

**MINUTES OF ASTON, COTE, SHIFFORD & CHIMNEY PARISH COUNCIL  
MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 3<sup>RD</sup> JULY 2014 IN THE  
MEETING ROOM, VILLAGE HALL, ASTON AT 7.30 PM**

- 1. Members Present:** Jane Everex  
Richard Haines  
Ben Lings  
John Ordish  
Paul Sparrowhawk  
Jane West  
Phil West

**In Attendance:** Helen Sandhu – Clerk  
Hilary Fenton, West Oxfordshire District Councillor  
Steve Good, West Oxfordshire District Councillor  
Simon James, agent of owner of The Old Chapel, North Street  
2 members of the public

**Apologies:** None

**2. Election of Vice Chairperson**

Jane West was proposed, seconded and unanimously elected as the new Vice Chairperson of the Parish Council.

**3. Presentation by Simon James on behalf of Richard Howe, owner of The Old Chapel, North Street, Aston**

Mr James told the Parish Council that he is acting as the agent of Richard Howe, who had been unable to attend this meeting. Mr Howe is conducting a pre-application consultation with the Parish Council about a proposal to build 3 homes on land at the rear of the old Chapel. Mr James showed the Parish Council an illustrative outline of how the plots would be sited. He explained that the access road has been designed to enable it to potentially be extended in the future to provide access to the dilapidated barns at Home Farm which could then themselves be developed, although their development does not form part of the current proposal.

Richard Haines informed Mr James that the views and issues of the Parish Council at this point are informal, and a lot more information will be required before a formal comment can be provided, which would be given to the District Council through the normal planning process. Mr Haines expressed the view that the proposal would be in line with the District Council's policy that only development which constitutes infilling would normally be permitted within Aston. Mr Haines went on to say that two of the Parish Council's key concerns about any planning applications for new housing are sewerage and parking. Whilst the proposal is for only 3 houses, as the access road could open up further land for future development, Mr Haines advised that the agent and applicant should consider the potential impact of the proposals on the sewerage services in the village very carefully. In terms of the parking, Mr Haines said that the Parish Council is always concerned about the potential for new developments to increase on-street parking, with the need for parking for visitors to be borne in mind within development applications. This would be a particular concern for this property; the Parish Council would not wish to see an increase in on-street parking outside The Old Chapel as North Street is one of the main entrance roads into Aston.

Mr James was then asked several questions by members of the Parish Council, and provided the responses shown:

**Presentation by Simon James on behalf of Richard Howe, owner of The Old Chapel, North Street, Aston (continued)**

Q: Where will the parking for The Old Chapel be?

A: A parking bay will be created off-street next to the access road.

Q: Will the access road be adopted by Highways?

A: This is not clear. Oxfordshire Highways has provided an email supporting the location of the proposed access road and confirming that access from Back Lane wouldn't be supported.

Q: How many properties could be developed on the site of Home Farm?

A: This is not clear, and development of Home Farm does not form part of the current proposal. Home Farm is not owned by Richard Howe.

Richard Haines made the point that as the access road forming part of this proposal would enable development of Home Farm, issues around its future potential development would have a bearing on the current proposal for the land behind The Old Chapel; the two sites are clearly linked.

Q: Would the access road open up the large fields off Back Lane for potential future development?

A: That is not part of the current proposal.

Q: What is the timescale for the proposals?

A: It is hoped that a formal planning application will be submitted by the end of July.

Q: How big will the houses be?

A: 3-4 bedrooms. The intention is to keep the site looking open and rural and not overdeveloped.

Q: How wide will the access road be? The proposal needs to take account of the requirements for refuse collection, etc, particularly if the access road is going to be used for more houses on Home Farm in the future.

A: The road will be 6m at its widest point, and 4m at its narrowest.

Mr Haines thanked Mr James for attending the meeting, and Mr James left.

- 4. Minutes of previous meeting** – on 5 June 2014 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Proposed by John Ordish, seconded by Paul Sparrowhawk.

- 5. Parish Councillors – Disclosure of interests on agenda items**

None.

