

WETHERSFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

REPRESENTING WETHERSFIELD, BLACKMORE END & BEAZLEY END



MINUTES of the Wethersfield Airbase Scrutiny Committee Meeting held at Wethersfield Village Hall on Monday 27 January 2025, commencing at 7:30pm.

Present: Cllr A Hull (Chairman) (Shalford PC)
Cllr R Duffin (Vice Chairman) (Finchingfield PC)
Cllr C West (Wethersfield PC)
Mr J Pearce (Chair Technical Sub-Committee WASC)
D Roder (Clerk and RFO)

In Attendance: Members of the Public: 0

WA24/24-25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Fennelly (Sible Hedingham PC) and Cllr A French (Shalford PC).

WA25/24-25 MEMBERS DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

None declared.

WA26/24-25 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 OCTOBER 2024.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 October 2024, copies of which had been previously circulated to Members, were confirmed as a true record, and signed by the Chairman. Proposer Cllr R Duffin, Seconder Cllr C West.

WA27/24-25 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

None.

WA28/24-25 CLERKS REPORT COMMUNICATION:

Home Office and Parish Council meeting – 21 January 2025.

- Christmas onsite went well, and service users enjoyed it.
- Preparations for Ramadan are under way.
- There is now a barber on site, snooker room and new pool tables/air hockey tables from Scampton.
- SDO still capped at 580 with 2 conditions submitted not yet discharged.
- 530 users on site currently.
- Flooding on Scalpins lane is causing issues for residents, service users and emergency services. It has been agreed that part of the grant money can be used to solve this issue. It is Highways land and permission is needed here.
- Grant money now agreed in principle for RAF Wethersfield Museum projects - approx. £4.5K.
- Other grant money awarded in principle for traffic calming projects in Wethersfield, Blackmore End and Beazley End, plus reinstatement of the footpath between

Wethersfield and Finchingfield along side the B1053 and measures to dissolve vehicles waiting outside residents houses beyond the main gate are all with Highways to come with a plan and costing.

Home Office and Parish Council meeting – 17 December 2024

- 550 service users on site.
- Site remains calm, lots of arts and craft activities making Xmas decs. Traditional Christmas dinner will be served on Christmas day.
- Fire and rescue services are still on site. leased from the MOD on a rolling basis. A new site has been identified at Kelvedon and due to relocate in 2027.
- Safeguarding incident with a volunteer recently - HO cannot discuss individual cases however those involved has since left the facility.
- Funding: 4 potential projects, 3 have been approved in principal and are now with ECC Highways for costing and delivery. These are:
 - Reinstatement of the footpath between Wethersfield and Finchingfield.
 - Sculpins lane residents (measures to prevent traffic beyond the main gate where 5 houses are sited beyond the gate)
 - Traffic calming measures around gate 7 (Beazley/Blackmore End and Wethersfield.
- Wethersfield Museum funding is still under negotiation.
- £2.4M received at BDC from HO, £200K earmarked for community projects.
- 1500 total SU's have been through Wethersfield in total.
- SDO: 2 remaining conditions still to be discharged. No 21 and 26.

Home Office and Parish Council meeting – 19 November 2024

- Site Update Site is running business as usual. We are aware of the seasonal weather and ensuring that services are being adapted for the winter months.
- SDO Conditions: Of the 27 conditions, 5 are capping occupancy to 580 SUs. To date 2 have been discharged and the documentation for the remaining 5 has been approved and is now with MHCLG for approval to ensure they satisfy the conditions. Once we have confirmation from MHCLG we will then bring in Braintree District Council and get confirmation from their planning department that they are content and only then would occupancy increase to 800. MHCLG will decide whether to post full documents relating to the SDO conditions online.
- Safeguarding: Essex Safeguarding Adults Board received positive feedback on changes made to site and there is improved collaboration taking place with Essex County Council. Chris Russell updated the group on the safeguarding and welfare audit which commenced on 30 September. The initial phase was to monitor CRH against their own safeguarding framework (such as identification, reporting, referrals into local authority). To date there has been positive feedback for the identification of safeguarding concerns. There are weekly multi-disciplinary calls to discuss cases who are on the radar, for those residents where a concern has been raised. HO is looking how to best merge SU feedback into the process for future phases.
- Funding HO have been discussing the project over last month or so along with any potential funding for the museum as well as some traffic calming measures. It has not progressed as quickly as was intended. HO is hoping in the next week or two to have a firmer decision. BDC have met with HO grant team 4-5 times since last meeting and are concluding on certain projects put forward. BDC are doing the necessary background work to get these projects over the line.
- AOB Activities Question raised on if there is an increase in occupancy whether activities will be brought inside and with extended hours. HO confirmed there has been an emphasis on outdoor activity provision up to now, this includes Cricket and

Football pitches, however, during the winter months greater use will be made of the indoor sports hall and the gym space. Mealtimes Question raised on mealtimes and capability to cater for all. HO confirmed this will be a criterion considered during any ramp up including any necessary extensions of serving times to better stagger demand. The current facilities are enough to make this possible. Cllr mentioned that mealtimes is included in community safety and current police resource is stretched so important mealtimes are staggered. Community Impact Councillors raised that service users have been sitting at a bus stop and questioned if SUs are aware there's no bus service anymore. HO will take this forward with Clearsprings. Councillors raised how many residents have come in/through the site and asked where the people are moved to? HO confirmed people will be moved from site before they receive their decision. ACTION RO to provide information on inflow/outflow at the next meeting.

July 2024: It has been reported to the clerk that at least two buildings on the airbase have been demolished by the HO. It appears this happened around July-Sept'23 whilst occupancy was under class Q planning regulations. The Clerk has since reported this with photographic evidence to BDC's Planning Enforcement officers. An investigation is underway – Follow up on this was made in December however **NO FURTHER DECISION CURRENTLY.**

ESSEX LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY CONSULTATION.

In November 24, a joint proposal was submitted to include the airbase in the above LNRS plan, which reflected the views and evidence collated by a stakeholder group including Finchingfield and Wethersfield Parish Councils (through their Joint Neighbourhood Plan Team); the Fields Association (TFA); the Community Planning Alliance; and the Wethersfield Airbase Scrutiny Committee (WASC). Additional comments on the suitability of the site for nature regeneration have also been provided by Natural England, Essex Wildlife Trust, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, Ground Control, Spains Hall Estate, the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, the Fry Gallery, the North Essex Farm Cluster, the British Trust for Ornithology, and the residents and businesses of Finchingfield and Wethersfield parish. The LNRS submission is not yet agreed however will be put forward for the follow-up meeting of applications.

NATIONAL AUDIT OFFICE REGARDING THE ACQUISITION OF NORTHEYE.

In December 2024, WASC submitted evidence to the NAO with comparisons to Wethersfield identified at Northeye.

RAF WETHERSFIELD MUSEUM

The Museum secured the unit in Finchingfield and opened as planned in August. Both Finchingfield and Wethersfield Parish Council agreed a grant of £2K each to the museum.

FINANCE:

- Little Bardfield PC kindly donated £315 to WASC in December 2024.

WA29/24-25 SUB-COMMITTEES

Mr J Pearce gave an update. The NP Regulation 14 consultation ended in November 2024. 60 responses received which were mostly supportive. Feedback has been collated and analysed, and recommendations will go forward to both PC's to agree and finalise the draft plan. It will then be submitted to BDC for legality checks and a 6-week consultation. Afterwards an independent examination will be required, which the NP working group will appoint.

The NP working group met with the Home Office and BDC in December. Home Office consultants have been asked to scale down work now for the MOJ. The Home Office expect to remain under SDO conditions until the term expires. The MOJ still maintain an interest in the site and the Home Office will need to get rid of the site for the best value. The Home Office were positive about many aspects of the LP including the museum back on site. The were also in agreement to a masterplan being development with the PC's, NP group, BDC and other stakeholders. There were some disagreements over built development numbers and mix, plus heritage apart from the weapons store. There has also been recent change in the NPPF which has altered the definition of brownfield to include open land so now the runway could be included, however agricultural land is excluded.

Two areas of work to now be pursued. Landscape designation protection to also include Shalford potentially, 4 quotes have been obtained and will go to each PC for approval and share of the cost. Designation as a conservation area of the airbase, Place Services have been invited to quote. 2 stages of work, stage one will include a character assessment and report, stage two will include a conservation area appraisal and management plan, plus a public consultation. The fee for stage one is £1857 including anticipated expenses. Stage two £3128.25 and the public consultation £669.50 plus VAT.

Councillor Hull and Richard Sidebottom have been in talks with a private equity fund with access to £750 million and have offered their support in acquiring the site to fulfil the ambitious community led plans set out in the future vision documents. Senior Management at Ground Control, a major business at the forefront of BNG and carbon credits have offered their full support to the project and offered their full resources to help acquire the site. Further ongoing talks are also being had with solar developers and carbon positive building developers, Greencore. Initial talks with National Lottery Heritage will lead to us applying for funding via their major projects process

WA30/24-25 JOINT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Included in W29/24-25.

WA31/24-25 FINANCE

| WASC Finance | | | |
|-------------------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------|
| Updated 1/01/25 | | | |
| Invoices Received | | | |
| <u>Date</u> | <u>Supplier</u> | <u>Description</u> | <u>Amount ex VAT</u> |
| 27/02/2022 | Captial Road Safety | Traffic Monitoring | £ 600.00 |
| 10/03/2022 | Sedley Place | Prison Model | £ 2,137.50 |
| 01/03/2022 | CBA | Mobilisation Payments | £ 2,000.00 |
| 28/02/2022 | Andrew Martin Planning | Briefing note and research | £ 1,000.00 |
| 05/05/2022 | CBA | Consultancy | £ 2,800.00 |
| 15/07/2022 | Spectra Studios | Prison Model | £ 1,200.00 |
| 01/08/2022 | CBA | Landscape assesment | £ 3,895.00 |
| 10/11/2022 | CBA | Heritage application | £ 5,000.00 |
| 15/03/2023 | T ROBERTS | WASC POSTAGE COSTS | £ 141.49 |
| 20/04/2023 | BURO HAPPOLD | WASC DESKTOP CONTAMINATION | £ 4,950.00 |
| 20/04/2023 | BURO HAPPOLD | WASC DESIGN NOTE ON EIA SCREENING | £ 500.00 |
| 04/07/2023 | TRANSPORT PLANNING CONSULTANTS LTI | TRAFFIC ASSESMENT | £ 4,750.00 |
| 11/10/2024 | BURO HAPPOLD | WASC CONTAMINATION REPORT | £ 5,000.00 |
| | | Total | £ 33,973.99 |

| Income Received | | | |
|-----------------|----------------------------------|---|--------------------|
| Date | Payee | Description | Amount |
| 21/02/2022 | Shalford Parish Council | 10% Contribution 21/22 | £ 2,150.00 |
| 14/03/2022 | Toppesfield Parish Council | Contribution | £ 500.00 |
| 11/04/2022 | Little Bardfield Parish Council | Contribution | £ 300.00 |
| 08/04/2022 | The Fields/SWAP | Grant | £ 5,000.00 |
| 05/05/2022 | Great Bardfield Parish Council | Contribution | £ 1,000.00 |
| 18/05/2022 | Finchingfield Parish Council | Contribution | £ 4,474.20 |
| 20/06/2022 | Sible Hedingham | Contribution | £ 500.00 |
| 01/08/2022 | The Fields/SWAP | Grant | £ 5,000.00 |
| 10/08/2022 | Castle Hedingham | Contribution | £ 300.00 |
| 25/10/2022 | Helions Bumpstead Parish Council | Contribution | £ 100.00 |
| 01/12/2022 | Finchingfield Parish Council | Contribution | £ 4,748.50 |
| 17/06/2022 | Shalford Parish Council | 10% Contribution 22/23 | £ 2,150.00 |
| 12/12/2022 | Sible Hedingham Parish Council | Contribution | £ 2,375.00 |
| 24/01/2023 | The Salings Parish Council | Contribution | £ 500.00 |
| 28/04/2023 | The Fields/SWAP | grant | £ 3,500.00 |
| 22/05/2023 | Little Bardfield Parish Council | Grant | £ 315.00 |
| 11/07/2023 | Toppesfield Parish Council | Contribution | £ 500.00 |
| 06/10/2023 | Shalford Parish Council | Contribution | £ 1,121.00 |
| 02/10/2023 | Finchingfield Parish Council | Contribution | £ 2,000.00 |
| 24/11/2023 | Gosfield Parish Council | Contribution | £ 250.00 |
| 21/05/2024 | Gosfield Parish Council | Contribution | £ 250.00 |
| 11/10/2024 | Private Individual | Gift | £ 1,000.00 |
| 09/12/2024 | Little Bardfield Parish Council | Contribution | £ 315.00 |
| | | Total | £ 38,348.70 |
| | | Current Position banked | £ 4,374.71 |
| | | EARMARKED RESERVES: | |
| | | Finchingfield Parish Council balance remaining 24/25 EMR | 4000 |
| | | Shalford Parish Council balance remaining 24-25 | 2500 |
| | | Shalford Parish Council balance remaining 23-24 | £1,121.00 |
| | | | £ 11,995.71 |
| | | Wethersfield Parish Council contribution Clerk and Hall Hire (£6500.00) | |
| | | Spending in the pipeline resolved: | |
| | | Water testing | 1000 |
| | | Total: | 1000 |
| | | Current balance banked + earmarked reserves | 11995.71 |
| | | Minus spending agreed but not yet paid | -1000 |
| | | Current position including earmarked reserves minus pipeline spending: | 10995.71 |

WA32/24-25 ITEMS FROM COUNCILLORS TO BE ADDED TO THE NEXT AGENDA

An EGM to be called by the Chairman.

WA33/24-25 NEXT MEETING OF THE WETHERSFIELD AIRBASE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

The next meeting of Wethersfield Airbase Scrutiny Committee is scheduled to be held on 24 February at Wethersfield Village Hall. The Chairman thanked everybody for attending and declared the meeting closed at 9.41pm.

Signed:
Chairman

Date: