7.3. Clerk's Assistant recruitment & budgetary implications.

With a rising workload and increase of housing within the Parish it is felt that an Assistant Parish Clerk would help with the efficiency of the work and allow for succession planning. Notices of the job will be posted as soon as possible. **CLERK**

7.4. Grass cutting contract renewal – playing field & Cemetery

The Council agreed that the current grass cutting regime should be reviewed and quotes obtained to renew the contract in Spring 2024. **CLERK**

7.5. Office hire agreement renegotiation.

It is hoped an update will be available for the next meeting.

7.6. Councillor vacancy recruitment

The required notices will be issued and Cllr Hunter agreed to write an article on Parish Councillor duties for the village magazine. **CLERK & ZH**

## **8. REPORTS & RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1. Playing Field

8.1.1. Field Lease - update.

Final amendments are awaited.

8.1.2. Play Area – repair work needed

Repairs are needed to several pieces of equipment. Quotes will be obtained.

A training course in Playground Inspection offered by CAPALC will be looked at. **CLERK**

8.1.3. Car Park Barrier damage

The barrier at the main car park entrance was damaged by a delivery lorry. Quotes are being obtained to repair the barrier and these will be passed onto the delivery company to agree payment. **CLERK**

8.1.4. Parking near the gate onto playing field

This issue was raised by a resident who experienced difficulty driving off the field during Feast Week due to a car parked near the gate. A sign will be put up to stress that emergency vehicles need to be able to access the gateway. Organisers of any events

that require vehicle access to the field will be made aware of the potential issue so they can take appropriate action. **CLERK**

#### 8.2. Scout Hut – update on their agreement and proposed garden

The Scout Hut Committee have signed the land use agreement and paid the rent agreed for this year. They have started groundwork on the area in front of the hut. The Parish Clerk will arrange for the litterbin to be moved. **CLERK**

#### 8.3. Clocktower and pavilion fire risk assessments

This contract has been let, but there has been no contact from the appointed company. The Clerk will chase this. **CLERK**

### 9. PLANNING MATTERS

#### 9.1. **Erection of a fence in place of existing hedge (Retrospective)** Green Gates

Church Walk Wyton Huntingdon PE28 2AH Ref. No: 23/01320/HHFUL

Cllrs Skinner and Elborn declared non-pecuniary interests in this application as neighbours.

**RESOLVED:** Houghton & Wyton Parish Council recommend APPROVAL of this application as the fence allows safer vehicle access along the highway than the hedge. However, the Council is disappointed at the consequent loss of biodiversity and habitat corridor in this area.

The residents stated they were not aware of the restriction placed on the boundaries in the Conservation Area. The Parish Council feels this reason should not be used to permit this kind of development, and do not want this decision to set a precedent for future applications which should be judged solely on their own circumstances.

It is noted that Church Walk is listed as a Character Area in the Houghton & Wyton Neighbourhood Plan.

Proposed: Cllr Guinea, Seconded: Cllr Boothman. For: 6, Abstentions: 2.

#### 9.2. **Change of use of land from Agricultural land to the keeping and exercising of horses with menage (for private use).** Land North Of Ruddles Lane Off Splash

Lane Wyton Ref. No: 23/01181/FUL

**RESOLVED:** Houghton & Wyton Parish Council recommend APPROVAL of this application, although the application is incomplete. The biodiversity checklist is ticked 'Yes' as being near a river, stream, ditch or canal, therefore a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal needs to be submitted.

However, the field was previously farmed for crops and is currently grazed and used for horses so it is unlikely the proposal will adversely affect on-site ecology.

The proposal covers a small area (30 x 60m) in the northwest corner of a relatively small (approx. 2 ha) field of agricultural grade 3.

Topsoil is to be removed from the area and banked up to screen the arena to the south and east. Membranes and top dressings are to be applied and a drainage system which will drain the arena into the surrounding land and, ultimately, into the surrounding ditches, as the field currently does. The site is at low risk of flooding and this will not be altered.

Whilst Policy HWNP7 – Protection of best and most versatile agricultural land -- would recommend rejecting this application, we feel that the land could easily be converted back to agriculture in the future.

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

#### 9.3. **Change of use of an agricultural building into 4 dwellings** Building East Of

Gumecestre Farm Splash Lane Wyton Ref. No: 23/01408/PMBPA

**RESOLVED:** Houghton & Wyton Parish Council recommend REFUSAL of this application for the following reasons:

Sections 1.1 and 4.2 of the ACORUS supporting document, supplied as part of the

application, makes clear that the application forms part of a common land owning by Two Hoots Farm and is made in the name of the owner of that farm using General Permitted Development Rights **Class Q** to convert an agricultural building into 4 residential dwellings.

Whilst certain conditions are met, the application does not satisfy all of the conditions required for a Class Q conversion. We believe this proposal requires a full planning application to be submitted and to be subject to scrutiny and consideration under both National Planning guidance and the planning policies of the Huntingdonshire Development Plan 2019.

Class Q requires that the agricultural building has been in use pre 20/3/2013, a condition satisfied in an earlier application 16/00223/PMBPA | Status: Prior Approval COU Approved – which shows this building being used as a grain store prior to this date. It also requires the building to be on land which is part of an Agricultural Unit (i.e. working farm in receipt of farm payments) greater than 5ha. The agricultural holding number is not supplied as part of the application, but the land in ownership document appears to confirm this as the case.

However, Class Q only allows a combination of conversions of building or buildings on any single Agricultural Unit to make a total of between 1-3 large dwellings totalling max 465sqm ; or up to 5 smaller units totalling 500sqm; or any combination up to a maximum of 865sqm i.e 1 x 465sqm + 4 x 100sqm = 865sqm.

The farmland in and around Splash Lane has been subject to a number of General Permitted Development orders converting agricultural buildings into residential. This latest application is for 2 large and 2 small conversions. There is already one unit converted to residential in the name of Two Hoots on land in Sawtry Way and hence taken together with this application would make a total of 5. This in itself would be permitted, however we believe the cumulative area of floor space then converted by this new development would breach the maximum 865 sqm allowable for any one Agricultural Unit.

The total floorspace calculations submitted as part of this application do not seem to marry with the individual room dimensions supplied. But even allowing for this, combined with what has already been converted by the Agricultural Unit which is Two Hoots would push the converted floor space above the 865 sqm allowed under GPD Class Q rights.

Furthermore, we note that some GPD rights were removed from Two Hoots Farm following a retrospective planning application for change of use from stables to residential 16/02514/FUL. We believe that this has implications for the Agricultural Unit as defined in Class Q and questions whether the information submitted fits all of the necessary criteria for Class Q.

In summary we do not believe this application meets requirements required for GPDO Class Q application and needs to be resubmitted as an application for full planning permission.

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

**9.4. T1 Cedar: remove major dead wood back to sound wood One main limb growing to the south is largely dead, proposed work will remove the dead wood back to sound wood approx. 4 metre lateral reduction** 4 Ansley Road Houghton Huntingdon PE28 2DQ Ref. No: 23/01598/TREE

**RESOLVED:** Houghton & Wyton Parish Council recommend APPROVAL of this application to maintain a healthy tree and reduce any danger from falling limbs.

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

9.5. Enforcement actions – updates on any actions from HDC. To receive notification of any potential enforcement issues.

Application 23/00123/FUL for the fencing already erected at an area of riverbank near The How has been withdrawn. HDC will be asked to ensure the riverbank and vegetation is reinstated. **CLERK**

There have been no further updates on enforcements in the parish; HDC will be contacted for updates. **CLERK**

9.6. Houghton Grange phase 2 update

In a response to the MP Jonathan Djanogly, Homes England have stated 'the application which has been submitted is legally and policy compliant'.

The Parish Council is pleased to note that residents have contact MP Michael Gove, at the Department of Levelling up, Housing and Communities. They can be contacted at [correspondence@levellingup.gov.uk](mailto:correspondence@levellingup.gov.uk).

Due to the number of issues raised by consultees to the Houghton Grange phase 2 application, this will not now be discussed at the DMP on 18 September.

HDC now recognise:

- Some data submitted is incomplete or out-of-date, eg water and traffic.
- There are significant landscape issues – HDC will have to employ an expert.
- An extension to make a decision has had to be negotiated with Homes England

Homes England will have to address any issues raised.

The Parish council appointed legal team are aware and on stand-by.

9.7. Other Planning Matters, including planning applications received after the agenda was published

There were no other planning matters.

## 10. PROJECTS

10.1. Playing Field storage sheds

The Clerk will meet with the Flood Group to finalise the site for their shed in the Playing Field compound. **CLERK**

10.2. Defibrillators in the parish

HDC have confirmed an application would be required if the defibrillator was to be installed on an out building at the Three Jolly Butchers. It was agreed that an application should be submitted for the original location.

A box can be obtained for the defibrillator at the Pavilion. A quote for providing the required electricity supply will be obtained. **CLERK**

10.3. Cemetery extension fencing, trees and works

A work programme has been agreed to install the fencing and secure hedge plants for the extension. An opening will be made in the existing hedge to allow access and the ground prepared for hedge planting. **NE & CLERK**

10.4. Clock Tower phase 2

A contractor is being sought to provide an assessment of the columns at a reasonable cost, to compare with an earlier quotation.

10.5. Playing field – hedging and vegetation.

The hedging will be progressed following the work at the cemetery using spare trees if possible.

## 11. CORRESPONDENCE

Two residents have suggested that safety could be improved at the junction of Huntingdon Road and the A1123. Pedestrians and cyclists are often continuing along the road near the chicane installed in 2017 rather than accessing the A1123 via Splash Lane. The Clerk will look at installing a sign in the area to highlight this route. **CLERK**

The Parish Council decided not to be involved in a national campaign concerned about the erosion status of Neighbourhood Plans.

A resident has informed the Parish council about a report to HDC about tree roots from HDC land damaging his boundary wall and land. This has been registered under Ref nos. PZKSJKLZ and ZNGNPFY. The situation will be monitored.

A request has been received to have a regular commercial stall at the Clock Tower. Some research will be carried out and this will be discussed at the next meeting with a view to establishing a policy.

**12. ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS, DELEGATED ACTION OR FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

Cllr Keane reported that an alarm at the National Trust Houghton Mill has been going off in early mornings. There are no details of who to contact in an emergency at this unoccupied site. A meeting to discuss this and other matters will be organised. **PB**

The Clerk will report some trees that are hanging low in The Lanes to CCC Rights of Way.

The Timebank AGM will be held on Wed 27 Sept at 10am. Everybody is welcome.

Thanks were expressed to Jessica Williams, Jean Foad and Lesley Craig for their continued work in running the 'phone box library' at The Green.

The Clerk will ask CCC Highways to look at the pavements on Hill Estate and the A1123, the various regular potholes that are reappearing in the village and the white lines on the A1123 that were originally reported in 2022. **CLERK**

There has been reports of dog fouling on the Playing Field. New signs will be put up and the Sports Clubs asked to help publicise this. The field is under a Public Space Protection Order and anyone identified as breaching that Order can be issued a fixed penalty fine. **CLERK**

**13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Due to councillor absence the next Parish Council meeting will be **Wednesday 11**

**October 2023 at 7pm.**

Signature ..... Date.....