



**MINUTES**

**Meeting:** PARISH COUNCIL

**Date:** 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022

**Time:** 7.30PM

**Venue:** PARISH HALL, THORNWOOD COMMON

**PRESENT:**

**Councillors (8)** Cllr A Buckley (Chairman), Cllr Spearman, Cllr Mrs Hawkins, Cllr Mrs S Jackman MBE, Cllr Tyler\*, Cllr Mrs Grigg, Cllr Irvine, Cllr Blanks

*\* for part of meeting*

**Officers in Attendance (2)**

Susan De Luca – Parish Clerk

Adriana Jones – Principal Financial Officer (PFO)

**Members of the Public (3)** – Inc PC Andy Cook

**Members of the Press (1)**

The Chairman announced that the meeting would be audio recorded for the purposes of taking and checking the minutes. The Chairman also thanked Councillors present who had so far financially contributed to the Norway House Christmas Party, advising that Emily and Paul had put a lot of work into creating a wonderful Alice in Wonderland themed event for the children.

**C22.149 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (6)**

Apologies received from Cllr Ms Wood, Cllr Mulliner, Cllr Bedford, Cllr Etherington, Cllr Clegg and Cllr Stroud. Apologies for lateness received from Cllr Tyler.

**C22.150 OTHER ABSENCES (0)**

None.

**C22.151 MINUTES**

**NOTED** that the Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council held on 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022 would be tabled the January 2023 meeting for approval.

**C22.152 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Spearman declared a pecuniary interest in any item concerning the Local Plan.

**C22.153 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

PC Cook provided Councillors with an update on crime figures from 3<sup>rd</sup> September stating there had been one dwelling burglary at Beaufort Close, one non dwelling burglary in Princess Close, 4 theft of motor vehicles – one of which was domestic related – one vehicle interference, and two criminal damage occurrences at the same location on two different days. There was a lot of activity at the current time in the Chigwell and Epping area.

[Cllr Tyler arrived]

Cllr Tyler stated that he had recently become aware of suspicious activity around the Vicarage Lane East location, to which PC Cook confirmed this area was known to the police.

The Clerk confirmed she would come back to PC Cook once a venue for the next Coffee with Cops was agreed. The Chairman thanked PC Cook for his update.

A member of the public present advised that she had recently attended the Plans East Committee meeting at EFDC at which the application for Rosario was discussed, and a decision made by the committee to defer this determination to allow for a site visit. The resident advised that in 2017 the Green Belt boundary line was changed to go at the back of the houses in Smiths Court, and she had recently seen documents concerning the Local Plan which suggested that a new Green Belt demarcation line using hedges should be created at the boundary of the Rosario site. The resident was concerned that the Plans East Committee members would not be aware of this when they visit site. The resident stated that she had sent a message to Mr Ansell at EFDC suggesting the committee members were made aware of this before their visit. The resident also stated that it seemed strange that the rugby club application was turned down however they are possibility considering allowing a development at Rosario which is on green belt. It was **AGREED** the Clerk would also contact Mr Ansell asking that the Plans East Committee members were made aware of this.

#### **C22.154 LOCAL PLAN – EFDC FURTHER MAIN MODIFICATION CONSULTATION**

Councillors recalled that Epping Forest District Council had been preparing its Local Plan since 2011. The Submission Version of the Local Plan had undergone Examination in Public by an Inspector, as well as a number of public consultations, the current consultation being further modifications to the submitted plan. This is thought to be the last consultation before the Inspector assesses the plan for final soundness, and subsequently EFDC considers it for formal adoption. The current consultation runs for 6 weeks ending Friday 9<sup>th</sup> December at 5pm. This stage of consultation is limited to the proposed further Main Modifications to the Plan only, identified as red wording throughout the consultation document. A link to the full details of the proposed modifications was included within the agenda.

Also attached to the agenda was a draft response to the further Main Modifications consultation for consideration by this Council. Cllr Blanks stated that it was mighty complicated to follow the trail of modifications and changes which have culminated in the current proposed changes, and that the PFO had done a good job in doing so. The draft response includes proposed changes which affect this Parish, as well as noting any changes which the Council should support or object to. Cllr Blanks confirmed that he had already completed his own response to the consultation online, stating that it wasn't particularly user friendly, and that he had received an emailed receipt. Cllr Tyler also supported the draft response, however asked if it was possible that the extra homes being proposed by the Latton Priory site promoters could come off the allocation for North Weald. The PFO explained that in order for that to happen, EFDC would need to go back to near the beginning of the Local Plan Process when it assessed housing numbers and suitable sites, and that this would cost hundreds of thousands of pounds and delay the adoption of the Local Plan. Furthermore, this would leave the Parish even more exposed to speculative development as developers would be able to argue that EFDC wasn't sufficiently planning for its future growth so they would come in and do it instead. In short, the Parish Council could end up being much worse off, and get more housing than that currently being proposed. Cllr Tyler stated that there was a lot of pressure that the housing figures in local plans are pre-pandemic figures and that the need for housing is not as great as it was. Cllr Tyler expressed his concern that the housing figures were out of date. Cllr Spearman stated that the figures were always out of date almost as soon as they were obtained.

Cllr Irvine asked about whether or not windfall sites were included in the Local Plan numbers, to which the PFO confirmed there was a specific separate allocation for windfall sites. There was further discussion regarding the Quinn development site, with Councillors noting that the site was not an allocation in the Local Plan, and that part of the reason it wasn't chosen was because of its proximity in regards to the village of North Weald Bassett, with other sites deemed more suitable.

The Chairman referenced the last paragraph of the draft response, stating that although it probably won't make any difference to the inspector, this Council had made its position clear. Cllr Tyler stated North Weald was effectively the dumping ground for development. Cllr Mrs Grigg stated that historically the District Councillors for North Weald Village fought extremely hard to protect the village from development, however they were up against a far greater number of Councillors from other areas in the District. Cllr Irvine stated that this Council needed to emphasise the importance of ensuring sufficient infrastructure was in place, and asked how should this Council take this battle forward. The PFO advised that the planning system allows for housing numbers to be agreed before the specific infrastructure is agreed per planning application. Cllr Tyler stated that currently builders were reluctant to start building due to supply and costing issues, to which the Clerk advised that in the press earlier in that day the Government had recognised the fact that developers seem to be sitting on planning permissions and not building quickly enough, and that this was a national problem.

Councillors **AGREED** the response as submitted as this Councils formal response to the EFDC further Main Modification consultation.

### **C22.155 LATTON PRIORY - HARLOW GILSTON GARDEN TOWN CONSULTATION**

Councillors recalled that Latton Priory was a strategic development site allocated within the submission version of the Epping Forest Local Plan for a minimum of 1,050 new homes. It is located on the southern edge of Harlow, sits within Epping Forest District Council's boundary, and forms part of the new Harlow and Gilston Garden Town. A consultation has been launched on the Strategic Masterplan Framework for this site and runs between 17<sup>th</sup> November 2022 and 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023. As well as new homes, the site is set to provide community facilities including a new secondary school, primary school and nursery and pre-school facilities, land for employment, a new central commercial centre, and a large area of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG).

On 28<sup>th</sup> November, the site promoters had invited Councillors and members of Epping Forest District Council to an online Zoom session to talk through the proposals being consulted upon. In addition, a full hard copy of the consultation material had been sent to the Parish Council Clerk, who had in turn contacted each Councillor asking if they would like to take a copy to review. A link to the full consultation material was included within the agenda. Councillors were asked to consider the content of the consultation proposals, and agree the general principal of a response which can be formulated for consideration at the 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023 Parish Council meeting.

The PFO showed Councillors the 202 page hard copy consultation document, stating that it was almost impossible to read on line, and suggested Councillors read the full hard copy. She also advised that there was some confusion in regard to the terminology used, as this was a Strategic Masterplan Framework and that it was not clear how this differed to a Masterplan, and that clarification had been sought from the site promoters in this regard. This was relevant due to the wording contained in the Local Plan. The document sets out the aspirations for the Latton Priory development site, not only for the life span of the Local Plan (2033) but also beyond. The PFO confirmed this was proposing 1,500 homes, and that one of the ways they were able to do this was

to seemingly extend the SANG into areas outside the Masterplan boundary, which would therefore free up more space inside the development for houses. It was unsure what EFDCs position would be when there was a proposal for development outside the masterplan area. Councillors noted there was effectively four pockets of development with the sites closer to Harlow having more of a Harlow feel / design, and those closer to the rural parts of Thornwood / Rye Hill Road having more of a traditional design.

The PFO advised that there were a number of good points in the proposal, however there was also many unknowns, most of which were essential to understanding how successful the development would be. This includes as an example where the access road to the site on the East will go, whether or not there would be healthcare facilities (the document stating these are not required), a lack of identifying the site as anything other than part of Harlow, and no thought about how travel to Epping by sustainable means can occur.

Cllr Tyler stated that if the consultants don't live in the area, they have no understanding of the dynamics and simply view it as a development site, and that as somebody who lived on Rye Hill Road for many years he was aware of the history of the remains of a Roman Villa in the area and there was a lot of investigation at that time. Cllr Tyler stated that a full formal archaeological survey should be conducted on the site before a spade goes in the ground. The PFO states that the document says some archaeological research has been done, but further work is needed, to which Cllr Tyler stated the person who does this should be completely independent.

