

GREAT CHESTERFORD PARISH COUNCIL

Notes from the Annual Village Meeting of the Parish of Great Chesterford held on Tuesday 31 May, 2022

Present; Parish Cllrs David Hall, Mike Mitchell, Tom Newcombe (Chair), Julie Redfern, and Sharon Tricerri. District Cllr Richard Pavitt. Kate Stacey (Clerk) and 37 members of the public.

Welcome

Cllr Tom Newcombe welcomed residents to the meeting noting that it had not been possible to hold a Village meeting for the past two years due to the global pandemic. Cllr Newcombe noted that he was especially pleased how the Village had been able to 'pull together' during the pandemic. Members of the PC introduced themselves. Cllr Newcombe thanked members of the PC for their work over the past two years and also thanked Aubrey Howe, Amanda Lindsell and Kate Stacey for their support. Thanks were also given to residents and other groups of volunteers who had continued to support the village in many ways in particular; Simon De Grey, Cresta Jerrard, Andrew Taylor, Jenny and Frank Palmer and the WI, Colin Day and Paul Rutter. Cllr Newcombe also noted that the PC had been able to reduce the precept this year which it had committed to do once the financial risks of the legal costs fighting the North Uttlesford Garden Village (NUGV) and the new Nursery litigation had been overcome.

Planning update (including London Road and Stumps Cross)

Cllr Newcombe reminded residents that at the last meeting two years ago the Village was facing the prospect of the NUGV planning application. Fighting the development had taken up a huge amount of the PCs time and he reminded residents that they could respond to any planning applications directly as well as via the PC. Over the last month an enforcement issue at the clay pit had been resolved with squatters moving out. Another current threat was an application for an aggregate processing facility on Newmarket Road which was a retrospective application.

Cllr Hall updated residents on two planning applications on London Road. One application had been approved for the building of 76 houses (against the PC's recommendation) and was already in progress. Another had been submitted for a 124 house site on the other side of the road (which was also against the PCs recommendation, 83 individuals had also written to object to the application). The PC had put in a Section 106 request for mitigation to include funds towards the new preschool, recreation ground, scout hut, storage hut, play areas, improvement to the corner of the B1383 bend into the Village and for funds to be set aside for 15 yrs towards the building of a pedestrian bridge over the river into the Village. Already in the planning application was a pedestrian crossing and cycle paths, but unfortunately the paths did not stretch beyond the development. Unfortunately when the planning application was presented to the relevant Uttlesford District Council (UDC) meeting key documents were missing and the meeting was poorly administered. The UDC CEO however deemed that the decision to agree to the planning application would

stand. Planning consent had been given subject to agreeing the s106 mitigation. The PC had still not received any feedback on this funding.

Cllr Hall described another potential site that may be developed at Stumps Cross. The PC had met with the developers (Catesby) and the initial proposal was for a development of 500 houses, now reduced to 350. The PC objects due to the land being a flood plain, a Roman site and the fact that it would be highly visible. The PC will remain in discussion with Catesby who are also continuing discussions with UDC.

Local Plan update

Cllr Hall noted that the production of UDC's Local Plan had been delayed by 4 weeks: because of this the consultation period would be extended by 8 weeks. It was therefore likely that it would be further delayed due to Council elections in 2023.

Cllr Hall noted that the NUGV application had been rejected by the inspectorate as it was regarded as non-sustainable, however the developers were still working on a reduced plan attempting to take into account the various concerns raised especially by Historic England. Infrastructural problems would probably still remain.

Neighbourhood Plan update

Cllr Newcombe reported that the Great Chesterford and Little Chesterford Neighbourhood Plan (NP) had now been submitted to UDC. The plan had been worked on over a very long period of time and the consultation period had now been completed. There would be a referendum on the plan and residents were encouraged to vote. It was likely that the NP would be put in place before the UDC Local Plan. Cllr Newcombe reported that GC had already grown by 27% before the NP was started (excluding the site currently being built on London Road). It was noted that Uttlesford was vulnerable to development without a Local Plan and without a 5 year land supply given Government building targets. Cllr Newcombe confirmed that GC had met its commitment to numbers in the NP.

