

Minutes from a Parish Meeting – Recreation and Open Space

Held on Wednesday 14 March 2018 at Over Community Centre

Introduction-Mr G Twiss, Vice Chair of Over Parish Council opened the meeting and welcomed in the region of 50 Parishioners. He also introduced Mr John Koch, a senior planning Officer from South Cambridgeshire District Council and District Councillors Brian Burling and Pippa Corney.

Background facts and figures-Mr Twiss briefly spoke about the fact that the District Council had conducted an open space audit in 2013 which had concluded that Over was underprovided with open space at that time, since then more dwellings have been built and hence this deficit has already increased, recently we have seen applications from developers which in total amount to around 200 more dwellings being built in the near future. These additional developments will also compound our open space shortage. Some years ago the Parish Council applied, and was granted, an open space designation on one of the parcels of land adjacent to the Recreation Ground, however as part of the review of the proposed new local plan the Inspector has recommended that this be removed as she concluded there has been no interest in acquiring this land for this purpose. This is not true as the Parish Council have tried to acquire this land and have cited this within an appeal against the decision for the removal of this designation. It was noted that this area is also really the only significant parcel of land which has not yet been developed and which could be used as open space within the Village. Mr Twiss also took the opportunity to run through the reserves held by the Parish Council and summarised that around £55,000 of our reserves could be made available for acquiring additional open space land.

Planning context-At this point Mr Twiss invited Mr Koch to address the meeting. For the benefit of those present Mr Koch explained the issue of the five-year housing shortfall, also highlighting the implications of this on our Village and how this should change following the adoption of the new local plan. A resident asked if the planning committee took into consideration the available facilities within the village, open space provision and the issue of sustainability when they were deliberating on applications, Mr Koch confirmed this was the case but that these issues were looked at in respect of each application and the fact that the Village is underprovided for example in relation to open space would not mean that there would be a requirement for additional space on a development, only the proportion of open space pertinent to the particular application would be required. Another resident asked if the appeal inspectors actually visited the area when they adjudicated on an application, Mr Koch said that this did happen as a matter of course. One resident noted that, as stated earlier in the meeting, there had been several applications which in total amounted to an additional 200 houses however if this had been a single application and due to the impact on facilities it may have been that the decision could have been deferred until the new local plan was in place. Mr Koch noted that the District Council officers can only look at what applications are in front of them at any one time and that the applications in question have already been approved. Concerns were raised by some residents in relation to the ability of the sewerage, electricity and water systems to cope with such an increase in dwellings, flash flooding, which appears to be on the increase adds to the sewerage and drainage problems. Mr Koch stated that he empathised with such concerns and that these are material planning considerations but that the District Council are dependent on the service providers-Anglian Water, the Environment Agency, UK Power networks etc to raise any potential issues. He noted that Anglian Water for example has a legal responsibility to meet sewerage needs and as such will merely express this in response to any application rather than flagging this as an issue. He urged residents to report any flooding or sewerage problems. A resident raised the point that she understood that a recent application in Swavesey had been turned down on grounds of sewerage, Mr Koch stated that the application in question had actually been refused on grounds other than sewerage issues. It was noted that Mr Koch had stated a need for an additional 1600 houses per annum but we, a group village, have had applications for around 200, surely if all 84 group villages were allotted around 20 houses then this target could be met. In addition there are a proposed 24,500 dwellings to be built collectively in Northstowe, Cambourne, Bourn airfield and other large areas but that stage two of the Northstowe development could not be progressed until the A14 upgrade was finished but a huge number of

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houses are instead being built in villages which also need to access the A14. One parishioner asked who, if anyone, was being held responsible for the housing supply shortage, Mr Koch stated that the issue was wider than this and aspects such as the economic climate and developers land banking had all compounded this.

Mr Twiss thanked Mr Koch and proceeded to the next agenda item.

Compulsory Purchase-Larger planning applications present an opportunity to obtain some s106 funding for village amenities. Even if we oppose the application, we still need to present a 'wish list', or we will miss out. Compulsory Purchase is a last resort, only considered when all reasonable offers have been declined, it requires a strong case, considerable time and expert input, and the process itself is expensive. Land is independently valued according to its current use, so land with planning consent will be beyond our means.

OPEN FORUM - Recreation & Open Space facilities and Neighbourhood Plans-Many questions had been voiced from the floor during the course of the meeting and these had been covered as the meeting had progressed. Mr Twiss asked those present what facilities they would like to see added to the Village. The overwhelming swell of feeling was that informal open space was what was lacking rather than sports space. A parishioner asked if there were any other suitable areas of land which could be used for such purposes within the village, she identified an area but it was noted this particular area is in private ownership. Another parishioner noted that the area next to the Recreation area would be more convenient as it is located close to a major village facility. One resident asked about the possibility of using a particular area of land, which is owned by the County Council, for such purposes however the area in question is currently being used commercially and is let so this is not a feasible solution. Mr Twiss noted that a neighbourhood plan could be useful tool for influencing future developments but these were reliant on people willing to volunteer their time to be involved, such plans also take time to come to fruition. A parishioner asked if the District Councillors would address the meeting to give their views and Mr Twiss invited them to do so. Mr Burling stated that both he and Mrs Corney both currently serve on the District Council planning committee so it was important for them to maintain an open mind, he noted that he would often abstain from any vote on a planning application at Parish Council level because of this, however the fact that they both serve on this committee means that they have a better opportunity to represent the Village. Mr Burling told those present that he too had grave concerns over the sewerage and flooding issues and raises this regularly at planning committee meetings when larger applications are being deliberated on. He stated that his aim is always to get the best deal for the Village in relation to large developments. A parishioner asked what could be done to help, Mr Burling implored those present to write to the planning authority and express their views especially in relation to the open space designation for the land adjacent to the Recreation area. He noted that there had been very few objections from residents regarding the recent application lodged by Kodiak homes. A parishioner asked if significant applications could be posted on the Over village standard so that more villagers could be made aware of these, Mr Burling agreed to do this, another parishioner encouraged all present to spread the word to encourage more people to comment on applications and express their views.

Summary and Conclusion-Mr Twiss thanked Mr Koch and Parishioners for attending and closed the meeting at 9.25pm.