Minutes of an Ordinary Council Meeting held on
Tuesday 5 February 2013 at Harlestone Village Institute, Upper Harlestone at 7.00 pm

Present: Cllr Dobbs (Presiding), Cllr Ashton Davies, Cllr Bayliss, Cllr Bilbie, Cllr S Flynn, Cllr T Jones, Cllr K Melling, Cllr Waller and Sarah Stock (Clerk).

In attendance: Ian Lindsay (Althorp), Stephen Bawtree (Pegasus Planning), Barry Frenchman (Dist Councillor), Dave Masters.

Admin matters

The Chairman notified the council that he had purchased flowers from the Chairman’s allowance for former Chairman of the PC, Clive Skinner and family, who have recently lost their daughter. The council approved the purchase.

127. To receive and approve apologies for absence.
None received prior to the meeting.

128. To approve and sign as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Parish Council held on 4th December.

The minutes having been circulated prior to the meeting were accepted as a true record of the meeting and signed by Cllr Dobbs.

129. Members are requested to make any declarations of personal or prejudicial interests relating to items on this agenda.

The Chairman, Cllr Waller and Sarah Stock were approached by contractors tendering for the grass cutting; no information was given and contractors were referred back to the PC.

No other declarations made.

130. To receive an update from District & County Councillors.

The Chairman invited District Councillor Barry Frenchman to address the council. BF will comment on the later planning discussion, but gave a general update on the SUE N4.

DDC intend to increase the council tax by 2%, the county council will not levy any increase, and neither will the police. Changes to the tax base appear not to affect Harlestone and our precept stands as per the previous meetings.

131. Finance: To receive an update on Finances from the Clerk.

a. Bank account reconciliation. The council reviewed the accounts; no action is required at this time

b. Accounts for payment: The council approved the following items for payment.

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<tr>
<th>Invoice Date</th>
<th>Payee</th>
<th>Invoice Number</th>
<th>Statutory Power</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Cheque No</th>
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<td>Harlestone Village</td>
<td>January</td>
<td>LGA 1972 S134 (4)</td>
<td>Hire (Meetings)</td>
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<td>Sarah Stock</td>
<td>January</td>
<td></td>
<td>Clerk remuneration</td>
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132. Parishioners are invited to address the council. Parishioners will be limited to 15 minutes.

Mr Masters requested feedback on the parking obstructions near Pheasantry Corner. The issue has been raised during the county parking review, which is conducted by the County Council. However, it is unlikely that the CC will have the resources to address the problem and the parish council received advice that we should raise the issue informally with the land owner. IL suggested that preventing parking in area might move the problem further into the village creating a greater danger.

Cllr Bilbies suggested we clear the area to make it possible to park safely, perhaps by moving the fencing back. This will be investigated and the PC will liaise with IL.

**Discussion Items**

133. Planning Applications: To review outcomes and applications received prior to the date of this meeting.

Planning Application DA/2012/0937

Description: Outline Application for residential development of up to 200 dwellings (including affordable housing) including road infrastructure, public open spaces, landscaping, sustainable drainage and engineering works (access not reserved)

Location: Land to east of Harlestone Road, Harlestone, Northamptonshire.

The council reviewed Cllr Waller’s report which was circulated prior to the meeting (shown in gray). The Chairman invited Cllr Waller to begin the discussion and invited IL and SB to interject when appropriate.

Cllr Waller started by briefing the council on the current planning policy and the proposed changes to these policies which affect this application and the council discussed the following observations.

**Observations**

1. Daventry DC has a requirement to have in place a 5 year housing supply with a 20% buffer. In April 2012 the housing supply was 2.08 yrs and is currently 2.35 yrs. Once the WNJCS is approved then, based upon the new homes proposed in the WNJCS the housing supply requirement will be fulfilled.

