

HIGH EASTER PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL
held via Zoom on Monday 1st March 2021

Present: Cllrs Nigel Boreham, Andrea Davis, Robert Lodge (chair), Neil Reeve, Janet Robinson, Paul Sutton, Jo Windley, and the Clerk Allison Ward

County and District Cllr Susan Baker (leaving after agenda item 20/164)

13 Zoom connections during the meeting from members of the public

20/159 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE – None

20/160 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS FOR THIS MEETING

Cllr Boreham declared a personal interest in agenda item 20.163.02 Maidens Barn as a neighbour of the site and a business associate of the landlord.

Cllr Windley declared a personal interest in agenda item 20.163.02 Maidens Barn as a friend of the landlord.

20/161 MINUTES OF THE ORDINARY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING of 1st February 2021 were approved by the Parish Council as a correct record. They will be signed by the Chairman of this meeting at the earliest opportunity.

20/162 PUBLIC FORUM – Nothing to report

20/163 PLANNING

20.163.01 – Previous Applications

Homely UTT/21/0158/FUL, section 73A retrospective application for the demolition of existing property and proposed erection of new dwelling.

The Chairman suspended the meeting to allow Julian Williams the agent for the application, to address the meeting.

Mr Williams outlined the story so far before confirming the latest application refused by Uttlesford at the December planning committee meeting has been appealed, including a cost appeal, and is awaiting the appointment of a planning inspector. Mr Williams confirmed this new application is very similar to the previous refused scheme with only minor amendments and went on to confirm how they had arrived at the latest scheme. He stressed this was not a ‘back door approach’, but a scheme where the agents had worked closely with Essex Place Services who had provided conservation advice and who were fully supportive of the plans.

Cllr Lodge resumed the meeting and invited Cllrs to respond.

Cllr Sutton commented that what we have seen is someone flouting the planning rules by demolishing a building in a conservation area and seeking to replace it with a completely new building design. Cllrs agreed there is a need to clarify the regulations on demolishing buildings in conservation areas to ensure this does not happen again. For Essex Place Services to say the plan is acceptable and appearing to guide the whole show is not in the view of the Parish Council respecting the views of the community, Parish Councillors or Uttlesford. Cllr Reeve commented on an earlier acceptable plan to replace the demolished property with an almost identical dwelling, other Cllrs also supported this design which would have seen the thatch retained, the building set back on the plot to ensure adequate parking and the distinctive bay windows retained. Cllrs confirmed the need for a scheme that all can support with Cllr Lodge commenting that at the last Planning Committee meeting he had stated the Parish Council was willing to meet with the parties to discuss, once again an application has been submitted without any local conversations,

Cllr Sutton proposed that the Parish Council makes no changes to the response in objection to the latest application agreed at the February meeting, this was seconded by Cllr Boreham with all in agreement.

Chapel House UTT/21/0048/HHF, proposed porch extension. Revised plans were submitted to Uttlesford, and the notice circulated to the Parish Council via email due to the short deadline. There were no objections to the proposal as revised and the Clerk submitted a comment to confirm this.

Signed
 Robert Lodge (Chairman Parish Council)

20.163.02 – Applications

Application No	UTT/21/0313/FUL
Location	Maidens Barn, Green Street
Development	Section 73A Retrospective application for the erection of two side extensions to former barn and installation of a bio-mass boiler for disposal of wood

Cllr Lodge suspended the meeting and invited Craig Plumb from Forest Contracts to speak on behalf of the applicants, after which residents were invited to make comments.

Mr Plumb confirmed this was a retrospective application for two new spaces for the business office and an air compressor area, plus the bio-mass unit. He confirmed the application included a proposal to put screening around the majority of the bio-mass unit to reduce its visual impact and to provide an acoustic barrier to reduce the noise from the shredding system. He advised the Uttlesford Environmental team had issued a permit in November 2020 and would be visiting the site shortly to complete an acoustic survey. He concluded by stating his intention was to work to achieve satisfactory solutions for all.

