

# **MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF WHITMINSTER PARISH COUNCIL HELD AT WHITMINSTER VILLAGE HALL AT 7:30PM ON WEDNESDAY 7<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2023.**

The Chairman welcomed all present to the meeting including the two members of the public in attendance.

## **Public Forum**

There were no matters raised from the members of the public present.

## **00/06**

### **Present**

There were 5 Parish Councillors present including Councillors Jones (Chairman), Hay, Braidford, Douglas & Mrs Gilmore. Two members of the public were in attendance.

## **01/06**

### **Apologies**

Apologies were received from Councillors Paynter (Vie-Chair) and Cllr Mrs Younger. These were accepted. There was no apology received from County & District Councillor Stephen Davies. However, Cllr Jones advised that he knew he was attending Frampton-on-Severn Parish Council and had little of relevance to update following the written report submitted to the Annual Parish Meeting.

## **02/06**

### **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest relating to known agenda items.

## **03/06**

### **Minutes**

The Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council held on Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> May were signed as a true record of the proceedings subject to the following amendment:

13/05 Chairman's Items & District Councillor's Report – 5<sup>th</sup> line – 'bee' changed to read 'been'.

## **04/06**

### **Matters Arising**

Cllr Jones asked again if Council thought some tree protectors/strimmer guards should be purchased to prevent damage to the new trees planted at the entrance to The Close/Henry Withers' Place. Cllr Braidford agreed to consider the options available. It was noted that the newly planted trees were being watered as necessary.

Cllr Mrs Gilmore congratulated Cllr Mrs Younger and Mrs Honor Jones on what had been an excellent Coronation event.

There were no other matters arising that did not form agenda items.

## **05/06**

### **Police & Community Safety Issues**

PCSO Trebble was not in attendance and no crime figures had been received, neither had there been any reports from the Neighbourhood Warden, although it was noted that he could be followed via social media if interested.

On the matter of the Playing Field Pavilion break in Cllr Jones advised that there was nothing further to report.

A response had been received from Gabrielle Webb of Stroud District Council on the matter of updating the Village Emergency Plan. She conceded that she was still not overly familiar with that aspect of her role but if a copy of the current plan was provided she would compare and contrast with others recently completed and offer any advice she might be able to provide.

It was noted that Cllr Paynter addressed the repair of the Perspex panel that had been damaged in the A38 North bound bus shelter but the traffic cone remained to be removed from the roof.

Finally on this item, Council was aware of a burglary concerning storage units located in Fromebridge Lane.

**06/05**

## **Planning**

### Decisions to Note

None.

### Applications to Consider

S.23/0945/TPO                    54 Upton's Garden, Whitminster, Gloucestershire.

Reduction of Lime tree by 4m.

Council resolved to defer to the greater knowledge of the District Council Tree Officer.

S.23/0445/OUT                    Land South of Grove Lane Whitminster Gloucestershire

Outline application with all matters reserved for mixed use development comprising up to 900 residential dwellings, 4.8 ha of employment land (comprising up to 20,000 sq m (GIA) Use classes E(g)(ii), E(g)(iii), B2 and B8), strategic transport interchange hub, sport and recreation facilities. Associated ancillary facilities, works, infrastructure, open space including allotments & landscaping. Vehicular access from the A38/A419 roundabout & Grove Lane

Council resolved to oppose this application for the following reasons:

- The prevailing Stroud District Local Plan includes a defined Settlement Boundary for the Parish of Whitminster. The site proposed is outside of the Settlement Boundary and would expend the village dramatically beyond the A38 toward the M5 motorway. This is in a direction that is contrary from the location proposed for modest expansion of the village, arrived at through public consultation and supported by the Parish Council in response to consultations initiated over the Local Plan review currently ongoing. The proposed development is not a modest Rural Needs Affordable Housing Exception Site and hence to grant permission would be a departure from the established precedent applied since the inclusion of Settlement Boundaries within Stroud District Local Plans dating from 1992. It would also be contrary to the reasons given for refusal in regard to a number of recent applications concerning land to the East of the A38 and similarly outside of the Whitminster Settlement Boundary.
- Policy CP3 of the prevailing Stroud District Local Plan sets out a hierarchy of settlements. Whitminster is identified as a Tier 3 Settlement defined as having capacity to provide lesser levels of development. 'Lesser' is less than a modest level, being the definition of development growth potential held by Tier 2 Settlements. Quite clearly development of the scale proposed is inappropriate for a Tier 3 Settlement and conflicts with the Stroud District Local Plan.
- The application refers to employment and other ancillary uses but does not address educational nor childcare needs. A development of this scale could potentially generate a need to provide places for over 1,000 children of school age. This is far beyond the capacity of the small village school and nearby secondary school provision. As the application includes no proposals to address this need locally it will be necessary to travel to existing urban centres or new schooling provision to be provided elsewhere. There is an irregular bus service available within the village but no rail nor other transport links. The development would therefore place significant reliance on the use of private motor vehicles and would be in conflict with policies of sustainability.

