

WOODCOTE PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of a Special Parish Council meeting held in the Village Hall Woodcote Monday 5th September 2011, commencing 7.30pm.

PRESENT

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| Chairman | Mr. R. Peirce |
| Vice Chairman | Mr. G. Botting |
| | Mr. D. Booth |
| | Mr. P. Tyler |
| | Mrs D. Hadaway |
| Parish Clerk | Ms. Jenny Welham |

Also present:- Mr. Colin White Planning Officer Chiltern Conservation Board, Mr. Mathew Heath and Mr. Richard Thompson, members of the Hilltop Field Action Group, District Councillor Christopher Quinton, County Councillor David Sexon, Jerry Green previous Chairman of Parish Plan and 268 residents from Woodcote, who had signed in estimated 300.

1. To receive apologies for absence

Mrs. S. Harrison, Mr. P. Stevenson, Mr. K. Grady.

Chairman Peirce opened the meeting and gave an overview of the agenda items and their purpose. He also advised that Agenda Item 3 would be dealt with first.

3. Introduction of the Neighbourhood Planning Application. Neighbourhood Plan for Woodcote. The Parish Council is seeking Volunteers for a steering group to manage the production of the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan.

Vice Chairman Botting reported to the meeting the progress to date with the Application by Woodcote Parish Council to be a front runner with an application for a Neighbourhood Plan. Woodcote have been successful with their application and some grant funding has been awarded. He also advised that the current sites on the planning map mirror those on the Woodcote Parish Plan and that the SODC Core Strategy is not yet finalised but the amount of new development being mentioned is around 85 houses for Woodcote.

Chairman Botting then introduced Jerry Green to speak. Mr. Green gave some background regarding the Parish Plan stating that when it was completed in 2008, 80% of the Woodcote residents responded and 67% of the respondents did not want further development for Woodcote and wanted to maintain the rural nature of the village. Some respondents did want development but they wanted low cost housing. He commented that all sites identified in the Parish Plan, including Hilltop Field had been included in the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment and were designated as "available in principle" for development.

Mr. Green stated that there is pressure to build more houses and that the Neighbourhood Plan will come into fruition in about 1 year and that a referendum will have to be carried out. He explained that the Neighbourhood Plan will have more influence than a community document as it will be statute, but the majority of Woodcote will need to agree to the content of the Neighbourhood Plan. He explained that the Neighbourhood Plan will be worked on in partnership with South Oxfordshire District Council and that it will enable Woodcote to define where new housing should be sited and the type of design and also that potential developers will need to consult the Neighbourhood Plan.

Mr. Green finished by asking the meeting for volunteers who wish to join the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to give their details at the end of the meeting. It is planned that the first meeting will be held end of September or early October of the newly formed group.

2. P11/1205/O Outline application for development of site for residential purposes (up to 115 dwellings) together with leisure facilities and new vehicular access, landscaping and provision of 40% affordable housing. Land bounded by Behoes Lane and South Stoke Road Woodcote RG8

Chairman Peirce explained that the application was for Outline planning so does not go into a great deal of detail, he explained that should the Outline planning be approved a further full application with more detail would then have to be submitted for approval. Chairman Peirce then introduced Colin White to speak. Mr. White explained his role as Planning Officer for Chiltern Conservation Board and stated that Woodcote is in the AONB which has the same status as a National Park, the only difference being that National Parks encourage recreational activities and areas of AONB do not. He expressed his support for the Woodcote Neighbourhood Plan,

He then went onto the Outline Planning Application, he stressed that Chiltern Conservation Board will be writing a letter opposing the application. Some of the points raised in the letter will be that the development does not conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the AONB. The level of detail is insufficient, traffic statistics in the outline planning are under estimated, the access point is very urban and not suitable for a rural village, and finally he stated that in terms of size this development is one of the largest he has seen. The letter of objection from Chiltern Conservation Board will be sent at the end of this week.

The Hilltop Action Group, Mathew Heath and Richard Thompson then addressed the meeting and gave a presentation. This group are strongly opposed to the outline planning application and presented their objections. Mr. Thompson stated that it is important to object on planning terms and not just emotionally. He also stated that any data on how the local schools and doctors will be overstretched would also be very helpful if anyone has that level of detail. The presentation finished and he gave the meeting details of how to reach their website (handouts already passed around) to copy the objections so residents can write or email their objections to SODC Planning.

Chairman Peirce then addressed the meeting and restated that the purpose of the meeting was for the Parish Council to gain the views and inputs from Woodcote residents. He confirmed that the Parish Council will finalise their response to the Outline Planning application at their meeting on Wednesday 7th September 2011. He asked the meeting if anyone had anything constructive or positive to say about the application, no one present at the meeting responded.

Chairman Peirce then opened the meeting for questions from the floor;

Mr. Roger Hadaway asked if we can have a moratorium on any further development in Woodcote until the Neighbourhood Plan is determined? Chairman Peirce replied that it was his understanding that planning applications can still continue to be presented for development.

Mr. Hawkins asked re the timing of the Neighbourhood Plan and also this development. Chairman Peirce stated that the Neighbourhood Plan would take approximately a year to be final and the timing for replying to this outline planning application was 19th September 2011.

A young lady (I did not hear her name) spoke and said that she really did not want the field developed and how it would impact the Woodcote environment and wildlife and also that she like the rural nature of the village. She suggested that the field be purchased to preserve it, which shows the level of support for opposition.

Dee Spiers asked how many houses does SOHA currently have that are unoccupied and also raised the point about pot holes in the road owned by SOHA. Chairman Peirce responded stating that we can probably find out that information but also stated that this was not relevant to this particular Outline Planning application in terms of an objection.

Mr. Jeremy Callen asked if the Outline planning is granted can the developers then alter the access? Chairman Peirce explained that they cannot change anything after it is granted without producing a further application.

Mr. Mark Lillywhite asked if this Outline Planning is approved can objections be raised? Chairman Peirce replied that objections can only be raised if due process had not been followed correctly.

Mr. David Jameson asked if the Reading Road would be widened as currently it often gets grid locked around school start and closing times, cars and buses cannot get along this road? Chairman Peirce replied that this would be a Highways matter but if they deemed it necessary then the developers would have to pay for this road widening.

Mrs. Pat Booker mentioned that at the exhibition about the development the developers had stressed that the 40% social housing would be part rented. It is now known from the Outline Application that this is now not the case and it will all be rental property, it is assumed that SOHA has changed this as they are partners in the development.

Mr. Tom Booker asked if the development of the 115 house was passed would these houses count towards the Core Strategy allocation? Chairman Peirce replied that yes they would count for Woodcote and be over the expected amount of new housing for Woodcote in the Core Strategy.

Gina Balarin asked if houses currently being built in Woodcote in infill sites count? Chairman Peirce replied that unfortunately the Government Planning Officer has stated that infill sites will not count and that only designated sites will be considered. Colin White replied that it was his understanding that some housing already built would count, Councillor Tyler stated that it was also his understanding and quoted that the Mowforth House/Folly development would count towards Woodcote's allocation.

Malcolm Gregory asked what the possibility of the Outline Planning application was of being approved? Chairman Peirce replied as an individual that he would be very surprised and saddened if it was approved. Mathew Heath also replied that he felt the Outline Planning would not be granted but that the developers would then go to Appeal.

A resolution was passed at the meeting from the public present that they unanimously opposed this application.

Christopher Quinton thanked Vice Chairman Botting and the Parish Council for all their hard work in getting the Neighbourhood Plan application approved. He also thanked the Hilltop Action Group for all of their work and their presentation. He finished by asking the Hilltop Action Group if they would put their presentation on the village website as a PDF file, they agreed to do this.

Chairman Peirce then stressed to the meeting that they needed to write, email or go online to send in their objections to the application and that the deadline was 19th September 2011.

Meeting closed at 9.05pm