A number of residents spoke in objection to the application, their main points are summarised as follows,

1. The site has permission for B1(c) use defined as light industrial and a site that does not create noise, smoke or toxic fumes. This is not the case, there is continual noise, glue like smells and residents suggested there is a high content of laminated wood being burnt which is releasing toxic fumes like burning plastic; concerns were viewed on what cannot be smelt and which may be more toxic with residents uncertain what they were breathing in. It was accepted the impact on neighbouring properties will increase in the summer months when windows and doors are open, and residents use their outside space.
2. The scale of the unit goes beyond light industrial use.
3. Noise from the site is particularly disturbing to local residents, evidence of noise monitoring and consultant expertise has been obtained to support these views.
4. Large windows have been added and light from inside the building creates glare where there was previously nothing. The applicant suggested this was an issue with the timer on the outside lights, however residents experience is this is not the case with the light coming from inside the premises.
5. The increase in larger vehicles accessing the site via the single-track lane is causing severe damage to the verges. It was noted the site is situated on a protected lane. It was noted there is a large pond in front of the site.
6. The bio-mass unit is very large, and its visual impact is of an industrial boiler. This is inconsistent with the surrounding neighbourhood.
7. Activity is on site from 7am to 5pm with most of the noise from the clanking of machinery in what is a quiet rural setting. The prevailing winds result in greater impact for some residents.

County and District Cllr Baker asked Mr Plumb what has changed from when the site had been located at Greens Farm on High Easter Road? Mr Plumb confirmed this new site is larger and the bio-mass unit has been upgraded and the system changed. The unit is designed to burn the site waste, it removes pollutants and then emits only water vapour. The system generates the light and heat for the site and avoids additional vehicle movements to remove waste materials. Forest Contracts are working with Uttlesford Environment and the installers of the system to ensure it is operating correctly. The landlord confirmed they are conscious of the fumes and noise and are working hard with the tenants to make sure the unit is working correctly. The move to this new location has not resulted in any additional vehicle movements compared to previously. Residents commented that the difference is High Easter Road was a much busier road with a wider carriageway.

The majority of Parish Cllrs had visited the site prior to the meeting and spoken with residents. The Clerk had received and circulated information and images from the site to Cllrs.

Cllr Lodge resumed the meeting and invited Cllrs to respond.

Cllr Sutton suggested the unit is not working as it should be and this is rightly adding to the residents' concerns and anxieties. Retrospective applications are always uncomfortable, most people abide by the planning rules and get the permission before they start the works. Cllr Reeve added that he can see the views of both sides and was supportive of the green energy aspects of the unit, although had concerns with its size. Cllr Windley noted how difficult conditions have been for local businesses and stressed the Parish Councils wish to be supportive of business, this view was also expressed by Cllr Davis as well as the Parish Councils wish to support farm diversification, Cllr Robinson also added her support for local business however stated this should not be at the detriment to local residents. Cllr Lodge suggested some compromises could be considered in terms of film for glass to stop glare and cladding the bio-mass unit or reducing its height, however noted that the comments from residents relating to odours was a concern.

In conclusion Cllr Sutton proposed that the Parish Council submits a response expressing the concerns raised by residents and the Parish Councils own reservations with the proposals as discussed, this was seconded by Cllr Lodge with all in agreement.

Cllr Lodge went on to propose that the Parish Council asks District Cllr Barker to call in application UTT/21/0313/FUL for decision by the Planning Committee should the officers recommend approval for the reasons discussed, this was seconded by Cllr Sutton with all in agreement.

Application No	UTT/21/0337/HHF
Location	Pleshey Grange, Grange Road
Development	Erection of entrance gates and brick pillars/walling to sides. Erection of detached outbuilding with ground floor storage and first floor office

Cllr Sutton proposed the Parish Council objects to this application as it is concerned that the scale and design of the gates and brick pillars/walling is not befitting the rural setting. The Parish Council has no concerns with the outbuilding proposed. This was seconded by Cllr Lodge with all in agreement

Application No	UTT/21/0386/HHF
Location	Tarr Potts, Slough Road
Development	Erection of workshop and store

Cllr Sutton proposed the Parish Council objects to this application for the following reasons,

- The scale and design are not appropriate in this countryside location, policy S7.
- The design proposes a ‘drive through’ with large roller shutters to both sides giving the proposal an industrial look which is not in keeping with the rural, residential use of the site, policy GEN2.
- The new access and outbuilding at the front of the site are not shown on the layout plans, the Parish Council is unclear on the intention for the site as a result of these additions.

This was seconded by Cllr Lodge with all in agreement.

