

HOUGHTON AND WYTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Parish Council Meeting** held on Wednesday 10 January 2024, 7:00pm.

Present: Cllr P Boothman - Chair
Cllr Gilmour
Cllr Hunter
Cllr A Skinner
Cllr Baxendale
Cllr R Guinea
Cllr J Rodgers
Cllr R Southworth

There were six members of the public.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were apologies for absence from Cllr D Keane.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Guinea declared an interest in item 9.2 as a neighbour.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

A member of the public questioned whether food waste could be placed in 'green' garden waste bins after April 2024 when HDC will charge for these to be collected. It is confirmed that food waste cannot be accepted in green bins after April, as the District Council cannot charge for the collection of food waste. Food waste can be placed in grey, household waste, bins or composted by households.

4. MINUTES

RESOLVED: The minutes of 6 December 2023 were approved as a correct record.

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

5. MATTERS ARISING

- The Parish Council will look at the cost and feasibility of transferring their website and emails to .gov.uk and this will be discussed at the next meeting.
- Following a query about the HDC Dog order, it was confirmed that dogs should be on leads while being walked on or along roads and on named open spaces, including Houghton & Wyton Playing Field. They do not have to be kept on leads on public rights of way if they are not covered by the above criteria. At all times dogs should be under control and not cause a nuisance or danger to others. Dog faeces should always be removed, unless exempt, and disposed of correctly. **ACTION: Clerk**

6. DISTRICT & COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORTS

- There were no District or County Councillors present.

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 Guinea, Seconded: Cllr Gilmour. All in favour

The budget report and bank balances were noted.

7.2. Budget and Precept request 2024/25

RESOLVED: The proposed budget for 2024-25 was approved. This will be circulated and posted on the website.

RESOLVED: It was agreed that a precept of £101,000 be requested for 2024-25.

Proposed: Cllr Hunter, Seconded: Cllr Rodgers. All in favour

ACTION: Clerk.

8. REPORTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1. Bus stop at Hartford Marina – meeting with Stagecoach representative
CCC Highways will be contacted about this matter and asked if a feasibility study can be carried out and costs calculated. Hartford Marina and Dobbies Gardens Centre will also be contacted to provide information as visitors and residents at these

businesses benefit from the bus stops. The member of the public who contacted the Parish Council offered to gain evidence of support and will be asked if this has been obtained. **ACTION: RB & Clerk**

8.2. Local Highways Initiative project application 2024-25

RESOLVED: An application will be submitted for a project to install a footpath on the north of the A1123 from the crossing near St Ives Road to Houghton Cemetery. The Parish Council will agree to contribute the up to 15% of project costs with an upper limit of £10,000. **ACTION: RG**

Proposed: Cllr Guinea, Seconded: Cllr Southworth. All in favour

8.3. Parking in the village – update

The County Council Highways Policy and Regulation Manager has provided details of the process for considering double yellow lines on St Ives Road to reduce parking and ease traffic congestion. There will be costs of up to £1,250 to apply for and advertise the Traffic Regulation application. Success will depend on any objections. Costs of a screen and installation to help control traffic accessing the National Trust car park are being looked at.

8.4. Parish Council Public consultation meetings

The Parish Council is grateful to all those who engaged in these consultations and are pleased to have representation from a cross section of residents.

Clock Tower – The Clock Tower at The Green is at the heart of the village and improvements to this area have been discussed since the Neighbourhood Plan was in production in 2016-18.

Repairs to the clock housing and re-thatching of the roof were carried out in 2023. This consultation focussed on remodelling the area around the Clock Tower, including increasing the paved pedestrian area, moving street furniture to give a more coherent appearance and addressing car-parking issues.

The consultation should residents to be in favour of improvements and the design options 1 and 2 were the most popular.

Suggested changes include:

- Bikes racks near Our Shop
- Moving the Royal Mail post box to outside Our Shop
- Remove noticeboards from the wall of Whympers and install double sided boards on the central paved area.
- Move and reinstall other street furniture to allow for a more coherent layout and improve parking.
- Have planting troughs under or around the noticeboard and/or pump. The option to have trees in the area could be addressed later if planned for.
- Designate disabled and resident parking spaces and or limit parking times in some areas.

A meeting will be arranged with the architect and further information circulated after this. **ACTION: RB & Clerk**

Work will be subject to the input from Planning, Conservation and Highways Officers at other authorities and further consultations.

20mph Speed Limit – the vast majority of respondents to the survey were in favour of this initiative.

RESOLVED: CCC Highways will be asked to progress this project. It was thought that the plans supplied should exclude signs painted on the roads and had too many repeater road signs and County Council will be asked if these can be reduced and if Houghton Grange can be included. **ACTION: Clerk**

Proposed: Cllr Southworth, Seconded: Cllr Skinner. All in favour.

