

# 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, 27 June 2022, commencing at 7:30pm.**

Present:

- Cllr A Hull (Chairman) (Shalford PC)
- Cllr R Duffin (Vice Chairman) (Finchingfield PC)
- Cllr A French (Shalford PC)
- Cllr T Roberts (Toppesfield PC)
- Cllr N Nicholson (Helions Bumpstead PC)
- Cllr P Kennedy (Great Bardfield PC)
- Kate Fox (Great Bardfield Clerk)
- Donna Roder (Deputy Clerk)

In Attendance:

- Members of the Public: 4
- WASC Technical Sub-Committee Member: Dr Richard Sidebottom.

**Prior to the meeting, Dr Richard Sidebottom – WASC Technical Sub-Committee Member gave two Presentations on:**

- **National interest framed around mega prison scale and location.**
- **Local interest framed around mega prison scale and location.**

**This was then followed by a Q&A.**

## **WA30/22-23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received from Cllr S Moutard (Gosfield PC), Cllr Alan Collard (Toppesfield PC), Cllr Sue Short (Wethersfield PC), Cllr G Southgate (Castle Hedingham PC), Cllr Sebastian Harris (Sible Hedingham PC) and Cllr D Hockley (Great Bardfield PC), Cllr M Lee (Sible Hedingham), Cllr J O'Brien (Little Bardfield PC), Cllr J Toocaram (Castle Hedingham PC), Cllr J Pearce (Wethersfield PC), Cllr R Aggiss (The Salings PC)

## **WA31/22-23 MEMBERS DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS**

None declared.

**WA32/22-23 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30 May 2022.**

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on 30 May 2022, copies of which had been previously circulated to Members, were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman. Proposer Cllr T Roberts, seconded Cllr R Duffin.

**WA33/22-23 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

None

**WA34/22-23 TO CONFIRM ADDITIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Helions Bumpstead Parish Council.

**WA35/22-23 CLERKS REPORT**

**CORRESPONDENCE**

1. WASC and DIO. A site survey is schedule for 7 July 2022, together with the DIO, Cllr J Pearce, CBA Consultants and the Deputy Clerk.
2. BDC: The meeting between WASC Communications Sub-Committee and Cllr P Tattersley was held on June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2022.
3. A grant funding request has been made to The Fields Association for £10K to cover the next phases on the Technical Sub-Committee work program.
4. A letter of WASC introduction was sent to the Clerk of Helions Bumpstead Parish Council.
5. A follow-up email was sent to Birdbrook PC regarding joining WASC.

**SWAP**

Banners: Wethersfield PC have the banner however it's too big for the bus shelter. Green Sure have been contacted for their assistance to install it on the village green opposite the Village Hall, however no response received.

The Government Petition is now at >10K signatures and a Government response has been received. Government responded:

“The Government is undertaking the largest prison build programme in more than a century, one of the sites being considered is Wethersfield Air Base, a planning The proposed prisons, if built, would be the greenest prisons built so far and follow a new design that helps aid rehabilitation of offenders, helping make our communities safer. The new prisons would also create over 1,200 permanent jobs in the local area once the prisons were operational and hundreds of local jobs during construction.

The MoJ ran a pre-planning public consultation to seek feedback from the local community on these proposals in the Braintree District. The consultation ran from 27 September until 8 November with face to face consultation sessions on the 14 and 15 October. Residents were able to have their say by submitting comments online, over the phone or by post. We appreciate the feedback received and had around 1,800 responses.

The MoJ are currently deciding whether to proceed to submitting a planning application for new prisons on the Wethersfield site and taking time to consider the information received from the public consultation, stakeholder engagement and the results of ecological surveys on the site.

The MoJ are committed to adhering to the Environment Act and have followed due process by engaging ecologists to conduct relevant surveys and provide the necessary advice on mitigation action required to offset the impact of the proposed development. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, reptile survey, and dormouse survey were conducted in 2020. A Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), great crested newt surveys, invasive non-native species survey, and an updated Phase 1 habitat survey were conducted in 2021. A Wintering Bird Survey was conducted in winter 2021/2022. A bat Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) has been conducted in 2022, and the following surveys are ongoing: bat activity surveys, bat roost surveys of buildings, invertebrate surveys, and a botanical survey.

The findings of these surveys have guided, and would continue to guide, the formulation of an appropriate mitigation response to the impacts of the proposed development. An ecology chapter would form part of the Environmental Statement for the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) if a planning application is submitted.