Cllr Sutton went on to propose that the Parish Council asks District Cllr Barker to call in application UTT/21/0386/HHF for decision by the Planning Committee should the officers recommend approval for the reasons discussed, this was seconded by Cllr Lodge with all in agreement

20.163.03 – Decisions

Application No	UTT/20/3313/FUL
Location	Punchbowl, The Street
Development	Erection of a 14.00m x 10.00m general purpose storage shed
Decision	Refused

Application No	UTT/20/2785/PAQ3
Location	Barn at Shorts Farm
Development	Prior Notification of change of use of agricultural building to 1 no. dwelling
Decision	Conditional Approval

20.163.04 – Local Plan Update

Cllr Lodge attended the first Local Plan Town and Parish Workshop on behalf of the Parish Council and will attend the second session scheduled for 30th March at 7pm.

20/164 COUNTY AND DISTRICT CLLRS REPORT

County Cllr Barker updated the meeting on Essex County Council funding where increased budgets have been allocated to flooding and to the Local Highway Panels for local projects. The Essex Highways teams will be out repairing potholes, Cllr Davis suggested it was not just potholes that were an issue but the state of the carriageway edges where the verges have been damaged particularly by the flooding and these should be a priority to. Cllr Barker confirmed she had a £10k grant from Essex County Council to use for local projects within her ward.

County and District Cllr Barker leaves the meeting.

Signed
Robert Lodge (Chairman Parish Council)

20/165 CLERK'S PROGRESS UPDATE and CORRESPONDENCE TO NOTE

Footpath 11 obstructions reported to Essex Highways reference 2696051 have been cleared and the route is passable. Fly tipping issues remain, and this is being managed by the PRoW officer and Uttlesford.

Creative Play have corrected the chain length on bucket swing in the play area following the annual inspection.

Further road closures this month include High Easter Road (Cricket Ground through to Barnston) between 1st March and 15th March for Gigaclear and works by Cadent Gas. Park Road, 1st March to 15th March for UK Power Networks.

Reminder Census 2021 will take place on Sunday 21st March 2021, residents will shortly receive information through the post on how to complete online.

There is a significant amount of information on support available for residents and businesses as a result of Covid, the village website has a page dedicated to this with numerous links.

20/166 COUNCILLORS REPORTS

Cllr Reeve confirmed he had fruit trees to plant in the Jubilee Wood and would be sending out a request to residents for assistance. They would be planted with stakes and wire fencing to protect from the local wildlife.

Cllr Windley confirmed the Uttlesford tree officer was unable to provide additional trees as the Parish Council does not own the land where the Jubilee Wood is located, Uttlesford are unable to donate to private landowners.

Gigaclear has 'flattened' the access onto the cricket pitch, Cllr Davis suggested they be asked to return this as it was/

20/167 PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

Residents have raised concerns with inappropriate and antisocial use of local byways, bridleways and footpaths by motorised vehicles. Of particular concern is byway 51 and bridleway 19. The Clerk forwarded to the PRoW officer who confirmed that the gates previously on bridleway 19 had been removed by the farmer following a request from the Essex team as they were not authorised and restricted access. It was noted this is a wider Uttlesford and County issue, Cllr Reeve suggested keeping District Cllr Day updated. The Clerk will continue to liaise with the PRoW officer.

The Clerk has written to County Cllr Barker for a progress update on whether it is possible to change legislation to allow winter closure and restrictions on byways to protect them from the damage caused when the surfaces are wet.

20/168 JUBILEE WOOD

Progress on tree planning covered in agenda item 20/166.

20/169 VILLAGE MAINTENANCE JOBS

Carried forward to next meeting

20/170 LITTER PICK

A village litter pick will take place on the weekend of 27/28 March. Residents would be asked to confirm in advance if they are able to assist to avoid gathering. The Clerk will produce the risk assessment and Cllr Lodge will be the lead Cllr.

20/171 FINANCE

The following cheques were proposed for payment by Cllr Boreham and seconded by Cllr Davis with all in agreement.

PAYMENT TO	VALUE
Wicksteed – Annual play area inspection inc VAT	£ 72.00
Allison Ward - Parish Clerk Feb 2021 inc Zoom subscription for month	£ 280.63

20/172 ITEMS CARRIED FORWARD FOR NEXT MEETING – Phase 2 play area, village maintenance jobs, tenders 2021.

20/173 DATE OF NEXT MEETING scheduled for Tuesday 6 April 2021 at 7.30pm, the meeting will be via Zoom.

The meeting closed at 9.40pm

Signed
Robert Lodge (Chairman Parish Council)