- 6. Open session for public debate**

One of the members of the public present said that he had attended the meeting because he would like to know what is happening with Thistle Cottage. Richard Haines informed him that there is a new planning application which the Parish Council will formally consider later in the meeting. The member of the public said that he is particularly interested in whether the new application proposes to retain the existing cottages? Mr Haines confirmed that the new application indicates that the existing cottages will be redeveloped.

- 7. OCC/WODC Items**

Steve Good informed the Parish Council that both he and Hilary Fenton are aware of the potential issues around the proposals for Thistle Cottage, and that he had been contacted by various residents about the plans.

**OCC/WODC Items (continued)**

Mr Good went on to express his concerns about Newbridge's ability to withstand the current traffic going over it. He expressed the view that there is a real risk that the bridge could be lost as a river crossing, and that this would have a very serious impact on traffic across the area, including in Aston. As a scheduled ancient monument, there is a limit to what can be done to strengthen the bridge. There has been an 18 tonnes GVW (gross vehicle weight) limit on the bridge for some years, the enforcement of which is the responsibility of Oxfordshire Trading Standards. The weight limit used to be enforced by monitoring cameras, but these haven't worked for some time, and the weight limit is now being increasingly disregarded. If Newbridge fails, there are only two other river crossings in the vicinity – Tadpole Bridge on the Buckland to Bampton Road, and the toll bridge at Eynsham. If vehicles have to fall back to using these two crossings, there will be a significant increase in the volume of traffic coming through Aston. Mr Good expressed the view that it is not clear how the issue can be resolved in the short term, but that the key immediate thing is to ensure that the current weight limit is proactively enforced. He then suggested that the County Council should consider reducing the weight limit to 3 tonnes, which would permit only cars to cross the bridge, with the exception of buses and emergency vehicles. Mr Good said that he has been in contact with Richard Haines and also with the chairmen of the Northmoor and Standlake parish councils, as he considers it essential that all councils which would be significantly impacted by a failure of the bridge should come together and bring combined pressure on the County Council to resolve the problem. Richard Haines said that Charles Mathew as the Ward's County Councillor should also be fully involved.

Steve Good is setting up a meeting with Trading Standards, which the three parish council chairmen will be invited to attend. Mr Good would also like Charlie Benner, the OCC bridge engineer, to attend.

**8. Matters Arising from Previous Meetings**

*a) Community defibrillators – grant offer from WODC*

Paul Sparrowhawk informed the Parish Council that the defibrillator which he had received (unsolicited) did not come with any contact details, and so there is no means of returning it. John Ordish informed the Parish Council that the Community Trust has confirmed that the unit can go on the wall near the entrance to the Village Hall and that the caretaker would carry out the required regular checks.

The Clerk was asked to contact Bill Wragge (WODC) about the purchase of a box for the unit. Paul Sparrowhawk was asked to contact Dick Tracey to ask him to check that the unit is genuine and suitable. John Ordish will obtain a quotation for the required electrical supply.

*b) Aston Website*

It was agreed that no direct access to the site will be given to members of the public/other village organisations – updates will be put on by the existing users.

*c) Central Aston post box*

Richard Haines and John Ordish will meet with Steve Davies from Royal Mail on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> July at 10.00am.

**Matters Arising from Previous Meetings (continued)**

*d) Public collection for retiring Postmistress*

The garage has a box for a collection and the shop has agreed to have one; they will be asked to ensure that the box is ready asap. Information about the collection to be put on Twitter and then communicated by word of mouth. The Parish Council will discuss what to buy with the collection at the September meeting. There was a suggestion that the Postmistress could be presented with her gift at the Produce & Craft Show on 20 September.

*e) Cote Chapel – new local volunteer support group*

John Ordish advised that he had emailed the new contact person to ask for more information on the new support group, but had not received a response.

Richard Haines said that there will be an article in the next edition of Voices written by a representative of the group; Cote Chapel will be open to the public once a month between July and September.

*f) Anti-social behaviour*

The incidences of young people driving mini-motorbikes around the parish have reduced. PCSO Helen Keen has provided some information on the legalities of mini-motorbikes which will be in the next edition of Voices.

