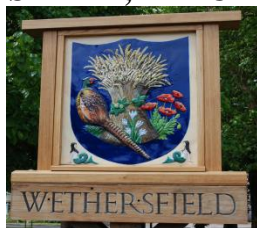


WETHERSFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

REPRESENTING WETHERSFIELD, BLACKMORE END & BEAZLEY END



MINUTES of the Wethersfield Airbase Scrutiny Committee Meeting held at Blackmore End Village Hall on Monday, 28 February 2022, commencing at 7:30pm.

Present:

Cllr A Hull (Chairman) (Shalford PC)
Cllr J Pearce (Wethersfield PC)
Cllr R Duffin (Finchingfield PC)
Cllr A French (Shalford PC)
Cllr T Roberts (Toppesfield PC)
Cllr R Aggiss (Salings PC)
Cllr K Jiggins (Salings PC)
Cllr P Kennedy (Great Bardfield PC)
Cllr S Moutard (Gosfield PC)
Cllr I Graham (Great Barfield PC)
Cllr A Collard (Toppesfield PC)
Cllr S Short (Wethersfield PC)
Donna Roder (Deputy Clerk)
Michelle Baker (Clerk)

In Attendance: Members of the Public: 10

WA36/21-22 TO ELECT A VICE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED. As some councillors were delayed arriving, it was proposed to change the order of business on the agenda, in accordance with Standing Orders. Item 1 was moved to item 8. Proposed by Cllr S Short (Wethersfield PC) and seconded by Cllr T Roberts (Toppesfield PC)

WA37/21-22 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr A Cole (Panfield PC). Cllr P King (Gt Yeldham PC), Cllr J O'Brien (Little Bardfield PC) and Cllr D Coverdale (Finchingfield PC).

WA38/21-22 MEMBERS DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

None declared.

WA39/21-22 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 JANUARY 2022.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2022, copies of which had been previously circulated to Members, were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman. Proposer Cllr R Aggiss (Sailings PC), seconder Cllr P King (Great Bardfield PC).

WA40/21-22 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- i. A member of SWAP shared details on their recent activities to oppose the Prison proposal. A demonstration took place in Great Bardfield, presentations made the local history group, Wethersfield Airfield Museum gave a presentation in Sible Hedingham and SWAP gave a presentation there too. FOI's from BDC have been received which contain over 80 pages of communication between MOJ and BDC since 2016 on the prison proposal. Questions regarding this were put to BDC at their last council meeting as it is mentioned several times in the FOI's by BDC Counsellor(s) that the local Parish Councils are in favour of the proposed Prison site at Wethersfield which is not the case whatsoever. SWAP have also just launched their website and fundraising letters being finalised for distribution.
- ii. A member of the public shared details on their personal engagement with ECC and CPRE regarding the prison proposal and their opposition to it. It was further mentioned that Tendering had offered the MOJ sites for the Prisons however it was not considered or follow-up by the MOJ.
- iii. A member of the public asked where they could find more details about WASC and SWAP. Many people are not on social media or have access to computers. It was discussed that each WASC PC to update parishioner's WASC updates on their own websites and noticeboards.

Cllr Duffin entered the meeting at 7.36pm.

WA41/21-22 CLERKS REPORT

CORRESPONDENCE

1. Meeting date agreed between WASC and DIO on 21 March 2022.
2. Follow-up email sent to MP James Cleverly on items discussed at the last meeting.
3. BALC Meeting: WASC Chairman and Councillor Juliet O'Brien to give a presentation 16 March 2022.
4. Response to the MOJ White Papers consultation sent.
5. Request for access to the airfield site for appointed contractors of WASC sent to the DIO and MOD. Our request for access has been refused.
6. BDC Levelling up plan for further information sent by Wethersfield PC.
7. MOJ communication to be sent regarding alternative road access viability to the site.

SWAP

Fund raiser leaflet distribution to all member Parish residents. Still pending bank account opening. Once finalised, the Deputy Clerk will email WASC members and their Parish Council Clerks to organise distribution support to their local parishioners.

PARISH INVOLVEMENT

Invitations sent out to 5 additional Parish Councils. Castle Hedingham, Stebbing, The Sampfords, Stambourne and Radwinter.

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The amendment of committee terms of reference to include non-councillor will be proposed to WPC at next week's full council meeting.

WA42/21-22 SUB-COMMITTEES UPDATE

Cllr A Hull gave an update on communications and strategy. A meeting with DIO 21st March, if okay with the committee it is proposed Cllr A Hull, Cllr J Pearce, Cllr R Duffin, Sarah Seacombe and Mick Nash would attend. We have been told our consultants will not be allowed on base to undergo heritage/ecology assessments, but we shall be emailing the DIO before the meeting requesting that copies of the two masterplans be sent to us, so we can push forward with meaningful discussion.

- a FOI - A large number of documents /correspondences has been released by BDC after request from a member of WASC. Judging by what we have been allowed to see it is quite easy to come to the possible conclusion that BDC are supportive of the proposals and seem to be almost collaborating in their effort to get a positive outcome. This problem is probably compounded by the fact our Three Fields Ward councillor Peter Tattersley has reported back to BDC and MOJ stating how local PCs are positive about the prison proposals (quote emails). We feel we should give Councillor Tattersley the opportunity to explain and then retract this misrepresentation. It is abundantly clear that PCs are far from positive about the proposals. So, we shall be writing to Councillor Tattersley and others at BDC (and the MOJ if necessary) stating our position.