   At this juncture DDC has an insufficient supply of new homes which will need to be addressed and is in the process of doing so.
2. Protecting Green Belt Land/Green Wedges: The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green belt is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. The Green Belts serve five purposes:
- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas;
- Prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns;
- Assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

The Northampton County Council Policy in regard to the Northampton Ring Road to the North and West is clear. The proposed site will be located inside the proposed Northampton North and West Bypass and therefore the site will not retain it’s characteristics of openness and permanent status, post Bypass and therefore would not be deemed as open countryside. The Bypass and Harlestone Firs will restrict and contain the sprawl of further urban development North towards Lower Harlestone. It could however be a stepping stone towards the west inside the Bypass and the land South of Whites Lane.

It should be noted that the applicant also owns the land to the North of the site which lays directly between the proposed North West Bypass route and Harlestone Firs. It should be made a condition that this area should be a buffer zone which provides permanent green space and/or an area for wild life habitat and/or additional tree planting.

It was raised that there was no direct benefit to Harlestone in supporting this application, and the impact could be considerable once the whole plan is complete (for 3000 homes on Dallington Grange). It was noted that there is no mention or plan for a bypass around Harlestone.

BF advised that there are no grounds for opposition as there is no legally defined green belt in Northamptonshire. As the land bank is low the majority of housing plans have been approved at appeal. It was suggested that with this in mind, Harlestone should push for community infrastructure.

SB confirmed the need for a supply of land. It was clarified that the proposed building area is defined as green wedge (Policy EN10) and some weight is given to that to protect the land, however, the land could not already be included in the SUE (this is) or should have some environmental significance.

3. Retention of Agricultural Use: The site is detached from other agricultural land close by and will be further isolated on commencement and completion of the North West Bypass. The land would then become less economically viable for agriculture. In the medium to long term, by the development of the land it would be put to better use for sustainable new home development.

The application includes the by pass for access to the development area, rather than direct access from the A428.

4. Conserving the Natural Environment: There will be some loss of natural habitat due the construction of the Bypass as well as the proposed development. Harlestone Firs is an area of special interest and an area to be protected.

The site itself is not a special area of conservation to warrant refusal on this basis given the impact of the construction of the Bypass. The proposed will retain the greater part of the existing hedgerows and there will be the provision of 36% (3.43ha) of the development area as open/green space. DDC requirement policy RC1 is a minimum of 10% of open space and amenity area. The site will undergo a tree planting program and the landscaping is sympathetic in its appearance from the A428 Harlestone Road.

It should be noted that the land was reserved for a park and ride facility which is no longer required and considered unsustainable. Had the park and ride facility been developed then the green wedge would have disappeared completely with very little green and open spaces. The appearance of a sparsely filled car park would be unsightly and detrimental in appearance and would be in conflict with the setting of the area. The development proposed would be more visually sympathetic in appearance given the landscape plan for the proposed development.
The County Council (CC) has queried how residents of the Gateway area cross the road and requested a contribution to the bus service. SB gave assurance that this concern would be addressed and all the trees planted would be conditioned and details of landscaping would be submitted to DDC, to include a combination of semi mature trees and whips.

5. Sustainable: The location of the site is in close proximity to Duston which makes the proposed easily accessible to local shops and local bus routes. Close and accessible transport routes provide good vehicle access to the Bypass and town centre. The development is considered sustainable.

6. The development will provide a value number of affordable homes and a diverse property mix within close proximity of Northampton urban area. Predominantly two storey homes, red brick with some Northampton stone. Include 2, 4 and 5 bedroom homes and 7 one bedroom flats. The mix of affordable homes have not been confirmed.

The council was concerned that the social/affordable homes may bring social problems to the area which some of residents would find unpalatable although it was accepted that Harlestone has very few affordable homes and this development would fill the gap. There are unlikely to be restrictive covenants on the homes. There is some negotiation to be made to restrict the number of affordable homes included in the project, and the housing association does vet the tenants and manage complaints.

7. Infrastructure: The Developer will provide the next stage of the North West Bypass between the A428 roundabout and the access to the development.

