

# Little Hadham Parish Council

Minutes of the 15<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Little Hadham Parish Council Planning Committee (2015-2019 Session) held on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2016 at 8:00 pm in the Village Hall, Little Hadham.

<b>Present:</b>	<b>Mrs M Wilkinson</b>	<b>Chair</b>
	<b>Mr T Hoodless</b>	)
	<b>Mrs E Lloyd-Williams</b>	)
	<b>Mr G Pearson</b>	) <b>Councillors</b>
	<b>Mr G Tooke</b>	)
	<b>Mr W Wright</b>	)

Mr B Evans – Clerk, and 24 members of the public.

**15.1. Absent** Cllr Bhatt [unwell].

**15.2. Declarations of interest.** Cllr Lloyd-Williams declared an interest in item 15.6.4 as she was a governor of Little Hadham School. Cllr Tooke declared an interest in item 15.6.4 as he lived next to the site involved. Cllrs Lloyd-Williams and Tooke withdrew when this item was discussed. Cllr Wilkinson declared an interest in item 15.6.1 as she was a near neighbour.

**15.3. Democratic 10 minutes.**

Mr Bill Bampton of Pelham Structures spoke in support of the new homes at Ashcroft Farm. He said that the application included the gift of land to Little Hadham School. The land would be fenced, levelled, drained, destoned and seeded with football pitches marked out. The houses would be of a traditional style that would fit in with existing homes.

Mr Keith Hutt, Deputy Chair of Little Hadham School governors, spoke in support of the homes at Ashcroft Farm [appendix 2].

**15.4. Minutes** of the meeting held on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2016 were agreed and signed as a true record.

**15.5. Matters arising from the minutes.** None.

**15.6. Planning applications considered by the Council.**

**15.6.1.** 1965/16 High Oaks, Pigs Green, Westland Green. Demolition of existing dwelling and outbuilding and the erection of 1 No. detached dwelling and outbuildings. Considered by Cllr Bhatt, Cllr Tooke and Cllr Wright. Cllr Tooke said the proposed new house was an improvement on the existing inefficient building. He thought it was in an isolated situation and proposed there be no objection. Agreed.

**15.6.2.** 1999/16 Church End Farm, Church End Lane. Change of use of a former agricultural building for commercial B1 and B8 uses. Considered by Cllr Wilkinson, Cllr Tooke and Cllr Wright. Cllr Wilkinson said that the residents of Hadham Hall had asked that there be no further developments at Church End because of the noise, traffic and pollution caused by the site users. Cllr Tooke thought there would be no real change of use and he had no objections. Cllr Wright agreed that there was no additional development. Cllr Pearson said that residents were concerned about the developments. Cllr Wilkinson proposed that the Council object on the grounds of noise, pollution, disruption and poor site access. Councillors voted three for and three against the motion. Cllr Wilkinson, as Chair, gave her casting vote for the proposal. It was agreed to object. [Appendix 1]