**9. Correspondence sent**

Listed in the Clerk's Briefing Notes previously circulated to all Councillors.

**10. New Business**

*a) Annual Parish Meeting – 17 June 2014*

There was a brief discussion about this meeting which had been poorly attended by local residents, including how best to advertise it.

It was resolved to discuss the issues further when the draft minutes have been completed.

*b) Oxfordshire Local Transport Plan 4*

The County Council is consulting on the high level goals and objectives to be included in the plan.

It was resolved that the Parish Council would respond to express the view that key issues around the A40 and the transport implications of gravel extraction must be fully incorporated into the plan.

*c) Website request*

A request from a local resident to include information about Witney Lions Club was discussed. It was noted that the website primarily exists to provide information about organisations within the parish. It was resolved that a separate section on the website should be set up which could contain very brief information (maximum 50 words and a website link/contact information) on other organisations not based within the parish which may be of interest to local residents.

*d) August meeting*

It was resolved that a normal Parish Council meeting would not be held in August. If necessary, a shorter meeting will be called to consider urgent matters which cannot wait until the September meeting (such as planning applications).

*e) Revised publication – Governance & Accountability – a Practitioner's Guide*

It was resolved to purchase this updated guide.

**New Business (continued)**

*f) Community Led/Neighbourhood Planning*

Information previously obtained from CPRE was put in the folder. It was agreed to discuss this issue further at the September meeting.

**11. Community Trust**

John Ordish told the Parish Council that the Chairperson of the Community Trust has spoken again to the people camping without permission on the playing field, requesting that they leave the site.

**12. Parish Infrastructure**

*a) Weedkilling*

The Clerk has requested a quotation from Des Johnston for weedkilling as previously discussed. The Clerk will place the order under her delegated powers provided it is for less than £350 (as agreed at the June meeting).

*b) Block work and kerbing around the war memorial*

- It was noted that there has still been no response from Southern Construction to the Parish Council's letter advising that a two year warranty is required by Oxfordshire Highways.
- The temporary repair has been carried out by Oxfordshire Highways.
- The Clerk is continuing to chase Oxfordshire Highways to request that they provide a suggested specification for final remedial work at the site and associated quotation. Highways has advised that the officer who would supply this is currently on secondment, and no-one else appears to be able to provide the information requested.

*c) Cote village information sign*

Signs now installed.

*d) Cote Chapel churchyard*

It was resolved that the Clerk would write to the local group Chairman to express the Parish Council's dissatisfaction with the condition of the churchyard, with reference to the fact that HCT is not following its stated intention of maintaining a 1 metre close-mown strip adjacent to the path. HCT to be informed that the Parish Council is considering removing the grant funding for the grass cutting at Cote Chapel from its budget.

*e) A415 bridge at Newbridge*

Discussed earlier in the meeting under agenda item 7.

*f) Thames Water network capacities*

The Clerk informed the Parish Council that she has written to Thames Water requesting information on the capacity of the foul- and fresh-water network in the parish. As Thames Water is not a public body, it is not legally obliged to provide information to the public. However, the Clerk advised that she had been contacted by a representative of Thames Water who has stated that the requested information will shortly be provided.

### **Parish Infrastructure (continued)**

#### *g) Hedges and boundaries*

The Clerk advised that she had written to the households whose hedges were discussed at the June meeting. All have now taken some action to address the issues raised. The correspondence received from them had been circulated in the Clerk's Briefing Notes. It was resolved to delegate a response to the Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman of the Parish Council, where necessary.

Thames Water has cut back the hedge of the SPS on North Street. The Clerk has cut back the tree growth around the VAS on Cote Road. The large bramble encroaching on the footpath at the boundary of the agricultural field on North Street has been cut back by the tenant of the land.

#### *h) "Walkabout" with Oxfordshire Highways*

It was resolved that the Parish Council would accept the invitation of an accompanied "walkabout" to look at highways issues from Oxfordshire Highways. It was agreed that the key areas were the Square and the wooden fencing around the new culvert adjacent to Chimney Bridge (which would be better replaced with metal railings). Richard Haines, John Ordish and Phil West agreed to take part in the walkabout. Steve Good said he would also like to attend. Preferred times – 10.00am, not Tuesdays.