It is likely that there will be a contribution to education, although the spending of this contribution will be spent at the CC discretion. The council would like ensure that the existing Harlestone residents have parity with the proposed new homes through provision technology based infrastructure.

The parish can make representation to the district council (Richard Lambert) for provision of additional facilities.

8. Daventry Local Plan: The proposal adheres to the majority of clauses in DDC General Saved Policies, however there are a number of conflicting points;

i. Policy GN1 Clause (F) “The granting of planning permission for development will be guided by the need to severely restrain development in the open countryside”. The point outlined in item 2 makes it clear that with the construction of the Bypass the site would no longer be deemed as open countryside.

ii. Policy GN2 Clause (G)&(H) Under the proposals and Policies of this Local Plan, planning permission will normally be granted for development provided it,

(G) will not adversely affect a special landscape area.

(H) has full regard to the requirements of agriculture and the need to protect the best and most versatile agriculture land from development which is irreversible.

iii. Policy EN10. Green Wedges, Rural access and Green Links (Policy EN10). Planning permission will not be granted for development in green wedges as identified on the proposals map unless it would not:

(A) Be discordant with the predominantly open/green nature of green wedge by reason of appearance or use

(B) Reduce the physical settlements between settlements.

(C) Compromise agricultural or forestry operations, recreation use or wildlife value in a green wedge.

(D) Impair public access to a green wedge.

There is a conflict in regard to Policy E10 however the Bypass that is a certainty will be constructed across the green space and will then isolate the area and will no longer be a permanent open space in appearance.

It would not reduce the physical separation between settlements as Harlestone Firs will continue provide the separation between the development and Lower Harlestone.
It will compromise the agricultural operations but will not compromise the other factors in clause (C) however it is considered that the benefit of the development far outweighs the small and less viable agricultural use.

The development will provide a significant contribution the DDC new housing supply.

It should also be noted that a badger set has been identified on the site and the applicant has stated in the application that the badger set will be protected and unaffected by the proposed development.

There will be no change to the impairment of access to the green wedge.

It is essential that the land north of the bypass adjoining Harlestone Firs is protected and enhanced to better protect the special landscape and wildlife and forestry operations of Harlestone Firs. The agricultural land with the eventual new Bypass will no longer be versatile and the benefit of development outweighs the need for continued agricultural use.

Recommendation

It is recommended that Harlestone Parish Council support the application for the reasons outlined above and subject to the following conditions.

1. Implement the Development in accordance with DDC Local Plan GN3.

2. The land between the North West Bypass and Harlestone Firs is allocated as Green Wedge of permanent green open space for the protection of the Harlestone Firs and to encourage more wildlife and habitat.

The Chairman invited comments.

SB was able to confirm that the NW by pass would be built before the homes are built.

IL would be reluctant to be conditioned to set aside the land adjacent to the proposal as green open space as this may be detrimental to any future plans for the land. The land is to be retained by Althorp transferred and maintained for agricultural use.

TC lent her support to the application, but would like to see improvements to Harlestone Firs.

SF queried the data which suggests that the vehicle traffic would not adversely affect the village, as traffic currently travels through the village to access Kingsthorpe and Northampton. The council could make an observation with our reply for CC to address the traffic issues. SF objected to the application.

DB echoed SF thoughts on traffic. DB was concerned that the residents of this development would not be an integral part of village life, thus detrimental to the village as is. DB objected to the application.

KM would like to see the NW by pass built in entirety; however, accepted this is likely to be 10 years away. The road built by the developer will not protect the village from urban sprawl. KM felt that there would be a greater detrimental effect on the village than had been highlighted during this meeting but could not evidence this concern. Therefore KM would neither support nor object.

KW supported the application.

TAD supported the application although expressed disappointment that there was no automatic right to funds to improve the infrastructure in the village.

MB wanted to ensure the safety of the adjacent land but would support the application.

The Chairman invited a show of hands from the councillors and asked to the clerk to record 5 in support, 2 against and 1 abstention.

It was agreed that the council would form a small working group to make representation to DDC before 13th March (planning committee hearing date) to ensure that while supporting the application Harlestone receives the necessary assistance to lessen the impact on the village and seek assistance in improving existing facilities.

Harlestone Parish Council supports the application subject to the following conditions.
1. Implement the Development in accordance with DDC Local Plan GN3.

2. The land between the North West Bypass and Harlestone Firs is allocated as Green Wedge of permanent green open space for the protection of the Harlestone Firs and to encourage more wildlife and habitat.

134. Village Communications:
   a. Progress report from Cllr Dobbs on publication of the Harlestone Hound.

   Cllr Dobbs will bring the publication up to date and will need information from councillors

   b. Email communication policy
   The Chairman reminded the council that we may be subject to the Freedom of Information in our informal communication and should perhaps be more careful especially when communication with external organisations.

135. Grass Cutting & Village Maintenance: The council is asked to award the grass cutting contract.

We have received updated quotes for grass cutting around the village.

A&A Landscapes at £2,115 pa
Letts Go Gardening at £2,100
Paul Dyball at £2,190

The council was reminded of our obligation to make best use of public funds and awarded the contract on strict financial lines. It was proposed to award the contract to Letts Go Gardening and approved by the council.

136. DDC Local Plan/WNJCS SUE N4

Daventry District Council is currently consulting on an Issues Paper for the Settlement and Countryside Local Plan. As part of the consultation exercise there are a series of meetings for representatives of parish councils to attend and discuss the emerging local plan. KW will attend the next meeting on the 29th Jan.

WNJCS SUE N4 pre-hearing meeting takes place on 4th March, and hearing will commence on 16th April. Cllr Waller will attend both to represent HPC. It was Cllr Waller’s recommendation that the parish needs a neighbourhood plan to the legal document by which all development in the parish should be governed. The council agreed with the need for a NP and approved Cllr Waller to go ahead. Cllr Waller will organise a working party, including non council members.

137. Harlestone Charities Nominative Trustee

An advert was placed in the White Magazine; Tracey Jones was nominated and confirmed as the PC nominated trustee. Sarah Stock will inform the charity secretary.

138. Items for next Agenda & date of the next meeting: Monday 4th March 2013. Dead line for items for the next agenda Monday 25th February.

Tennis Court: No meeting has taken place, and we will wait now until the New Year to discuss this with IL.
Broadband speeds: Nothing further to report at this time

Access road to Church car park: Nothing further to report at this time

Drain clear schedule: Request sent and complaint made about the drain near 19/20 Lower Harlestone. The report has been referred to Jon Sparks at the CC, but no action has taken place yet.

Community Speed Watch: As per instruction at the last meeting, we have registered our interest to be involved in a community speed watch programme. Since the publication of the agenda the council has received notification that we need to obtain 75 pledges for this scheme to go ahead. A presentation will take place on Monday 4th March from Jon McQuaid to brief the council and any other interested persons.

A428 Traffic Calming: We have received the £5,000 grant from the County Council. MGWSP engineering will put in place the order for a pole and hook up in the vicinity of the existing Speed Camera in Harlestone, and I have asked them if they can expedite it. The CC will meet the costs initially and then invoice us.

The Parish Council will be responsible for all ongoing power costs for the device, which are generally quite reasonable (from SB)

The council was asked to investigate the Police Property Fund. This grant can be applied for and used for any project deemed to benefit the community. Sarah Stock was asked to investigate.

SF requested a progress report on traffic calming near Railway cottages

The council was asked to provide funds towards the repairs of the Church flag pole (Oct ’12), the clerk was asked to obtain an update from the PCC.

The council is asked to include in the news letter an item regarding the bins along the A428 reminding residents to remove the bin in a timely manner to ensure access along the path.

The council is asked to organise a Litter picking weekend (Rona Wade)

The playing field wall was damaged in the recent high winds and falls under the responsibility of the council. Cllr Bilbie is able to use the Community Payback scheme workforce to make the repairs and the council authorised him to do this.

Meeting closed at 9.55 pm