- 15.6.3.** 2013/16 The Lodge, Stonehouse Farm, Stortford Road. Form new roof at raised height to create a first floor incorporating 2no dormer windows, a first floor side window, 2no rooflights and a first floor side window incorporating juliet balcony. Alterations to ground floor fenestration. Considered by Cllr Wilkinson, Cllr Tooke and Cllr Wright. Cllr Wilkinson said there would be little effect on others. Cllr Tooke said it was surrounded by farm buildings. Cllr Wilkinson proposed there be no objection. Agreed.
- 15.6.4.** 2015/16 Ashcroft Farm, Stortford Road. Development of Five Dwellings on land adjacent to Ashcroft Farm. Considered by Cllr Wilkinson, Cllr Bhatt and Cllr Pearson. Cllr Wilkinson agreed there would be real benefits of the new land to the school, however, she said the Council had agreed not to support any new building on the flood plain. She said, no matter what mitigation was undertaken by the developer to reduce run off, the new buildings, by their very presence, would result in more run off. This would increase the likelihood of further flooding to the village. Cllr Wilkinson said the site had very poor access. There had been car accidents and there was a danger to children walking to and from school along the A120 pavement. Because of the risk of flooding and the dangerous access Cllr Wilkinson felt that the Council should object to the proposals for more homes on a flood plain. Cllr Wilkinson read a report from Cllr Pearson [see appendix 3]. Cllr Wright said he disagreed. He understood the developers would be taking measures to prevent flooding. This was a sensible place to build five quality houses and the Council should be doing everything to help. He agreed that the access was not good but he thought five more homes were unlikely to make things worse. Cllr Pearson said that consent for five new homes in Albury Road had already been granted. He thought that the developers should wait until the new bypass and flood alleviation scheme had been constructed and shown to work before proposing to build new houses. Cllr Wilkinson proposed that the Council object on the grounds of increased risk of flooding and the danger of the access road. Councillors voted two for and two against the motion. Cllr Wilkinson, as Chair, gave her casting vote for the proposal. It was agreed to object. [Appendix 3]
- 15.6.5.** 2088/16 The Angel, The Ashe. Repair and conversion of barn to function room. Internal alterations to main dwelling including new stair to attic and insertion of mezzanine to brick range. Considered by Cllr Wilkinson, Cllr Bhatt and Cllr Tooke. Cllr Wilkinson proposed there be no objection. Agreed.
- 15.6.6.** 2103/16 Roedene, Albury Road. Demolition of existing dwelling and replacement 2 storey dwelling. Considered by Cllr Wilkinson, Cllr Bhatt and Cllr Tooke. Cllr Wilkinson proposed there be no objection. Agreed.
- 15.7. Planning decisions received from EHC.**
- 15.7.1.** 1641/16 Land at Stonehouse Farm, Millfield Lane. Installation of a 15 metre high slimline monopole supporting 3no. antennas and 2no. dishes, 3no. equipment cabinets and ancillary development. Refused.
- 15.8. Appeal decision received from EHC. To note.**
- 15.8.1.** 2455/15 Albury Lime Kiln, Albury Road. Outline application for 5 dwellings with all matters reserved with the exception of vehicular access. Appeal allowed.
- 15.9. Date of next meeting – Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2016.**
- 15.10. The Chair closed the meeting to the Public and the Press at 8:40 p.m.**

**Appendix 1 3/16/1999/FUL Letter of objection re. Change of use of a former agricultural building for commercial B1 and B8 uses, Church End Farm, Church End, Little Hadham.**

Little Hadham Parish Council considered the above planning application at its meeting on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2016. The Council agreed to object to this planning application on the grounds of increased noise, pollution and disruption to local residents and poor access.

Access to the farm is by the very narrow Church End Lane. The lane is already used by many vehicles including farm vehicles and large articulated lorries using the existing businesses. Users of St Cecilia's Church frequently park in the lane making access more difficult. The creation of another industrial unit can only worsen this situation.

Children walk along the lane on their way to and from school and large groups of children walk from the school to the church for occasional services. The heavy vehicles accessing the industrial units are an obvious danger.

This industrial estate was created when the Hadham Water Company was set up followed by the conversion of a small number of redundant farm buildings. Despite the Council's many requests, no consideration has ever been given to whether this is a suitable site for an industrial estate. This is a rural site with a number of nearby residents. The noise, pollution and visual intrusion has gradually increased over the years as the estate has expanded.

The Council believes that the industrial estate is already too large for this site and that any plans to expand it should be refused.

**Appendix 2 Representation on behalf of Little Hadham School Governors to the Little Hadham Parish Council.**

Good evening. My name is Keith Hutt. I'm speaking to you this evening on behalf of the Governing Board at Little Hadham School.

It so happens that 2016 sees the 200th year that there has been a school on the site of the current Little Hadham School. In 1816 water was drawn from a well, and of course there was no electricity or gas and no indoor toilets. There was just one classroom. Since then there have been many improvements, a recent addition being the fabulous Early Years unit that was opened in 2012 and this year a much welcomed new boiler. It is important that we continue to improve.

I would like to comment on the benefits of the proposals before you in two parts, the long term and the immediate benefits. Firstly then, the long term benefits:

Small schools like ours are increasingly under threat financially, not least because income is mainly based on pupil numbers. The maximum number of pupils allowed in any school is determined in relation to the area of the site. Consequently, at present we are limited to an intake of 20 pupils per year. Although Little Hadham School is currently financially very secure, the potential to increase numbers would undoubtedly bring greater security in terms of its continuing viability, particularly at a time of increasing local and national uncertainty about the future of schools. The land being offered to the school by Mr Lynch would change our capacity, such that in the future we could consider increasing our intake to 30 pupils; that is one full form of entry.

Now I would like to turn to the more immediate benefits of the proposals:

Our school, recognised by Ofsted to be good, is thriving and almost full. However our outdoor facilities are not as good as they should be. What we are being offered via this planning application is of enormous benefit to the school and the children it serves.

Currently, we have a field that is uneven and, because it drains very badly, is frequently water logged and unusable. At present our outdoor facilities do not match those of other schools in the area. Our field is too small for us to have a junior sized football pitch, a requirement when competing with other schools.

The field also slopes quite significantly and, however hard we try to combat the problem, is plagued by rabbit holes - quite a serious health and safety issue.

The gift of land and the included works will provide us with a field with a high quality surface with a much shallower gradient, and very importantly, large enough for a junior size football pitch. It will also be built to Sports England standards with very high-quality drainage. In addition new rabbit fencing will be provided to protect the whole area, something we would never be able to fund ourselves.

The gifted land will also include additional playground space, thereby providing the potential when funding to allow us to create a netball pitch. When our Early Years unit was built the earth that was excavated was piled across the end of our field. This has created an irritating problem for those supervising the children during break times, because the children can disappear behind it. As part of the proposed development this mound will be removed and the field extended.

One of our most exciting developments in recent years has been that we have become a designated Forest School. This is a teaching and learning approach that makes great use of the outside environment. The proposed extension to our field will include a newly planted area, thereby increasing the range of activities our children can engage in on site as part of the Forest School curriculum.

Little Hadham School is a very important community asset. Hopefully, in the future when we have a Sports England quality pitch, groups within the local community will be able to use it outside school hours.

I am pleased to say that during negotiations over the last two years the proposals has gone through a number of changes, primarily in order to meet the wishes of the school. We are very pleased with what is now being proposed.

Since 1861 there have been a number of landmark improvements made to our school. The proposal before you undoubtedly ranks amongst those, as a key opportunity to enhance our facilities and is fully supported by the County Council, indeed we met with the County's appointed solicitor earlier this week to ensure that the proposals, if approved, will be legally binding.

I could say a lot more but time does not permit. So, on behalf of the community served by Little Hadham School, not least of course our current and future children, may I strongly urge you to support this proposal?

### **Appendix 3 Letter of objection re. 3/16/2015/FUL Development of Five Dwellings on land adjacent to Ashcroft Farm, Stortford Road.**

The Council considered this application at its meeting on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2016. The Council agreed to object to the development on the grounds of flooding and dangerous access.

The Council has heard a number of presentations from Mr Bill Bampton of Pelham Structures Ltd. and a presentation from Mr Keith Hutt, Deputy Chair of Little Hadham School Governors.

Homes at The Ashe and Ford have been subjected to flooding on a number of occasions in the last few years. This has been caused when there has been a rise in the river level as well as by surface runoff from saturated ground during heavy rain. I include a report from Cllr Graham Pearson. The extra homes on the flood plain will increase the rate of surface runoff, putting homes at The Ash and The Ford downstream at increased risk of flooding. The Council was

unconvinced by the developer's assertion that flood prevention measures they plan to construct, would reduce rather than increase the flood risk.

The planned bypass for Little Hadham includes flood prevention measures. However, the plans are not finalised and it will be a number of years before the bypass is in place. The Council asks that no new houses be built on the flood plain before the flood prevention measures have been constructed and shown to be effective.

The village is served by a sewer that runs south through the village. This sewer should be sufficient for the current population and for the new homes. However, heavy rain causes raw sewage to surcharge onto the road and into homes several times each year. This is assumed to be because a number of homes have unlawfully connected their rain water drains to the sewer. This situation has existed for many years and new homes on this site can only make matters worse. The solution to the problem may lie with Thames Water rather than the developers but the Council believes that no new homes should be connected to the sewer until the problem has been resolved.

The Council understands that residents in the existing homes on the site have real concerns about the surcharging sewers and runoff flooding.

The Ashcroft Farm site is served by the narrow Ashcroft Lane. This crosses the pavement to join the very busy A120 where traffic queues for the traffic lights. The developers plan to widen the lane but there will still be very limited visibility along the pavement that is used by children passing to and from the village school. Drivers will not be able to see children on the path in front of the garage until their vehicles have extended well onto the pavement. There has already been a collision between a child on a scooter and a vehicle.

Because of the queuing traffic, vehicles frequently wait on the pavement which is then completely blocked. This forces pedestrians, including many children, on to the road in order to get by. The traffic from five extra homes can only exacerbate the problem.

The Council is concerned about the future of the school. It appreciates that the extra land being offered by the developers will provide greatly improved outdoor facilities, as well as allowing the school to increase its intake. However, the Council must also consider the security of its residents. The prospect of an increased risk of flooding fills many with deep concern.

As one of the key community assets of the Parish improvements to the school are an important consideration. However, concerns of the flood risk in this instance outweigh these gains.

### **Report on flooding – Cllr Graham Pearson.**

The Parish Council agreed a resolution that there would be no building on the flood plain, nor on land adjacent to the flood plain until such time as the Flood Alleviation Scheme from the A120 By Pass is built and proven to cope with the increasingly high rainfall levels that are occurring and are predicted by the Environment Agency to become worse.

The Applicant within their Statement of Community Involvement states that they have had two meetings with the Parish Council where they have presented alternative proposals and held question and answer sessions with the public present. This is incorrect and implies that the Parish Council already support the Applicant.

It should be clarified that no formal meetings have been held between the Parish Council and the Applicant. The Applicant attended twice to speak prior to the meetings though it was not an agenda item. Although there were some members of the public present the presentation was not widely advertised so that a fair representation of views could not be given.

The site is within Flood Zone 2. Following the Flood of Feb 2013 one of the residents who had been flooded several times said that they had been adversely affected by the drainage

from the current Ashcroft development. They advised that “we observed the river rise and start to flow along the new trench towards the new houses, and so along the side of our boundary fence up to the sub-station where it pooled into the front garden of Ashcroft Farm and thence to the street. In other words, not draining the Ashcroft Farm development into the river, but the other way around....”

The first photo is of the River Ash now full and the ditch starting to back up towards Ashcroft Farm.

This is supported by similar drainage problems in the Parish that occur once the River Ash is full, the ditches that drain into it back up and surcharge across other land causing flooding. Adding more drainage to this will only make matters worse for the 93 homes at risk of flooding.

The second photo is of the current exit to Ashcroft Farm with the flooding to be seen to the left of the photo.



Other residents of the current Ashcroft Development raised concerns that water was seen to be running across the fields where the new development is proposed, and that they experienced water runoff near to their door, and problems with the sewer surcharging due to the water runoff getting into the system.

This sewer surcharging had been a constant issue throughout the Parish each time there is a high rainfall. Little Hadham Parish has in the last 8 months been given 26 severe weather warnings, an average of 3 a month, the last being 27/8th Aug. Each weather warning was of potential sufficient rainfall to cause flooding issues. Although on these occasions the majority of the rainfall passed to other nearby towns that experienced flooding, any planning must take account of the threat of water run off to homes already at risk of flooding. It is of note that for an average of 9 months of the year, the groundwater in Little Hadham is high. This results in the rainfall immediately turning to water runoff as it cannot soak into the ground. Sustainable drainage systems have little effect as they are already at capacity.

Homes at risk of flooding are having problems getting insurance cover. Although Flood Re has now started it does not provide cover for any new properties built after 2009. Houses that cannot get flood cover cannot be bought using a mortgage making it difficult for homes to be sold. As these homes are in Zone 2 of the flood risk would they be able to get insurance cover?

The application mentions ‘cut and cover’ drainage. Concerns are raised that where an open ditch is replaced with a pipe then covered with earth, this reduces the capacity of water able to flow through that stretch of ground. When water levels are high, which is often, cut and cover drainage cannot flow as quickly and backs up in the same way as open ditches when they cannot empty into the full River. What will happen to the water runoff that this backing up would cause? Have any checks been made to ascertain if this water runoff would flow through the school grounds and cause problems for the buildings?

There are also concerns over the traffic and access to the development. There have been several accidents by the existing exit to Ashcroft Lane, and the road is not of sufficient width for the safe passage of two vehicles and pedestrians.

I therefore object to this application.