

# AWBRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Awbridge Parish Council planning meeting held on Zoom Video conferencing on Tuesday, 21<sup>st</sup> July 2020 at 7.30pm

**Present:** Cllrs Jackson (Chair) (**GJ**), Seymour (**KS**) (Vice Chair), Coggon (**DC**), Sheppard (**AS**), Allen (**PA**), Legon (**PL**)\*

**In attendance:** Fred Tucker (**FT**), All Saints Church, Awbridge, and 12 members of the public

**Apologies:** Cllr Adams-King (**NAK**)

**Clerk:** Ian Milsom

\* Joined the meeting at 7.40pm

### Action

#### 20/001p **Welcome, introductions and apologies for absence**

The meeting commenced at 7.35. **GJ** welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies as above.

#### 20/002p **Declarations of interest**

**AS** declared an interest, as a resident of Church Lane, in the planning application [Land West of All Saints Church, Church Lane](#). It was agreed that this did not preclude **AS** from taking part in the discussion of this item, or from voting on any subsequent proposal.

#### 20/003p **Minutes**

It was agreed to hold over approval of the June full council meeting minutes until the August meeting.

In relation to the minutes of the planning meeting dated 7 November 2019, **GJ** ask the clerk for clarification as to whether the text “it was concluded that Council is not competent to comment on this application” related to the Squab Wood landfill site application, or to the proposed Church Lane development which had been discussed immediately prior to this item. The clerk confirmed that the text in question related solely to the Squab Wood landfill site.

#### 20/004p **To consider planning applications notified to Council**

##### [Land West of All Saints Church, Church Lane](#)

**GJ** explained to the members of the public present that no open public session has been included in the agenda for tonight’s planning meeting. However, in recognition of the level of interest in the proposed church lane development, the Parish Council (PC) will take questions from the floor and will attempt to answer these tonight where possible.

**GJ** explained the PC’s role in the planning process. The PC does not make the final decision on planning applications, this being the responsibility of Test Valley Borough Council (TVBC) as the planning

authority. The PC puts forward comments to TVBC on planning applications and indicates whether it supports or objects to the application. Objections to planning applications are the subject of strict criteria and must be based on material planning considerations.

**DC** asked for clarification on whether, in this case where community support is required, the PC's support counts for more than it would with other planning applications. **GJ** agreed that as it is being made under COM9 of the TVBC revised Local Plan 2011-29, the support of the parish council is key to the application's success.

**GJ** expressed the view that as the PC has already voted to support the project in principle, the focus tonight should be on considering the planning aspects of the application rather than looking back over the process to date. **DC** expressed confusion at this, explaining that he had understood that giving in 'principle support' meant that the PC was happy for the proposal to be further developed, not that thereafter the PC would have no further input except in relation to planning issues.

**PL** felt that since the submission of the full planning application the process was moving away from that described in COM9, with the decision seeming to now rest with planning officers rather than on the support of the community.

In response to a question from **DC**, **GJ** informed of a conversation that had taken place between the Developer's agent and two representatives of the PC, when community concerns about what was happening with the proposed development were highlighted. Following on from this, **GJ** advised that the Church is going forward with a community consultation that will take the form of a questionnaire that will be distributed along with the Awbridge District Village Association (ADVA) newsletter. The questionnaire will simply ask parishioners if they do/do not support the application and is intended to give each member of a household the opportunity to comment on the proposed Church Lane development.

**GJ** proposed holding off on the PC's decision on the planning aspects of the Church Lane development until it has seen the results of the applicant's latest questionnaire. **GJ** explained that the PC is not constrained by the planning consultation deadline, (31 July 2020), and it can submit comments up until the date the application is considered by the TVBC Planning Committee.

**PL** questioned whether retrospective engagement with the community counted under COM9. **GJ** advised that he had sought advice on this point and is confident that it will not be an issue as it is satisfying the applicant's need to consult with the public. **GJ** added that the applicant has already met the normal requirements of COM9 and had intended to consult further with the Awbridge community at the annual parish assembly in March. This was not possible due to the pandemic.

**PL** asked if the PC would have the opportunity to look at the questions in the questionnaire before it is distributed. **GJ** replied that with the applicants permission, copies of the questionnaire could be made available to Members.

**PL** reminded members that **DC** had already done some work around a questionnaire. There followed a discussion about how information gathering could be accurately achieved through an appropriately designed questionnaire, with contextualised questions presented in the correct way. **DC** felt that it might be better if such a questionnaire came from a group that is not proposing the development.

**GJ** pointed out that COM 9 is clear that the consultation must come from the applicant. **DC** nevertheless felt it would be helpful if the PC had some critical input to the questionnaire in order to ensure that it delivered the sort of information that would enable the PC to reach a decision as to whether to support the development. **PL** agreed that without detailed answers the PC will not be able to reach a decision one way or the other.

**GJ** made clear his opposition to this approach and expressed the view that there was a risk of it producing a fragmented picture.

The idea of weighting questionnaire responses from residents of Church Lane was raised. **GJ** opposed this and felt it was a move away from the process outlined in COM9. **DC** disagreed, feeling that the issue is not simply about establishing the balance of opinion of the community, but in gauging what the need is.

There was then a discussion about 'fraud prevention' in relation to the questionnaire. Suggestions to prevent this included hand-numbering the questionnaire and measures to prevent it from being photocopied. It was agreed that another planning meeting would be required to consider the results of the questionnaire, and to consider the planning aspects of the Church Lane application. No date was set.

**FT** provided the information that a questionnaire circulated in ADVA news would be delivered only within the parish of Awbridge.

**GJ** asked Members for their views about proceeding with the applicant's questionnaire, re-designed by **DC**, with the results being collated by the PC. **PL** and **DC** indicated their support. No motion was proposed or seconded, and there was not vote taken.<sup>1</sup>

#### **Questions from members of the public**

These included:

- How will it be ensured that only Awbridge residents complete the questionnaire?
- Post questionnaire, will parishioners be able to have further input to the planning process?
- Why has there been no previous discussion about alternative approaches to the project, e.g. smaller car park, larger graveyard
- As a gesture of goodwill, can the applicant temporarily withdraw the application pending the outcome of the questionnaire?

**GJ** responded to the above questions.

The clerk asked for clarification regarding Council's response to the planning aspects of the Church Lane application. **GJ** advised the clerk that this be in the form of a holding response, stating that the parish

council would be submitting comments when the results of the questionnaire were known.

[Land Adjacent Dunbridge Lane](#) Erection of equestrian barn and provision of associated parking and turning area. Closing date 23 July 2020  
It was proposed that Council's response be 'No objection'. **RESOLVED.**

[Awbridge Farm Cottage Dunbridge Lane](#) Single story side extension. Closing date 23 July 2020.  
It was proposed that Council's response be 'No objection'. **RESOLVED.**

The meeting closed at 8.45pm.

***'No decision can be taken on any item not included in the meeting agenda. This includes items that may be discussed within another agenda item.'***