8.5. Drainage and Flooding Issues

The recent wet weather has led to the river level being within 10-15mm of the high levels recorded in Dec 2020. The ground is saturated leading to flooding in the meadows and fields

The Flood Group would like to explore the possibility of permanent installation of a pump at the Meadow Lane pumping station which is strategically positioned to protect much of the village from flooding. The Parish Council would consider funding or asking for S106 money towards this, although maintenance and operation costs also need to be factored in.

Residents have experienced problems with overburdened sewers throughout the village as the foul water system is at capacity. Anglian Water (AW) have inspected the sewers and say there are no problems, but no report has been forthcoming. Repairs were carried out in Home Farm Road in 2023. The Parish Council is still trying to arrange a meeting with AW representatives, so will also request this report and more information. **ACTION: Clerk**

Excess storm water has caused flooding in road by coming up through gullies and manholes, although the Environment Agency have proved to be quick to react to clear blocked gullies reported to them.

Residents are encouraged to report problems to the relevant body so that they are aware of issues.

Flood warden training has been arranged for Parish Councillors on Sat 27th Jan. **ACTION: All available councillors**

9. PLANNING MATTERS

9.1. Proposed Emergency Remedial Works to Roof Coverings and Structure Public House Three Jolly Butchers 3 Huntingdon Road Wyton Huntingdon PE28 2AD Ref. No: 23/02013/LBC

RESOLVED: Houghton & Wyton Parish Council recommend that this application be APPROVED as this is essential maintenance work to a listed building. The materials will be replaced on a like for like basis.

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

9.2. Construction of a dwelling with associated garage and workshop Houghton Hill House Houghton Hill Houghton Huntingdon PE28 2BS Ref. No: 23/02456/FUL

RESOLVED: Houghton & Wyton Parish Council recommend that this application be REFUSED. The reasons for refusal are very similar to the Parish Council response to the previous application in 2022.

Despite the application being for a high quality, well designed, 21st Century building, which once built will operate with near zero carbon running costs, we feel that on balance the chosen location and accommodation offered breaches key planning and development policies contained within the Houghton & Wyton Neighbourhood Plan, without meeting the needs of the village, or delivering sufficient additional benefits to the community to warrant departing from the Neighbourhood Plan.

To approve the application requires the Parish Council to break its own Neighbourhood Plan Built Up Area policy HWNP 1 and recommend a departure from the Neighbourhood Plan.

The application is for a large property set back some 45m from the proposed access lane into the countryside, and approximately 110m downhill from the main house. This would break the defined built-up area, moving the building line east of the village.

The village of Houghton & Wyton is situated within very close geographic proximity to the pretty market town of St.Ives, in between which exists very little countryside to separate the two settlements.

To make a very clear distinction between built areas and the countryside and help prevent un-necessary sprawl or creep, somewhat uniquely within Huntingdonshire, this particular Built-Up Area policy defines the built-up area of the village by a very carefully positioned hard boundary line.

The Neighbourhood Plan policy was hard fought for, which together with an anti-coalescence policy HWNP 3, passing through two examination stages before finally being made, underlining the importance of the countryside especially in this sensitive area.

The hard built-up area line where this proposed development would be situated, is deliberately set on the west side of the private lane proposed for access to the new property.

The policy states that breaking this will be acceptable where a proposal can comply with relevant policies for building in the countryside. Inspecting the relevant policies HLP policy 20 - Homes for Rural Workers, and HLP policy 28 Rural Exception Housing, shows that the required criteria are not met and do not support the application or provide justification to break the Built-Up Area policy HWNP 1.

Working together with HWNP1 is HWNP 3 – Anti coalescence policy, which seeks to protect the village character and distinctiveness by retaining and enhancing a clear and obvious open land gap between the village and neighbouring town of St.Ives. It states that development will not be permitted if, individually or collectively, it would result in the loss of the visual and physical separation between these two settlements or would lead to their coalescence. This separation includes the open spaces provided by the large gardens of house on The Thicket and Houghton Hill House itself.

The policy justification carefully describes how the fields, gardens, wooded area between the eastern edge of the village, through and around Houghton Grange and the Thicket wood, all contribute to the actual and perception of a countryside separation gap between the settlements and serves as another reason not to break the purposefully hard defined built-up area boundary.

To allow even one building would start to erode the open spaces between the village and town and devalue the carefully crafted policy and delineation.

NPPF allows for a departure from a Neighbourhood Plan if doing so can be demonstrated to deliver a greater benefit to the community than sticking to that plan. Whilst this application would provide an additional property within the parish, the Neighbourhood Plan makes very clear that the village needs smaller 1 and 2 bed starter and more affordable homes, as well as properties for older people to downsize to release the family homes, already in the village. The environmental benefit of the well designed dwelling is only conferred on the residents of that property, and it does not convey any other public benefit to parish residents.

