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| **The Minutes of Great Witley and Hillhampton Parish Council** |
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| **Held at the Great Witley Village Hall on****Wednesday, 8th March 2017 at 7.30pm** |
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| **Present: Acting Chairman Cllr G Goodman (GG), Cllrs C Shaw (CS), C Dermietzel (CD), N Drew (ND), A Symonds (AS), B Dallow (BD), District Cllr P Cumming (PC) and County Cllr K Pollock (KP).** |
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| **In Attendance:** Clerk, J Evans |

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| **1.** | **Apologies:** Cllrs R Perkins (RP) and F Chapman (FC) |
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| **2.** | **Declarations of Interest:** |
|  |  | a. | Register of Interests: Councillors were reminded of the need to update their register of interests. |
|  |  | b. | Disclosable Pecuniary Interests: None |
|  |  | c. | Other Disclosable Interests: None |
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| The meeting was adjourned at 7.50pm for **Public Question Time**, notes of which are appended to these minutes. |
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| **3.** | **Application for a dispensation:** None |
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| **4.** | **Minutes:** the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 11th January 2017 were not approved at this time. |
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| ***GG addressed the public members present. There is only one item on this meeting’s agenda 17/00093/FUL. The Parish Council will discuss with the Developer the details of the application and then the public will be included in the discussions. GG also outlined the difficulties in using the new planning department website. Any individual comments to the application should be made in person through this website and PC agreed that he will assist with anyone encountering difficulties. The Parish Council will then come to a decision by show of hands. The Clerk will then respond to MHDC.*** |
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| **5.** | **Planning:** |
|  |  | a. | 17/00093/FUL Proposed development of 175 houses in Great Witley with accesses from Stourport Road A451 and the B4197.* Concerns over the design and layout of the development were highlighted. Questioning whether it was in keeping with this rural village.
* Stennard Harrison, the developer, (SH) was asked what the inclusion of a bowling green would entail? SH said it will be delivered inclusive of a green and pavilion. The control would then be handed over to the residents. A contract may be drawn up that designated land could be gifted to the community.
* SH was asked who would own this designated green space. SH answered that the developer would own this space.
* Would the developer plan to build on this space in the future? SH said a contract could be drawn up to transfer ownership of the open spaces to the community if the Parish Council were mindful to accept this application. If it was rejected, then this open space would remain in the ownership of the developer.
* Who would maintain this green space? The answer to this would be stated in the Section 106 agreement through the local authority. SH said they as a company are policy compliant by allowing 40% open space on the plans for the development.
* Why are they offering a bowling green? SH said that the last bowling green in the village was located at The Hundred House. This green no longer exists. He is now offering the bowling green as the village rejected the expansion to the doctors’ surgery and school in the previous application. SH is trying to help the community.
* What are the differences between the previous application and this one? SH answered that the last application was not 100% policy compliant. The inclusion of the open space and increased number of social housing homes available has addressed the reasons why the previous application was refused by MHDC. It is a known fact that there is a housing shortage in the country.
* It was suggested that the new application is not compliant with the SWDP. SH said that he will challenge the SWDP.
* What are the developer’s expectations for disruption and timescale for this new proposed development? SH answered that there is no definite build programme. It is subject to the end user: 1) the open market and 2) the housing association. Under Section 106 there is a timescale of 6 weeks and work would start immediately. It would be a phased development with all works contained on site.
* There would be disruption to traffic and the restructure of sewers and waterways. SH disagreed and said that more open space on site would create less disruption. There is a masterplan for villages to have decent planning therefore building in blocks of 20 houses to be built at one time going on over 10 years or so. MHDC are happy building in blocks of 20.
* Why are the 2 storey houses being built on the higher ground which will make them more visible. SH disagreed with this stating that open spaces have been kept for good visual impact on the village and that the houses will be at a lower line than those on the Glebe, specifically the bungalows built at the bottom of the Glebe.
* The Parish Council would like to re-site the green spaces and SH was happy for this to be considered.
* The Parish Council highlighted that it should be taken into account that there are floodlights at the football pitch and these may affect houses being built in sight of the floodlights. SH was sympathetic to this point and happy to be flexible if the village approve this new application.

**A VOTE WAS TAKEN. ND ABSTAINED FROM THE VOTE AND THE REMAINING 5 COUNCILLORS PRESENT VOTED AGAINST THE PROPOSED APPLICATION. THEREFORE, THE PARISH COUNCIL WILL OBJECT TO THE PLAN TO MHDC.** |
| **6.** | **Date of next meeting:** It was agreed by a show of hands that the next meeting will be at Great Witley Village Hall at 7.30pm on Wednesday 15th March 2017 at 7.30pm. |
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| The meeting closed at 9.00pm. |
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| Signed …………………………………….. Date …………………………………….. |
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|  | Chairman |

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| **Notes of Public Question Time**  |
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| Approximate 150 Members of the public were in attendance and raised the following concerns during Public Question Time: |

It was noted that the Developer Mr Stennard Harrison (SH) was happy to reply to any public questions by post.

Plans were made available for public viewing.

* The public reported that they were unable to hear all the discussions between the Parish Council and SH. GG repeated the details of the discussions.
* A question was raised on the impact of the local infrastructure that this development would pose. For example, on the doctors’ surgery:

*SH stated that during the first application which was refused he had offered an enlargement to the current surgery but that offer has now been withdrawn. If this new application is approved, then SH will be required to provide the NHS with an agreed sum of funds to go towards improvements to the surgery facilities.*

* A concern was raised regarding the negative visual impact to existing houses at The Glebe. Parishioners wanted justification which would allow a great many new houses to be built on open rural space:

*SH* *reported that a team of specialists had looked at the visual impact such a development would have and that it was acceptable.*

* Residents expressed how unreasonable it is to block open rural views by such a large new development and that it will impact many houses in the Village.

GG recommended that concerned residents should contact MHDC with their concerns individually.

It was also pointed out that the new road which proposes to cut through Bowens Field also poses a danger due to its proximity to the recreational ground.

Affected residents reported that from their existing windows the new development would severely obstruct and remove any views they have at present and do not accept the ‘specialists’ opinion.

* This is a rural village and the design of the new development will not sit easily. It is the public’s view that the design of the 175 houses is very much in keeping with an urban town setting. Three storey town houses do not belong in a rural village setting.
* It was pointed out that the residents did not want this development when it was first applied for just over twelve months ago so queried why SH thinks their views would have changed enough for them to accept this new development?
* It was thought that the centre of the village houses around 150 homes at present and this new development of 175 would more than double the size of the village. SH was questioned as to why he thinks it is now ok to go ahead with this development?

*SH replied that it was policy compliant.*

* The SWDP recommends a growth of 35 houses up to 2030. With the last development, this figure was almost met with just 3 new build houses outstanding. Therefore, to increase the number of new homes 175 it was felt to be outrageous and unreasonable.
* AS questioned whether this new plan was policy compliant as two recent planning refusal examples show. Both Mill Orchards and Orchard Farm had their planning applications for around only 4 houses rejected as they fell outside the SWDP. The SWDPs strategy is to focus most development on urban areas, not Category 1 Villages such as Great Witley. The SWDP states the role of Category 1 villages is predominantly aimed at meeting locally identified housing and employment needs, The 175 house application far exceeds any local needs.

*SH replied that each case is individual and it is up to the inspectors to decide.*

* PC, who expressed to be perceived as being impartial, reiterated that it is important for individual views and concerns to be logged with MHDC. However, it should be considered that it is not the quantity of comments they receive but the quality of those responses.
* PC also noted that it is premature to report that MHDC is happy with this application.
* PC also highlighted that if there were sufficient weight to the argument then the National Policy Housing Framework could override the SWDP which is now in place.
* Should any parishioner encounter difficulties in registering their comments with MHDC planning department, PC is happy to assist.
* PC will report the views from the parishioners at this meeting to MHDC for debate.
* KP, who is a governor at the primary school in the village, said that when the last application was proposed SH stated he would pay for 2 new classrooms out of his own pocket and not from Section 106 Funds. In this new application, there has been no land allocated for more classrooms and no intention to cover the costs made.

*SH asked that if he agreed to gift the land over to the village would approval of this application be conveyed. As the previous plan was refused if this subsequent one is also refused then SH will take away this offer.*

* A concern was raised as to where any surplus surface water would run off to if the porous ground which is there now is tarmacked over. At present water runs off into the Brintons pools down to the sewage plant and finally onto Bank’s fishing pools. Is there a new provision for a new water main?

*SH said a hydrologic model shows that surplus surface water would be retained in ponds which is included in the plan.*

* At present, there is very little to entertain teenagers in the village. What facilities will be available to them when more families move into the development. Also, why is SH proposing to build on crop fields?

GG reported that Funds would be made available under Section 106 to be spent towards items which would benefit the village. Should this plan go ahead then it is proposed to use Section 106 funds to extend the village hall and to provide more playground equipment. However, since last year the Section 106 Fund has been reduced in value and is now split between on and off site facilities. PC confirmed this reduction and the question was asked how would the villagers like any future funds to be spent? Parishioners asked where is the space for these said facilities? They wish to retain the green fields and to not have them built on.

*The plan would include 40% open space and discussions through the villagers and the Quarter Green committee would decide how any funds were spend and on what facilities.*

* It was suggested that SH showed contempt towards what the villagers required.

*SH again repeated that as his proposed plan and benefits were rejected last time he would not renew those benefits for this subsequent plan.*

* It was thought that in 2012/13 the green ‘triangle’ in the village might be ripe for development but the SWDP in 2014 changed this thought and so the fields have been left undeveloped. SH was asked why he should be given ‘special’ treatment after the SWDP has ended?
* Once again, the query over flooding worries was raised. Parishioners were not satisfied that contingences were in place for surplus surface water.

*SH answered that he had already answered this question and that contingences were in place.*

* It was asked where we are as a parish council with the Neighbourhood Plan and would it be in place before the proposed development plan.

*AS said that our draft Neighbourhood Plan was with MHDC for informal review. From here it would be presented to all parishioners to be subsequently voted upon by parishioners. Our Plan is progressing swiftly. The draft Neighbourhood Plan for Great Witley and Hillhampton states “Developments will be permitted only at the pace the village can withstand. The pace of development should not exceed 5 dwellings each year or 25 over 5 years whichever is the greater.” The Parish Council will include this information in our response to MHDC.*

* It was raised that the requirements to be policy compliant can be viewed online. It was suggested that in allowing a development of 175 houses MHDC would meet its target as set out to be policy compliant. They may reach their target but this will not be to the benefit of local communities. Are MHDC loading all their target requirements onto 1 village? It should be noted that this development proposal came from a developer and not MHDC and that they did not welcome the submission of this application. MHDC had already identified the locations of the number of houses required in the SWDP by the inspector, who did not agree to the higher numbers wanted by the developers. This application is not in the SWDP and the strategy followed in setting the Plan was to put the bulk of housing by the urban areas not in the villages.
* There is an offer of a bowling green. Who will provide the groundsman for such a large maintenance commitment?

*SH said that 40% of undeveloped land would be gifted to the village in an agreed contract if this new plan was agreed. Therefore, it would be up to the community to maintain such a facility.*

* AS challenged SH’s reply to the Parishioner statement above, pointing out that in previous comments to the Parish Councillors earlier that evening SH had stated that the developer would retain ownership of the open spaces (an important detail he had omitted to mention in his reply to the Parishioner), unless the Parish Council agreed to support the application, only in which eventuality would a legal agreement be drawn up to pass ownership (and running costs) on to the community.
* The plan allows for around 448 parking spaces on the new development. Are MHDC planning to improve the surrounding roads and bridges to accommodate the increase in traffic which this development will create?

*KP informed that WCC Highways would be expected to contribute towards infrastructure improvements. However, there are no plans to alter the Holt Fleet listed bridge. A new bridge would be required but this would not be within the next 10 to 15 years. Not a great deal of change is expected with the road infrastructure also.*

* GG expressed the difficulty in turning right opposite Witley Court. With all the concerns raised villagers asked if these were not enough reasons why the plan should not be approved?
* The pre-school has a waiting list, the school is oversubscribed and the car park cannot cope with the parking requirements for these facilities.

*SH said that more parking spaces could be made available.*

* It was reiterated that the village does not want this development. The plan goes against the requirements as set out in the SWDP. It was suggested that MHDC may only approve the plan to meet their targets and needs and that the National Policy may override the SWDP. It was felt that this new development will not bring any benefit to the village.

*PC said that also the village do not want this development, the SWDP can be overruled. It is down to SH to prove that the development is worth some benefit to the village.*

*SH stated that if the plan goes through the developers will give funds to the NHS to take into account the additional burden on the local surgery.*

A show of hands from the parishioners’ present resulted in 4 to recommend the development and the remaining 150 (approximately) did not recommend the development.

The public question time session was ended at 8.45pm.