- Large scale development of the nature proposed has an impact not only on the host settlement but also at a wider District, County and regional level. It needs to be planned for an considered strategically. The strategic allocation of development land is addressed through the Stroud District Council Local Plan that considers wider impacts across the District and neighbouring authority areas. The proposed development is not included in the current Adopted Local Plan nor does it feature as a proposal recommended within the emerging Local Plan, which has been the subject of widespread consultation.
- The applicant has failed to address the need for development of the proposed scale and in the proposed location at the present time.
- The applicant has failed to engage in any meaningful public engagement to assess public views or to identify the potential impact on the local community.
- The applicant has not demonstrated any consideration of alternative sites that may be more suited to a development of this scale.
- This application has been submitted in tandem with an application concerning land North of Grove Lane and larger in scale. Clearly the two applications cannot be considered in isolation and this approach is a contrivance. It must also be noted that permitted and pending applications on land between the M5 motorway and Stonehouse, including a football stadium amongst others, must be taken into account when considering the further impact these applications would have, if permitted, on local infrastructure and highways implications.
- The proposed location will be susceptible to the impacts of noise and pollution from the nearby M5 motorway and proposed football stadium thus having potential for emotional and physical harm to potential occupants.
- The information provided in regard to highways measures and the impact on the local and regional network and existing traffic flows is limited. The local roads are already congested and at capacity at peak commuting and school times whilst hazardous situations frequently occur at nearby motorway junctions that are at capacity. The allocation of employment land is insufficient to provide adequate local employment opportunities and it is unrealistic not to expect that residents of the proposed development would commute to larger centres such as Bristol, Gloucester, Cheltenham or further afield. Therefore, the proposals would result in a dramatic increase in vehicular movements causing widespread congestion.
- Taken together with permitted and pending applications to the West the proposals, if permitted, would create urban sprawl from the town of Stroud beyond Stonehouse and across the M5 corridor into the villages of the Severn Vale. This would be to the detriment of the character of the locality and impact on the view from and setting of the Cotswold escarpment, being an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as the backdrop to the Severn Estuary RAMSAR designated area beyond.
- As the site would not be a strategic allocation for housing there has been no opportunity to plan for the provision of local service such as the expansion of General Practice medical services, diagnostics or hospital provision across all grades. This would therefore place an unacceptable burden on existing services that are under strain and be to the detriment of the health and wellbeing of the current local population.
- The site is impacted by the presence of critical high-pressure pipelines and other existing services.
- Development would lead to the loss of footpaths featuring within the Whitminster Village Walks guide that was progressed as a Millennium Project and has recently been demonstrated to be invaluable in maintaining good mental health and fitness through experiences arising from the pandemic.
- Increases in traffic volumes would impact on quiet roadways in the vicinity currently used for mixed modal transport to the detriment of highway safety and sustainability objectives, as those moving to walking or cycling for local journeys cease doing so as it becomes hazardous.

- Local knowledge has identified area of the land used for the disposal of waste materials and are likely to be hazardous.
- Council is concerned at the loss of agricultural land contrary to national policies aimed at achieving self-sustainability in agricultural production.
- The proposed development will give rise to the loss of a valuable environmental habitat and wildlife corridor. Local knowledge also suggests the presence of a high level of biodiversity and protected species that cannot be disturbed.
- Although noted as not being susceptible to flooding the development of such a large area will undoubtedly have an impact on water penetration and run-off, irrespective of mitigation measures, downstream in local catchment areas. The River Frome and other tributaries feeding the River Severn already over-top at times of heavy rainfall and the situation will only be made worse if this development is permitted giving rise to flooding in local villages.
- There is no capacity for additional foul water disposal or treatment capacity.
- The scale of development, especially when combined with the tandem application, could essentially increase the population of the village eightfold or more. This would destroy the community that has grown organically over centuries and would place an unacceptable strain on local facilities and the community at large. This would be exacerbated by the impact of the recently consented solar farm wrapping around the village to the West.
- The proposals would clearly have a direct and derogatory impact on Moreton Valence to the North (as well as all local villages) and Council fully endorses and supports the comments made by Moreton Valence Parish Council that duplicate some of the comments made above.

S.23/0440/OUT Land North Of Grove Lane Whitminster Gloucestershire

Outline application with all matters reserved for mixed use development comprising up to 1,240 residential dwellings, primary school, local centre of 1.6 ha (comprising commercial business and service uses (Use Class E), drinking establishment and hot food takeaway (Sui Generis) with a GIA limit of 4,000 sq m of which no more than 1,207 sq m (GIA) shall be used for retail (Class E(a)). The maximum single retail unit size shall comprise of no more than 835 sq m), local transport interchange hub, sport and recreation facilities. Associated ancillary facilities, works, infrastructure, open space including allotments and landscaping. Vehicular access from the A38 and Grove Lane.

Council resolved to oppose this application for the same or relevant reciprocal reasons as per application reference S.23/0445/OUT above.

#### Local Plan & Other Planning Matters

There was still no update received from planning enforcement concerning the Whitminster Inn and Old Stables at Kidnams Farm. However, it was noted that additional resource had been provided to planning enforcement with the whole planning department to be dedicated to assist in clearing the existing backlog of issues during one week in May.

## **07/06**

### Accounts

#### Accounts for Payment

The following accounts were approved for payment:

Play Inspection Company	Annual Inspection	£87.54
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#### Audit

Nothing further to report at this stage.

#### Other Financial Matters

The balance at the bank was reported as £60,185:16 following the receipt of the recent instalment of precept. Following the input of details on-line, at the end of the March meeting, in order to be able to set up on-line banking with Lloyd bank, further contact had been made by the bank and advice had been received that the application for the conversion of the account to on-line banking was being processed.

**08/06**

**Highways & Byways**

After further chasing contact had been received from Gary Wilson but unfortunately the dates offered were not ideal. Alternative dates were proposed and efforts would be made to arrange a meeting between Parish Council meetings.

It was noted that Hyde Lane had been resurfaced and a good job had been done but there was disappointment that the work had not extended to Jaxon's Farm. Discussion followed concerning verge cutting and visibility splays.

**09/06**

**Skate Ramp**

At the May meeting it was agreed noted that should a Public Works Loan Board Loan be taken out for the full necessary amount to progress the skate ramp then early repayment would be unlikely to give rise to any penalty given rising interest rates. With uncertainty surrounding any future planning battles and projects such as the Pavilion rebuild looming it was agreed that Council should proceed on the basis of securing a loan for the full required balance, less the appropriate ring-fenced third party grant aid agreed. This would enable a reserve to be progressed and the matter was to be progressed accordingly. This had been taken forward an application for loan funds was being prepared.

**10/06**

**Solar Farm**

Cllr Jones had been in discussion with Mr Baker of JBM Solar and had pressed him for a meeting to discuss the proposed Community Benefit payment. Mr Baker had agreed to attend the June meeting but subsequently stated that he was unavailable. He did, however, propose a revised contribution of £40,000 as a lump sum. This would be payable once the site becomes operational but Councillor Jones was to explore if this could be an immediate payment and have final go at improvement. However, if it was determined that this would be the final offer then authority was given for the matter to be settled.

**11/06**

**Correspondence**

The following items of correspondence were received:

Countryside Voice magazine.

Trow Magazine.

Councils Connected newsletter.

Stroud District Council eNews.

Minutes of the March meeting of Severn Voice along with a request to update the contact list and for Councils to each nominate two Councillors from each parish that would become core representatives. Cllr Mrs Younger agreed to attend the July meeting, that the Parish would be hosting, and it was resolved that Council would always endeavour to send two representatives to the meetings but it could not commit to that always being the same two individuals.

An updated was received on the highways verge cutting contract.

Other electronic correspondence had been circulated between meetings.

**12/06**

**Chairman's Items & District Councillor's Report.**

All Parish related Chairman's matters had been considered during the meeting.

Cllr Jones gave a brief update on District Council matters reviewing that the leisure facilities, including Stratford Park Leisure Centre, would be brought 'in-house' next year following changes to VAT treatment and also recent appointment changes including the Council Chair.

**13/06**

**Other Business**

Cllr hay asked Cllr Douglas if there had been any developments concerning the heating boiler at the village church and Cllr Douglas advised that it was being inspected in 10 days time and he would report back to the next meeting.

**14/06**

**Future Agenda Items**

None that were not previously noted.

There being no further business the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.53pm.

**CHAIRMAN – Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> July, 2023.**