Residents raised queries about provision on school places given the potential increase in size of the Village. It was noted that the schools catchment area would likely reduce as the Village school was at capacity. Developers did provide funds for education, but they may not necessarily be spent within GC. A boundary change had been made to take the 76 house London Road development into GC. This was advantageous to the PC as it increases the precept income.

A resident asked whether a judicial review of the 124 house site was possible. It was noted that this had been considered but not considered worthwhile due to the cost and likelihood of failure.

Open spaces and Recreation Ground Trust

Cllr Tricerri reported on activities undertaken in relation to open spaces and the recreation ground. A height limiting barrier and bollards had been erected on the Recreation Ground to deter travellers on the grounds (two previous incidents had occurred causing mess and damage). The recreation ground had been improved with fertiliser, sand and vertidrainage. Unfortunately during the recent high winds three trees had been lost on the recreation ground and replacements would be considered. UDC had donated some trees which had been used to provide a windbreak for the orchard. Cllr Tricerri gave thanks to the many volunteers who had planted the trees and watered them regularly. New fencing had been put around the play area at the recreation ground and a survey had been undertaken to ask

residents what play equipment they would ideally wish for in the two play areas in the village. Cllr Tricerri noted that finance would be required if grants could not be obtained and she would welcome any ideas and/or fundraising towards play area improvement. Another area that needed updating was the skate park that was nearing the end of its life. Within the last two years new nets had been bought for the tennis courts, the outdoor gym had been inspected and next month a ROSPA inspection would take place.

Scouts

Cllr Newcombe reported that a planning application for an extension to the scout hut and storage hut had been successful. Andrew Taylor, scout leader would now be fundraising.

New Nursery

Cllr Mitchell noted that the Village had already been made aware of the status of the new nursery in an email from Cllr Newcombe on 27 February. The situation was now that an advertisement would go out shortly seeking interest from any nursery providers who would wish to be involved in the opportunity of taking on the nursery at the prebuild stage. A loan would be applied for to build the nursery anticipating that the rental income would pay off the loan. It was likely that the build would be complete by the end of 2023. Archaeologists would need to finish their dig around the site following the unfortunate unearthing of Roman remains by the original builders who had dug in areas in breach of planning requirements.

Yellow lines

Cllr Mitchell reported that consultation had started five years ago into the provision of yellow lines on the High Street in face of poor parking. A new plan was now in hand which would be trialled over six months. Residents were in general agreement that parking around the school was particularly poor.

Jubilee

Cllr Redfern thanked the WI for their efforts towards the Jubilee picnic event from midday to 5pm on Horse River Green on Jubilee Sunday. She also encouraged residents to decorate their houses and enter the 'best decorated house' competition. The Jubilee beacon would be lit at 9.45pm on Jubilee Thursday on Horse River Green.

Good Neighbours

Cllr Redfern reported that the Good Neighbours initiative had been started around 3 years ago and it had been of great benefit during the pandemic as 80-90 volunteers came forward to assist others in the Village. If residents would like to join the group they should forward their email to Cllr Redfern. Cllr Redfern also asked residents to inform newcomers to the village of the initiative. She was also looking for volunteers to assist with the over 60s Christmas lunch. Cllr Redfern also reported that 21 residents had volunteered to form a speed watch group.

Chairman's Award

Cllr Newcombe announced that the award this year would be presented to Cllr David Hall who was retiring from the PC. Cllr Hall had come to the village in the 1970s and

had spent 12 years on the PC and contributed a great deal of time and effort particularly on planning issues with a forensic eye for detail.

AOB and questions

Cllr Newcombe noted that with Cllr Hall's retirement the PC needed at least two more Councillors and would be happy to discuss with any residents who might be interested.

Street lights

Residents noted that street lighting in the village was not good particularly on London Road. It was noted that street lighting is an on-going issue and a large drain on the PCs finances, but it was hoped that faulty lights would be fixed over the next few months.

Cats

A resident complained about cat poo; however it was noted that cats were difficult to control.

Bike racks

The potential location of bike racks on School Street was still under discussion.

Bins

It was noted that more rubbish and dog waste bins were needed on London Road

The meeting closed at 9.35pm and was followed by drinks.