Councillors were asked to email any other concerns which they would like the walkabout to cover.

### **13. PLANNING**

#### **Planning applications granted**

13/1494/P/OP      Land between Saxel Close and Aston Village Hall, Aston  
Erection of 38 dwellings  
Conditional approval

14/0619/P/FP      Home Farm House, Bampton Road, Aston  
Erection of single storey rear extension (retrospective)

#### **New planning applications**

14/0791/P/FP      Thistle Cottage, Ham Lane, Aston  
Development of seven dwellings and extend/refurbish Thistle Cottage  
and associated works

It was agreed that the current site is a blight on the village and that it would benefit from development, provided that the development is sympathetic.

The Parish Council resolved to **object** to the application for the following reasons:

- Inappropriate parking provision for the plots on the Ham Lane boundary of the site. The parking spaces are at the rear of the houses, and it would be very likely that the occupiers would choose instead to park on their front gardens/Ham Lane.
- Inadequate parking in the development which is likely to lead to people parking on Ham Lane which will create a road safety issue – it was observed that the lack of a fence or wall boundary at the front of the site would encourage people to consider parking on Ham Lane/part on Ham Lane and part on the verge/the front gardens of the properties;
- Lack of appropriate turning provision for large delivery vehicles which will mean that they will not be able to turn and leave the site in forward gear, which will present a road hazard;

**PLANNING (continued)**

- Lack of provision of affordable housing. It was agreed that the Parish Council should request that any s106 money for affordable housing generated by the development is spent within the parish.
- Concerns about the ability of the sewerage system in Aston and beyond to cope with an increase in the number of houses connected to it.

It was further agreed that the letter would also express concern about the detrimental impact on residents of Ham Lane during the building work and would ask the District Council to consider measures to mitigate this, including asking the developer to provide more information on how they would propose to manage the building work given the restrictions posed by the site.

The letter will also request that additional s106 money for amenities beyond affordable housing be sought from the developer, to be spent in the parish.

Richard Haines will attend the Lowlands Planning Committee meeting on 21 July and will give a presentation on behalf of the Parish Council.

14/0885/P/FP      47 Cote Road, Aston  
Erection of two storey, first floor and single storey rear extensions  
*No comments*

**14. Finance**

*a) Account Balances – circulated in the Clerk’s Briefing Notes*

Balance on Current Account at 30 June 2014      £ 7,663.85  
Balance on Deposit Account at 30 June 2014      £16,694.87

*b) June invoices presented for approval and payment*

		Statute
Clerk’s salary and working from home allowance	355.80	LGA 1972, s112
Clerk’s expenses – printing – 106 sheets @ 5p	5.30	LGA 1972 s111
SLCC – Oxfordshire Regional Conference	82.80	LGA 1972 s111
West Oxfordshire District Council – emptying of dog bin in July	20.40	Litter Act 1983
Des Johnston – 6 cuts of playing field	336.00	LG(MP)A 1976, s19
OALC – Chairmanship course	78.00	LGA 1972 s111
<b>Total</b>	<b>£878.30</b>	

It was resolved to make the above payments, proposed by Jane West, seconded by John Ordish. The cheques were signed by Richard Haines and John Ordish.

**15. Parish Councillors’ reports from meetings attended since last meeting**

John Ordish informed the Parish Council that he had attended a meeting of the Flood Working Group in Bampton. The Environment Agency is not planning to carry out any work on the Great Brook for the foreseeable future. The EA will come out to meet with the Parish Council on site to discuss what can and can’t be done because of the water voles, if the Parish Council would find this useful. Much of the meeting had been concerned with issues around Brize Norton, Bampton, Shillbrook and Clanfield.

**16. Date of next meeting:      No normal August meeting**  
**Thursday 4 September 2014, 7.30pm**  
Monthly Parish Council Meeting

Signed .....dated.....