

**WETHERSFIELD PARISH COUNCIL**  
**REPRESENTING WETHERSFIELD, BLACKMORE END & BEAZLEY END**



**MINUTES of the Wethersfield Airbase Scrutiny Committee Meeting held at  
Blackmore End Village Hall on Monday, 24 January 2022, commencing at 7:30pm.**

Present:

Cllr A Hull (Chairman) (Shalford PC)  
Cllr J Pearce (Wethersfield PC)  
Cllr D Coverdale (Finchingfield PC)  
Cllr R Duffin (Finchingfield PC)  
Cllr A French (Shalford PC)  
Cllr T Roberts (Toppesfield PC)  
Cllr R Aggiss (Salings PC)  
Cllr A Cole (Panfield PC) *left at 8.44pm, returned at 9.06pm*  
Cllr K Jiggins (Salings PC)  
Cllr P Kennedy (Great Bardfield PC)  
Cllr S Moutard (Gosfield PC)  
Cllr J O'Brien (Little Bardfield PC)  
Cllr D Hockley (Great Barfield PC)  
Cllr S Short (Wethersfield PC)  
Donna Roder (Deputy Clerk)  
Michelle Baker (Clerk)

In Attendance:                      Members of the Public: 5

**WA22/21-22 TO ELECT A CHAIRMAN**

**RESOLVED** Cllr A Hull nominated, proposed by Cllr A Cole (Panfield PC), and seconded by Cllr K Jiggins (Salings PC). A Vice Chairman will be appointed at the next committee meeting.

**WA23/21-22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Cllr P King (Gt Yeldham PC), Cllr M Lovell (Gt Yeldham PC and Cllr A Collard (Toppesfield PC).

**WA24/21-22 MEMBERS DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**

None declared.

## **WA25/21-22 ADDITIONS TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

**RESOLVED** The following additional members were approved to represent their Parish Councils:

- i. Little Bardfield – Cllr J O’Brien.

## **WA26/21-22 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 DECEMBER 2021**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 December 2021, copies of which had been previously circulated to Members, were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.  
Proposer Cllr R Duffin (Finchingfield PC), Cllr J Pearce (Wethersfield PC).

## **WA27/21-22 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

- i. Questions asked on the actual size of the site in hectares.
- ii. A member of SWAP shared details on their fund-raising efforts to date to oppose the Prison proposal.

## **WA28/21-22 CLERKS REPORT**

- **CHAIRMAN’S RESIGNATION**
  - Councillor David Wilson has resigned from his position as Chairman of the Committee. Councillor Susan Short is now the second representative from Wethersfield Parish Council.
- **LIST OF PARISH COUNCILS AND MEMBERS**
  - A full list will be compiled and made available. Currently there are 10 Parish Councils who are members of WASC.
- **DEPUTY CLERK**
  - An appointment has been made. Donna Roder started her position of Deputy Clerk for Wethersfield Parish Council, on January 11, 2022.
- **CORRESPONDENCE**
  - An email will be sent to MP James Cleverly in follow-up to items discussed at the previous meeting.
  - A request to the DIO will be made to arrange a meeting with WASC.
- **SWAP**
  - Fund raiser leaflet distribution to all member Parish residents - volunteers are needed. The Deputy Clerk will email WASC members and their Parish Council Clerks to organise.
- **PARISH INVOLEMENT**

- Aim to contact an additional 9 Parishes in the next month. Sible Hedingham, Castle Hedingham and Stebbing will be prioritised.

## **WA29/21-22 SUB-COMMITTEES UPDATE**

Cllr J Pearce gave an update on the Technical Sub-Committee. He explained the make-up of the Sub Committee which comprised local professionals with a range of relevant skills. The Sub Committee had met on two occasions in order to scope the work which needed to be done in order to present credible representations in readiness for a planning application for two prisons should it materialise. The Sub Committee had decided which tasks could be done by the group or others in the community and which would need to be carried out by consultants. Quotations from appropriate consultants had been obtained and a Phase 1 Schedule of tasks needed up to planning application stage had been prepared. This was the subject of a following item on the agenda and amongst other matters included the need for work on an economic appraisal, digital modelling, heritage appraisal, ecology impact, landscape character assessment, and planning policy review. Consideration was given to a response to the White Papers on Prison Strategy and Levelling Up.

Cllr A Hull gave an update on Finance/Fundraising and Strategy Sub Committees. He said the SWAP fundraising leaflet was in preparation and it was agreed to distribute this via the member Parishes. With regard to financial support from parishes, Shalford PC have committed 10 percent of their precept, Wethersfield PC have contributed the cost of Deputy Clerk plus hall venue costs for WASC meetings. Finchingfield PC will agree their commitment at their next Parish Council meeting. Engagement with BALC is underway. The follow-up with MP James Cleverly is in progress, further engagement with Dominic Raab and Ben Wallace is in the pipeline, and a letter to the MOJ will be sent seeking information regarding the possibility of building of a new road at the back of the site.

**WA30/21-22 TO AGREE THE TECHNICAL SUB-COMMITTEE PHASE I WORK PROGRAM**  
**RESOLVED** Cllr T Roberts (Toppesfield PC) proposed and Cllr R Aggiss (Salings PC) seconded.

WASC - Technical Sub Committee Phase 1 Work Programme				
Task	Description	Lead	Estimated Cost	Progress
Preparation of database	Set up a WASC research database which could be shared with SWAP	RS	£100.00	Estimate obtained but could be reduced through sharing within the team
Digital model of proposal/flyaround	Preparation of a digital model of the prison proposals set in the context of the surrounding area and enabling a fly around (later phase) the site/area to demonstrate the landscape impact. Need for CAD support and drone photography	MN	£5,517.00	Quotations obtained
Landscape character assessment	Assess landscape character, determine visual envelope and take photographs of representative views. Appraise the baseline landscape and visual context. Identify sensitive landscape elements/features / risks to be taken into account. Identify sensitive visual receptors to be considered. Set out the planning context, local landscape character, visual amenity, constraints and opportunities (landscape and visual baseline). The purpose of the report is to establish well-founded design recommendations to evaluate the impact of the development.	JP	£4458-9950	Three quotes obtained. Work could be phased
Economic assessment	The creation of jobs and economic benefits to the area is likely to be a major argument to support a planning application for the prisons. However the evidence to support that assertion is thin on the ground. This economic assessment study seeks to review the evidence and draw conclusions about the likely benefits that the proposal would bring when weighed against the locational disadvantages	RS	In house	Draft document prepared for discussion
Critical Down assessment	When a public body acquires land compulsorily or by requisition and later declares that land surplus to requirements there is an obligation to offer the land back to the original owners or their successors provided there is no material change in the character of the land. This is an arguable point that needs to be resolved.	SS	In house	SS prepared an initial issues paper for consideration. Decided to take no further action at present
Previously Developed Land assessment	To consider the argument being advanced that as a brownfield site there is a presumption in favour of the development. If accepted this would be a material consideration and needs to be challenged with robust research and legal opinion if necessary	JP/SS	£1,000.00	Fixed quote received from planning consultant. Consideration to be given to obtaining Counsel opinion only
Prisons Strategy White Paper	To prepare a response on behalf of WASC/ SWAP which demonstrate that the proposal would be in conflict with the White Paper	SS/RS	In house	Draft response prepared -to be finalised and submitted to meet the consultation deadline of April 2022.
Traffic Modelling data	Traffic count proposed at four locations (either side of Sculpins Lane junction with Finchingfield Road, Heddingham Road and Braintree Road) to give base data to build up a model of traffic movement which can be used to assess the traffic impact of the proposals on the local area taking into account traffic generated at other new prisons.	MN/RS	£600.00	Quotation obtained from consultant. To avoid survey during school holidays.
Strategic accessibility study	A study which is looking at the relative remoteness of the site from major roads when compared to the rest of the UK. This will demonstrate the effect this would have on costs of construction, costs on the supply chain once operational, the need to travel by private vehicles, and the conflict with prisons policy for prisoners to be closely accessible to jobs, family and health services.	MN	In house	Study being progressed
Levelling Up assessment	ECC have published a so called White Paper relating to levelling up across Essex. Based on the Indices of Deprivation Rural Braintree is identified as one of five Priority Area alongside Harlow, Basildon, parts of Colchester and Jaywick. The implications of this need to be considered.	RS/JP	In house	Comments made directly to Cllr Butland at WPC who responded to deprivation in Rural Braintree based on ageing population, access to services and public transport, but implications need to be evaluated
Ecology assessment	To carry out an ecological survey of the site which will map the Phase 1 habitats and assess the potential of the site following implementation of proposals to support protected and priority species and habitats. Report should identify any likely significant impacts on key biodiversity receptors, including statutory designated and non-designated sites, make recommendations for further detailed Phase 2 surveys where appropriate, highlight how features of ecological value can be protected and suggest mitigation and enhancements to enable biodiversity net gain to be achieved. Carry out a desk-based study to identify records of rare and protected species, and protected areas/habitats, in or around the site.	RG	£3,000.00	Three quotes sought. Two obtained. Need to consider possibility of open mosaic habitat
Heritage assessment	To carry out an initial heritage assessment of impact on setting of listed buildings in area around base; consider heritage assets within base and impact of prison proposal; consider impact on setting of Wethersfield Conservation Area; consider emergency listing of base heritage assets	JP	£8,300.00	Quote obtained. Could be phased. Additional £4500 budget if undertake emergency listing process Historic England and Place Services response to Scoping request a helpful indication of heritage issues
Architectural assessment	Obtain an authoritative view of architectural merits of prison proposals	JP	TBC	Consider possible consultants
Review local and national planning policies	Draw together all relevant policies in Local Plan Part 1 and 2 of BDC Local Plan and NPPF and guidance. Part 2 examination expected to be concluded soon followed by adoption at Council	JP	In House	Lot of this work covered in previous consultation responses. Update to include Part 1 and 2 of Local Plan 2022 when approved by BDC
Respond to EIA scoping request	Provide a WASC response to the Scoping request submitted by MoJ with a December deadline. This seeks a BDC opinion on what matters need to be covered in an Environmental Impact Assessment	JP	In house	Completed. Submitted on 24/12/21
			Estimated Total + VAT	£22,975 - £28467

**WA31/21-22 FUNDING**

**DEFFERD** Michelle Baker Clerk of Wethersfield PC gave an update. PC's need to confirm if they hold a General Power Of Competence. SWAP will pay all fundraising directly to Wethersfield PC.

**WA32/21-22 COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP**

**RESOLVED** A request the amendment of committee terms of reference to include non-councillors in the membership was agreed. Proposed by Cllr R Duffin (Finchingfield PC), seconded by Cllr S Short (Wethersfield PC).

**WA33/21-22 MEETING DATES**

**RESOLVED** A fixed schedule of monthly meeting dates was agreed. Proposed by Cllr David Cloverdale (Finchingfield PC); seconded by Cllr T Roberts (Toppesfield PC). The Deputy Clerk Wethersfield PC, will check with each member Parish Clerk to find the best solution on the date of each month.

**WA34/21-22 ITEMS FROM COUNCILLORS TO BE ADDED TO THE NEXT AGENDA**

*To elect a vice chairman  
To propose a weight limit on Finchingfield Bridge.*

**WA35/21-22 NEXT MEETING OF THE WETHERSFIELD AIRBASE SCRUTINY**

**COMMITTEE:** The next meeting of Wethersfield Airbase Scrutiny Committee will be agreed by the end of January 2022.

The Chairman thanked everybody for attending and declared the meeting closed at 9:29pm.

Signed: .....  
Chairman

Date: .....