Policy HWNP 16 deals with windfall development which this site would be classified as were it suitable and supported by policy for development. However, for the same reasons as mentioned earlier, the policy does not fully support this particular application as the greater village need is not for 5-bedroom properties, but for 1 and 2 bed starter homes and for older persons accommodation.

The proposed development lies within the Houghton & Wyton Conservation Area and therefore the landscape area itself is considered to be a Designated Heritage Asset. Within this, the Houghton Hill character area assessment (HHCA), describes building such as Houghton Hill House as being set within expansive gardens to complement its

higher status, open grained dispersed development plots, located well away from one another and set amidst dense screening.

Over many years the Houghton Hill House estate has shrunk from being a large estate of 89 acres now reduced to 35 acres. If passed, this planning application would remove a further 2.5 acres to create a building plot within the grounds of Houghton Hill House an historic listed building of local importance.

The conservation area character assessment states that New Development should:

5.3.1 preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area and respect its morphology and settlement pattern.

The HHCA states that Houghton Hill House is the earlier of the houses and the open feel of informal parkland remains across a considerable area of the hill, despite the introduction of low-density housing on the western and northern fringes of the park in the latter part of the 20th Century.

Furthermore, the proposed site features small areas of ridge and furrow arable land of the medieval common land field system which will be lost from this development.

The application specifies the entrance to the property would be along the private access road/lane immediately to the west of the site requiring a new entrance to be formed in the field boundary.

We feel it is important that the special character of this lane is not spoilt. The lane has a non metalised surface and it, and area it runs along, is best described as a country lane, having a quiet, rural, untamed character bordered by field hedgerow and trees. The lane as it stands fulfils an important function in transitioning between the built environment and the natural countryside to the east, this could be eroded with more use.

Removal of the field boundary hedging to create an access and erect a 2m fence is not supported by Policy HNWP 6. Retaining and enhancing biodiversity in respect of the valuable hedgerow that would be lost. This access, while not creating new access to the A1123, is increasing the number of vehicles accessing and egressing the site onto this busy road

Policy HWNP 7 – Protection of best and most versatile land is also a consideration.

Whilst not currently farmed as such, by remaining as countryside and not developed means that this land is usable, valuable agricultural land which is not lost forever.

The Design and Access report said that the survey indicates the area is “sterile” from a biodiversity perspective though it is understood that there are bats and owls in or close to the proposed site. 8 trees were felled on the western boundary of the site after approval by HDC in Sept 2021 despite PC concerns as to quality of application.

In considering this application, the Parish Council have been made aware of a complex neighbours' dispute over the ownership and responsibility for maintenance of the field hedgerow boundary and whether a right of access exists in law to break through it and create an entrance as proposed.

Given this is such an important feature of the application as it stands, we feel it makes sense to establish what the true facts are before a decision is taken by the District Council to approve or otherwise.

Finally, we are also aware of comments submitted by neighbours to the District Council in respect of the application and requests they have should the planning application be approved. In the event of such an outcome, we would urge officers to meet those requests through relevant conditions applied to permission and especially during the build process.

The submitted Tree Survey was undertaken in 2021, we believe this has expired and a new survey should be undertaken.

As this proposal is within the curtilage of a listed building, we would have expected to have seen a Listed Building Consent also.

Proposed: Cllr Skinner, Seconded: Cllr Baxendale. For: 7, Abstentions: 1

9.3. Houghton Grange phase 2 update

Some councillors met with the executive leader of HDC to discuss the lack of response to Parish Council issues and the progress of this application. She also advised that the Parish Council should start thinking about the S106 funding that will be available from this development. A meeting to discuss potential projects with Planning Officers has been requested.

The Chief Planning Officer at HDC has been asked to arrange a meeting between the Parish Council and Homes England to discuss this application.

S106 project suggestions: Several projects were listed that will be discussed with HDC. It was also suggested that HDC be asked to insist that new houses approved should be as environmentally sustainable as possible.

10. PROJECTS

10.1. Clock Tower phase 2

See item 8.4 above.

10.2. 20mph speed limit initiative

See item 8.4 above.

11. CORRESPONDENCE

There was no correspondence to discuss.

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

It was noted that a recruitment advert will be published to provide maternity leave cover for the Timebank co-ordinator. **ACTION: Clerk**

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next Parish Council meeting will be **Wednesday 7 February 2024 at 7pm.**

14. MOTION TO EXCLUDE PUBLIC AND PRESS

RESOLVED: The meeting will be closed to the public and press for items 15 and 16 in accordance with The Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 as confidential information may be discussed.

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

15. COMPLAINT AGAINST THE PARISH COUNCIL

The complaint was discussed and a response to the complainant will be drafted and sent within 20 working days.

16. PLAYING FIELD LEASE

Some points raised by one of the registered owners have been addressed in a recent meeting. The Parish Council solicitor will be asked to draft the changes agreed and all landowners will be asked to sign the complete lease if they are content. The Parish Council is keen to complete this process within two weeks.

Signature Date.....