The PFO referenced the Ridge Line across the site which this Council had always stated should not be built upon, advising that the plans did identify a 'build to' line, however within the consultation paperwork there was a concerning statement on page 49 which suggested being able to build beyond the 110m AOD as being necessary to deliver the 1050 new homes. This would suggest there is the intention to build beyond the ridge line.

The Chairman said there was confusion with regard to what was happening with Rye Hill Road, to which the Clerk advised she had also raised this. It was felt that this point also required clarification so as to not cause a detriment to the residents of Rye Hill Road.

The PFO mentioned the suggestion within the documentation that the current PROW and cycle network south of the site going towards Thornwood and Epping was sufficient that there were no plans for improvement, however stated that this was not acceptable given the sustainability aims of the site with walking and cycling being the first method of travel choice.

The PFO mentioned there was a distinct lack of information about bus routes, suggesting there would be a bus strategy in the future, but that in reality this needed to be agreed before development so bad travel habits did not embed. In addition, the proposed location of the allotments did not fit within the development guidelines issued by the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners which says that allotments should be a central focus point of the site to encourage community cohesion. Cllr Blanks stated that he had mentioned in the past the best way to prove the issues this Council is trying to put forward is to ask the developers how they get to meetings in the locality, and invariably it is by car.

The Chairman stated that the proposals included three possible locations for the Gypsy and Traveller allocation within the site.

Cllr Irvine asked for clarification as to the social housing on the site, stating that at the meeting with the site promoters they suggested that residents in the Epping Forest District would get priority and asked if this was the case, to which the Clerk confirmed that EFDC does have a hierarchy policy where people with links to the district would be considered first.

Cllr Irvine also expressed concern about the lack of clarity concerning broadband infrastructure, to which the PFO confirmed that this had also been raised at the recent Latton Priory meeting.

Cllr Mrs Jackman stated that she was dumfounded that they were suggesting healthcare facilities would not be needed for this development, which was supported by Cllr Tyler. The PFO explained that the only requirement on the developer was to build a building for healthcare, and it would be up to the CCG as to whether or not a health care service were in fact needed – to all intents and purposes neither the District Council nor the developer had much sway in this matter. Cllr Tyler stated that the residents of the Parish of North Weald Bassett already struggle with getting a doctors appointment, and to add another 7,000 people to the Parish without another doctors does not make any sense. The PFO stated that for a development where walking and cycling is the first point of travel, how could you do this if the doctors was miles away.

The PFO stated that one of the very interesting points in the consultation paperwork was that at a previous consultation a total of 68 people attended the Thornwood exhibition and only 56 attended the Harlow Leisure zone exhibition, so for a development which is promoted as primarily being part of Harlow, there seemed to be more interest from residents of Thornwood. In addition, the proposals suggested phasing of the different areas, the first phase being the build of 500 homes however these would be built before the Sustainable Transport Corridor or options were in place, thus allowing unhealthy travel behaviour to occur.

Cllr Mrs Jackman suggested that there was a district lack of common sense being applied to many elements of the proposals, including healthcare, transport and travel. Cllr Tyler agreed. Cllr Mrs Jackman suggested the CCG should be approached asking why no doctors was needed.

Cllr Irvine stated that at the meeting with the site promoters, the transport representative stated that transport modelling would be conducted after the site and housing numbers had been agreed, however you would have thought this would need to be completed in order to establish if the site is suitable for development in the first place.

Cllr Tyler explained that he also couldn't see any information about additional police or fire services that would cover the area, that could be located in the community centre. The PFO stated that she couldn't see any information about consultation with the Safer Communities Team about the design of neighbourhoods.

The Clerk explained that in order for a draft response to be formulated by the Office staff for consideration at the 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023 Parish Council meeting, she needed to understand what Councillors concerns were, and what elements of the proposals they supported. The Chairman explained that the PFO had listed some pointers regarding the consultation, and it was **AGREED** this should be sent out to Councillors. The PFO advised this would need to be read in conjunction with the consultation document to provide context.

Councillors **AGREED** a draft response should be created based on the PFOs comments, specifically including the following areas of concern:

- Lack of clarity on Broadband Infrastructure
- Lack of clarity regarding Rye Hill Road
- Lack of clarity on sustainable transport options towards Epping
- Suggestion that no healthcare facilities will be needed, and evidence to support why this is the case.
- Clarification as to the Gypsy and Traveller site location
- Location of Allotments
- Transport Links to surrounding areas
- Impact of Traffic on the B1393 and surrounding roads
- The cumulative effect of development

The Chairman stated that there seemed to be a distinct lack of understanding about living in a rural area and the practical side of life for such living, and that there were clearly 5 or 6 main issues under which there should be sub headings.

It was **NOTED** that agreement had been given for this Council to respond on 10<sup>th</sup> January 2023.

Meeting closed

Signed .....

Date .....