To mitigate the ecological impact of building on this site, prison landscaping would use native planting and seed mixes as far as possible.

The loss of any trees, scrub, and buildings would be mitigated/compensated. Brown hares use the site, and appropriate mitigation/compensation would be provided. Great crested newt impacts are limited to habitats on land (no ponds would be lost), and we propose following the District Level Licensing route with Natural England, to offset any impacts.

The invertebrate surveys target a wide range of rare and notable species, including priority species. We are confident that the needs of any priority species can be accommodated within the habitat provisions envisaged.

The MOJ is committed to Environment Act and to the protection of wildlife. The MoJ currently operates a number of prisons in Sites of Special Scientific interest (SSSI's) and on sites with protected species of birds and other wildlife. Any proposals put forward for Planning Permission would have a commitment to protect the wildlife on the site and to mitigate the impact of the proposed development.

Ministry of Justice “

### **PARISH INVOLVEMENT**

No further updates from Stebbing, The Sampfords, Stambourne, Radwinter and Rigewell currently. Birkbrook PC have put the item on the agenda as a motion at their next PC Meeting.

### **WA36/22-23 SUB-COMMITTEES UPDATE**

Cllr A Hull gave an update on Essex County Council Climate Action Committee and their target to be carbon net zero by 2030, of which BDC is a focus area. Furthermore the Pant Valley Farm Cluster is also an ECC key point of focus. WASC also has an accumulation of

valuable data, and even more so from tonight's presentation from Dr Richard Sidebottom. It now needs to be agreed what to do with it so a further Strategy Sub-Committee Meeting will be held next week. From the Technical Sub-Committee, heritage consideration work is being prepared, and landscape consultants will be visiting the site on July 7, together with the DIO. Transport consultants assessment are also underway.

**WA37/22-23 RURAL MEGA PRISONS AND THE NATIONAL INTEREST.**

An update was received by Dr Richard Sidebottom prior to the start of the meeting.

**WA38/22-23 HERITAGE REPORT**

Awaiting further decision from our consultants.

**WA39/22-23 BDC FOI'S**

An update was received from the meeting with Cllr P Tattersley on June 23, 2022. It was agreed that our BDC Cllr would provide an update for his five parishes, that the MOJ's prison proposal is not favourable by those Parishes he represents. This update will be sent to the MOJ, BDC and other public bodies to correct the record from the FIO's received.

**WA40/22-23 JOINT NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

The joint meeting between Finchingfield PC, Wethersfield PC, Toppesfield PC and Sible Hedingham PC is to be agreed. Mid July 2022 is the target date. Toppesfield PC also confirmed that their NHP does not include the airbase.

**WA41/22-23 BDC PLANNING COMMITTEE**

An update was received that this will be discussed further, at the next Strategy Sub-Committee meeting in July 2022.

**WA42/22-23 ECC LEVELLING UP WHITE PAPER**

Cllr R Duffin gave an update on the ECC Levelling Up Launch on June 10, 2022. It was discussed if WASC should also write to ECC in addition to local PC's. It was agreed that in the first instance Cllr R Duffin will share the feedback email from BDC, via the Deputy Clerk, for distribution to all WASC members.

**WA43/22-23 SWAP NEWSLETTER**

No further update from Sible Hedingham on help for distribution to 2K houses.

**WASC Finance**  
**Updated 24/06/2022**

**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
<b>Total</b>			<b>£ 8,537.50</b>

**Income Received**

<u>Date</u>	<u>Payee</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount</u>
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	Bardfield Parish Council	Contribution	£ 1,000.00
18/05/2022	Finchingfield Parish Council	Contribution	£ 4,474.20
15/06/2022	Sible Hedingham Parish Council	Contribution	£ 500.00
15/06/2022	Shalford Parish Council	Contribution	£ 2,150.00
<b>Total</b>			<b>£ 16,074.20</b>

**Current Position** **£ 7,536.70**

Wethersfield PC contribution of salaries (Deputy Clerk) and village hall costs for meetings.

**WA45/22-23 ITEMS FROM COUNCILLORS TO BE ADDED TO THE NEXT AGENDA**

*All items should be sent to the deputy clerk by 18 July 2022.*

**WA46/22-23 NEXT MEETING OF THE WETHERSFIELD AIRBASE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:**

The next meeting of Wethersfield Airbase Scrutiny Committee will be held on Monday 25 July 2022.

The Chairman thanked everybody for attending and declared the meeting closed at 9.31pm.

Signed: .....  
Chairman

Date: .....