Councillor Butland. It has been drawn to my attention after speaking to several PCs that at the beginning of this process, various district councillors visited individual PC meetings all giving the same 'advice'. That all PCs should concentrate on what they can get out of the prisons being built rather than focus their effort on trying to stop the prisons being built. Heavily implying that the process was a done deal and will get passed by the Secretary of State regardless of protest or objection from a parish or district council. This 'advice' coupled with the now infamous article in the Dunmow Broadcaster back in 2016 where Councillor Butland clearly stated his personal opinion that the prisons were a great idea for the site, well, this does not sit well with our subcommittee. This misinformation, given from a council leader, from the outset, could be seen, by some, to be a flagrant attempt to influence PC actions. Many of us here today were at the initial meeting in this very building where Councillor Butland, Councillor Tattersley, Councillor Santomauro, and Councillor Van Dulken all sat here saying the very same thing, get what we can out of it. We feel this attempt to influence us needs addressing, can others here please advise if their PCs had the same visits where the same 'advice' was given? If deemed serious enough, we believe this issue should be brought to the attention of the monitoring officer.

Future strategy, awaiting initial consultation work as explained by Cllr J Pearce.

Each individual PC try to raise awareness in their own parish and hopefully be prepared to help circulate leaflets produced by SWAP.

Cllr J Pearce gave an update on Technical Work Program (see below). Database is progress as is the Digital model. Drone footage has been taken of

Five Wells and the link will be sent to all members to understand further the huge scale of the development, although this is only half the size of the same proposed in Wethersfield. The Landscape character assessment contract has awarded to CBA and under the initial budget. The assessment will include a baseline assessment plus five different viewpoints.

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. 5-6 people can access. JP to send email addresses to RS for those sub-committee members to access.
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	£2,900.00	Three coordinated contracts needed. Modeling - Sedley Place £2100, Digital capture - Septra Studio's £800. Drone footage - FOC GT. £3K saving on previous quotes with VAT. vv £5175 originally + VAT
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	£4,900.00	Three quotes obtained. Preferred consultant interviewed and to be appointed. Work phased so that this phase will be baseline assessment. Discount applied in conjunction with heritage work set out below
Economic assessment	The creation of jobs and economic benefits to the area is like 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. Ongoing research underway
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. Local landowners may progress.
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. Draft report received. Consideration to be given at later stage to obtaining Counsel opinion
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	Response prepared and submitted to meet the consultation deadline
Traffic Modelling data	Traffic count proposed at four locations (either side of Sculpins Lane junction with Finchingfield Road, Hedingham 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	Traffic count completed. Initial analysis undertaken, expectation based on several assumptions, traffic increase best case scenario +114% overall. HGV's will be significantly higher, plus organic growth in traffic levels coming 10yrs. Expert traffic analysis needed (see below).
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 been progressed. Demonstrates relative isolation of MoJ site contrary to prison strategy
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. Cllr Butland asked in writing to clarify data
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. Reports need update but access to site required. JP to resend consultants quotes to review required work.
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	£3,800.00	Quote obtained. Consultant being appointed. Phase 1 work to include baseline assessment and assessment of non-designated heritage assets and potential for conservation area. Additional £4500 budget needed) if undertake 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
Transport Assessment	To give a qualified and accurate traffic assessment impact statement. Detailed analysis needs to be fully qualified and broken down by type of vehicles generated by prisons plus organic local growth next 10 years.	JP/MN	£2,500.00	Approved by sub-committee.
			Estimated Total + VAT	£22,975 - £28,467
			Revised Estimated Total + VAT	£22,858 - £28,350

WA43/21-22 TO ELECT A VICE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED Cllr Roger Duffin was nominated. Proposed by Cllr Sue Short (Wethersfield PC) and seconded by Cllr Trisha Roberts (Toppesfield PC)

WA44/21-22 FUNDING UPDATE

Shalford PC have submitted their 10% precept, Toppesfield is pending. An additional member will also join the WASC Finance Sub-Committee.

WA45/21-22 FINCHINGFIELD BRIDGE

RESOLVED A request to ECC for a weight limit to be imposed on Finchingfield Bridge was agreed. Proposed by Cllr R Duffin (Finchingfield PC), seconded by Cllr S Short (Wethersfield PC).

WA46/21-22 REGULAR MEETING DATES FOR 2022

RESOLVED A fixed schedule of monthly meeting dates was agreed to be held on the last Monday of the month (excluding Bank Holidays) Proposed by Cllr K Jiggins (Salings PC), seconded by Cllr A French (Shalford PC).

WA47/21-22 ITEMS FROM COUNCILLORS TO BE ADDED TO THE NEXT AGENDA

None received.

WA48/21-22 NEXT MEETING OF THE WETHERSFIELD AIRBASE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

The next meeting of Wethersfield Airbase Scrutiny Committee will be held on Monday March 28th 2022.

The Chairman thanked everybody for attending and declared the meeting closed at 9:06pm.

Signed:
Chairman

Date: