

Meeting of Charlbury Town Council held on Wednesday 25th October 2017
at 7.30pm in the Corner House.

Members Present: Mr P Kenrick (Chairman), Mr R N Potter, Mr V Hill, Mr P Morgan, Ms N Ely, Mr R Prew, Mr R Puttick, Ms L Reason, Mrs K Broughton, Dr A Merry, and Mr R Fairhurst (arrived at 8.07pm).

Apologies: Mrs J Burroughs and District Councillor Ms L Leffman.

Prior to the meeting opening, Mrs Ann Lloyd addressed the Council by previous arrangement. Mrs Lloyd made the following points:

She would like to see the Council

- Build on the 'Town Proud' group achievements.
- Make the Town look cared for.
- Remove graffiti in the bus shelter.
- Engage a lengthman to undertake various duties (self employed).
- Weed killing had not been effective this year.

Mrs Lloyd was thanked for her contribution.

1. To receive the minutes of the last meeting.

Mr Morgan proposed that the minutes be signed as a correct record, this being seconded by Mrs Broughton and agreed with one abstention.

2. To deal with matters arising.

Publica. Letter of concern recently sent has had a short reply from Mr Neudegg, the Chief Executive and one reply from Shipton-under-Wychwood Parish Council. Parish liaison meeting is to be held on 22nd November when some questions/concerns are to be answered.

Ramped access to footpath, Nine Acres Lane. No reply received from OCC. Estimates of cost requested one year ago.

Spendlove Car Park. Marked incorrectly. Parent and Child spaces to be returned with directional arrows for safer circulation. Possible screening of the recycling area has been put to WODC officers without success.

Footpath to Town from Banbury Hill. Possible use of route through Oxpens allotments to be discussed with Mr Widdows who is, in principle, in favour if possible.

Mr Moore has expressed concern at the state of some allotment plots. Clerk is in the process of dealing with this as detailed in the recent allotment report.

Traffic. Issues to be pursued. Meeting to be arranged in next month or so to include requests for Sheep Street signs.

Surgery. Issues raised have been dealt with by the Clerk. Mrs Broughton and Mr Hill thanked. Next surgery is December 2nd. Mr Kenrick/Ms Reason and Dr Merry to officiate.

3. Declaration of Interest.

Mr Puttick declared an interest in the Community Centre licence application as a trustee.

4. To sign orders for payment/receive report.

The Clerk had previously circulated a list of accounts to be paid and explained these to those present. Mr Potter proposed that the accounts be paid, this being seconded by Dr Merry and agreed. Accordingly cheques were signed by three Councillors.

5. To receive a report from the Planning Committee.

Inspector Steve Hookham had attended the planning meeting on 23rd October and had given those present a breakdown of crime statistics, an update on force reorganisation and the re-emergence of the equivalent of the NAG arrangements. Inspector Hookham was thanked for attending.

A reply from the Head of Planning at WODC (Giles Hughes) to the letter of concern re the Hixet Wood Police House application process was read out. This was considered unsatisfactory and there was general agreement that the matter should be referred to the Strategic Director (Christine Gore).

The following plans were considered:

17/03084/HHD Small porch extension, single storey garden room, extension and detached home office at 35 Ticknell Piece Road.

1. We have no objection.

17/03149/LBC Alterations to include new roof light at Corner House, Market Street.

1. We have no objection.

2. We are the custodian trustee.

17/03231/LBC Replace doors on lean-to shed at Redding Wyck House, Market Street.

1. We have no objection.

17/03156/HHD Rebuild/ enlarge stone built garage at Fiveways House Sturt Road.

1. We have no objection but ask that any consent be conditioned to ensure that the building remains a garage (to prevent the establishment of a separate dwelling)

Residential development of 25 dwellings and a 12 bed supported living facility with associated access, parking and landscaping on land south of Forest Road, Charlbury, Oxfordshire

These revised comments supersede those submitted by Charlbury Town Council in September 2015.

Charlbury Town Council does not wish to explicitly endorse or oppose this application, but would ask for the following comments to be taken into consideration:

1. **Overview.** We recognise this application as an innovative and commendable scheme and we welcome its aims to address the major challenges of housing affordability at various levels, the maintenance of and support for a socially balanced community in Charlbury as well as the needs of those suffering from young onset dementia. However, we wish to ensure that a number of issues set out below are adequately addressed and we do also recognise genuine concerns with regard to the site location (see item 6 below).
2. **Public Consultation.** We applaud the level of public consultation carried out by the applicants and acknowledge the efforts made by them to address issues raised.
3. **Housing Affordability.** Housing affordability is recognised as a key issue for Charlbury in the emerging WODC Local Plan 2031, paragraph 9.6.5. This scheme seeks to address this issue in an innovative way, aiming to help maintain a socially balanced community in the town. In addition to social affordable units, this scheme includes other homes that we understand will be offered at discounted prices with priority given to local people. We applaud this initiative but seek to ensure that it provides a sustainable benefit to the town which can only be achieved if the affordability and local priority conditions are maintained in perpetuity and not just for early occupiers of the site. We therefore ask that a Section 106 agreement (or other instrument) be put in place to secure this benefit and we also ask that the Town Council be involved in the negotiations for such an agreement.
4. **Social & Affordable Housing Needs in Charlbury.** We note that since this application was first submitted in 2015, two further developments have been approved and are in progress (Application references 15/00567/FUL & 16/02306/FUL) which will deliver a net gain of 20 social affordable homes. A further site within the town has also been identified for inclusion in the emerging local plan (Policy BC1c) to accommodate around 40 dwellings including a high proportion of affordable homes. We welcome the much-needed provision of additional affordable homes within the town but ask that due weight be given to the above developments and site allocation when re-considering the current application at this time. Furthermore, a local Housing Need Assessment has been commissioned for Charlbury as part of the development of a Neighbourhood Plan and the report is expected imminently. Subject to the report's timely availability, we will seek to submit evidence of local need from this report and ask that it be taken into account in assessing the contribution of the current application to local need.
5. **Social Housing Mix.** The scheme is also proposing a number of units that will be for self-build consistent with a government commitment to providing more housing for self-build communities on the basis that these provide lower cost housing which also tends to be delivered to high standards of sustainability. We welcome this initiative but are concerned that the cost benefits may accrue only to initial occupants. We therefore ask that appropriate agreements be sought to preserve these benefits for future residents.
6. **Extra Care Facilities.** We applaud the inclusion of extra care facilities for assisted living for those diagnosed with early onset dementia. However, we ask that the following matters are addressed by way of conditions or legal agreement. Firstly, we are concerned that pedestrian safety (see 10 below) will be a major issue for residents of the extra care facility. Secondly, we understand that, for legal reasons, the extra care facilities will be provided by a housing association and not directly by the Young Dementia UK charity. It is therefore essential that appropriate legal agreements are imposed to ensure that these facilities remain in perpetuity for the extra care purpose stated.

7. **Location.** We are concerned that the proposed site, on the western approach to Charlbury, lies within a very sensitive landscape within the Cotswold AONB and is beyond the natural boundaries formed by the river and railway (although we acknowledge that a small industrial estate is already located beyond this boundary). WODC has identified this application as a **major** development and therefore paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) applies indicating that “*Planning permission should be refused for major developments in these designated areas [including AONBs] except in exceptional circumstances and where it can be demonstrated they are in the public interest*”. Under these circumstances, any recommendation to approve MUST be backed by robust evidence of exceptional circumstances and public interest. With specific regard to this site we note *inter alia* that:
 - a. the West Oxfordshire SHLAA dated June 2014 (Page 49, Site ref 266) states that this site was not taken forward to detailed site assessment because it was too distant from the settlement.
 - b. the draft West Oxfordshire Design Guide 2015 (section 5 page 13) states that “development is constrained by the river Evenlode and the railway line to the south-west”.
8. **Precedent.** We remain concerned that this development may provide a precedent for further development along the Forest Road and seek further assurances that this would not be the case. Following the earlier approval of this application a speculative enquiry was received relating to a neighbouring site although we acknowledge that this did not result in the submission a planning application at that time.
9. **Visual Impact.** We acknowledge that the applicants have taken considerable efforts to minimise and mitigate the visual impact of the site, especially in this latest application. In particular, we appreciate the removal of houses bordering the Forest Road and the introduction of bollard external lighting to reduce light pollution. However, we note that the view from Grammar School Hill (LVIA page 38, Viewpoint M) may still have a moderate impact in winter and will still give a sense of detachment from the town.
10. **Safety of Pedestrian Access.** We are concerned that the safety of pedestrians walking between the site and the town may be a serious issue due to the need to cross the road twice *en-route* to the town, the narrowness of the pavement (there appears to be no practical opportunity to widen it, especially over the railway bridge) and the likely speed of traffic approaching the town downhill from the west. Please can this issue be given a high level of scrutiny and appropriate measures be included to address the issue.
11. **Play Area.** It is clear that families with children will be a significant part of the demographic expected to occupy this development. Given the distance and pedestrian safety issues (see 8 above), there is a clear need for some kind of play area on the site and we ask for this to be included.
12. **Provision of Community Transport.** It is important that the community feels itself to be connected to Charlbury and that residents do not automatically use their cars to get into town. We suggest that Young Dementia UK be required to provide a minibus to take residents into town.
13. **Archaeology.** We understand that an archaeological survey has been carried out on the site but in view of the locally recognised archaeological and historical significance of the site we ask that a watching brief be maintained throughout the development.
14. **Infrastructure.** Can an evaluation be carried out to determine the impact that the development will have on local infrastructure such as school places?
15. **Public comments.** A large number of comments have been received from local members of the public and these are divided fairly evenly between those supporting and those objecting to the application. This underlines the levels interest and concern engendered by this application in fairly equal measure. We ask that careful consideration be given to all of these comments.
16. **Section 106.** We ask that agreements be sought in the following areas and that the Town Council be involved in the negotiations:

- a. Securing the affordability of homes in perpetuity (see 3 above);
- b. Securing the purpose of the Extra Care facilities in perpetuity (see 6 above);
- c. Contributions to the costs of community facilities and infrastructure;
- d. Measures to improve pedestrian safety (see 10 above);
- e. Provision of a play area on the site (see 11 above);
- f. Contribution to the cost of community transport between the town and Rushy Bank (see 12 above).

In view of the significance and level of public interest in this application we ask that it go to committee for decision and we also suggest that a further site visit be considered to enable committee members to assess the impact of the changes introduced in this current plan.

The above comments were agreed following circulation on a proposal from Ms L Reason, seconded Mr Potter. **F 8, A 1.**

The Chairman was congratulated on the submission.

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There was some discussion around a recent Charlbury Society planning meeting based on an invited panel answering questions. The Chairman had been invited, principally to represent the Neighbourhood Forum. Mr Hill felt that he would like to know more about the neighbourhood plan process and asked if minutes of meetings were available. The Chairman undertook to produce a report for each meeting to provide a regular update on progress.

## **6. To deal with Correspondence.**

**B.D.O.** Audit Report. See agenda item 9 on the agenda.

**Ms Leffman.** Litter bin at Fiveways and move bus shelter. Precept item for bin. OCC have previously said that the path outside Wellington Cottages/corner of Hixet Wood is too narrow for a shelter and would impede sight lines, hence its current location.

**M Chambers.** Traffic speeds on The Slade. Clerk to respond accordingly.

**A Marlow.** Fishing platforms - noted. Issue for Mill Field management plan.

**Arrow Accounting.** Appointment of Internal Auditor. Dr Merry proposed that Mr P Hood, Arrow Accounting, be appointed internal auditor for a further year, seconded Mr P Morgan and agreed.

**F 9, Abst. 1.** The engagement letter was signed by the Chairman and Clerk.

**Tom & Sandra.** Issues re hedge with neighbour. Respond that this is a District Council matter (copied to Ms Leffman).

**WODC.** Premises licence for Community Centre. A copy had been circulated and the Chairman pointed out some small inconsistencies which the Clerk was asked to clear up with Paul Jenkins, the applicants agent. Subject to this Mr Potter proposed no objection, seconded Ms Reason.

**F 4, A 1, Abst. 3.**

## **7. To consider the Neighbourhood Forum.**

The Chairman gave an update on the progress of the plan.

The housing needs assessment had been received today in draft form - useful evidence base.

The local character assessment is progressing with a report back due in a week.

Elements of the plan are currently being drafted with the aim of a full draft in early 2018. Then a consultation process will begin.

At the November planning meeting an update on progress with the plan will be given. Meeting will therefore start at 7.30pm. The Clerk will provide Mr Hill and Mr Prew with reports which will give them some background information and will meet if necessary to discuss further.

#### **8. To consider recommendations of the working group meeting of October 11th.**

Notes from the meeting had been circulated.

There was some discussion on how best to publicise the Council and Ms Reason thought that door to door visits may be the best way to disseminate information. Two actions were proposed:

1. Include a sum in the Precept for PR.
2. To adopt the proposed policy for addressing Council at both planning and full Council meetings

Mr Potter proposed that the recommendations be accepted, this was seconded by Mr Fairhurst.

**F 7, A 1, Abst. 2.**

#### **9. To receive an audit report.**

The Clerk had circulated a report outlining the comments of the internal and external auditors. The report was accepted on a proposal from Ms Reason, seconded Mr Puttick and agreed nem con.

#### **10. To receive a report on Nine Acres/Community Centre.**

The Clerk had previously circulated a paper setting out the issues which need to be dealt with in view of the completion of the community centre and its impact on Nine Acres in terms of boundaries, joint use of pavilion and other matters. The recommendation of the Clerk that a full report to be prepared for the November meeting was agreed nem con.

#### **11. To receive reports.**

- a. Cemetery. Bins emptied and hedge cut. Lime trees and subsidence - movement at Glebe House ongoing.
- b. Corner House and Memorial Hall. Minutes have been circulated. A decision on use of ex library rooms has not yet been made. Currently a pop-up shop is operating in the room. Secretary wishes to step down Broadband provision being considered. Anonymous donor has offered to fund a building report. The Chairman reported that he had attended the AGM and thanked the officers and committee on behalf of Council.
- c. Mill Field, Watery Lane and bridges. Report circulated. Bank near sluice needs repair.
- d. Nine Acres. Report circulated.
- e. Quarry Lane and Ticknell. Wreck of bicycle to be removed.
- f. Wigwell. Nothing to report.
- g. Gifford Trust. Report circulated. Playing Close railings need painting.
- h. School Governor. No report.

- i. Transport/Station. Punctuality is shocking. New trains to be introduced on 2nd January 2018.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.41pm.

Signed.....  
Chairman