

**Minutes of an extra Roade Parish Council Meeting
held on Thursday 7 February 2008 at 7.30 p.m.
at the Roade & Courteenhall Ex-Servicemens' Club**

Present: Dr John Gwilt (Chairman)

Rev Malcolm Beech	Dave Bennett	Cecil Bottomley
Bill Dredge	Glenn Dudman	Mrs Myra Inglis
Bill Mann	Rick Thake	

Apologies: Mrs Anna Freund Dick Johnson Mrs June McAlear
Mrs Susan Mallock Mrs Sylvia Mawby (Clerk)

Minute Taker: Mrs Nicky Hall

The Chairman opened this extra meeting of the Parish Council at 7.30 p.m. and welcomed all present.

Action

1. **Declarations of Interest:** There were no declarations of interest.
2. **Public Session:**
- 2.1 The Chairman confirmed that this evening's Public Session, which would normally be open for discussion of any matter, would not take questions on the proposed development of the former Walkerpack site since we do not yet have the final complete submission. However there are some concerns which need to be taken up further with the planning department of South Northants Council and the developers which would be discussed.
3. **Apologies:** Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs Freund, Johnson, McAlear and Mallock.
4. **Attendance Register:** This had been signed by all Councillors present.
5. **Walker Pack Site/Grafton Gate Planning Application Ref: S/2008/0093/P:**
- 5.1 The Chairman confirmed that the main purpose this evening was to deal with the present situation regarding the Walkerpack site. That afternoon he and Cllr Bottomley had been invited to talk to the planning officers at SNC about some of their concerns. District Cllr Sally Townsend had earlier sent an email to Mrs Angela Whitfield, Principal Planning Officer at SNC, to which a detailed response had been received. Cllr Townsend read out both emails to the meeting: her initial note had outlined concerns regarding, inter alia, the removal of trees on the site, the proposal for "high rise" flats which were totally out of keeping with the existing village, the need for social housing to go to local people, the anticipated traffic congestion (particularly at rush hour) which these extra homes will contribute to an already over-loaded A508, and the resulting poor air quality. The number of units had been reduced from 127 to 124 but Cllr Townsend was concerned to know what ratio was being used, as the original brief allowed for only 64 dwellings.
- 5.2 Mrs Whitfield had responded to Cllr Townsend's queries to say that regarding the trees, no Tree Preservation Orders had been in place, and only one objection to their removal had been received and therefore negotiations had progressed with the developers on that basis. New landscaping is planned for the site.
- 5.2.1 Mrs Whitfield noted that the blocks of flats were necessary to provide a buffer between the railway and the rest of the site. She agreed that social housing should go to people in Roade and confirmed that Susan Hope and Jacqueline Brookes (Strategic Housing Officers) have been involved in pre-application discussion for many months on this issue.

- 5.2.2** Taylor Wimpey had produced a Transport Assessment demonstrating that the traffic from this level of development will not create a material impact on Stratford Road, and the Highway Authority appear to be happy with this assessment and is therefore not raising any objections in principal.
- 5.2.3** Regarding the number of units proposed, Mrs Whitfield noted that the number of 64 had been used to work out the minimum number of affordable housing units that could be provided on the site and in no way limited the numbers to only 64. No maximum number was quoted at the time. A number of planning advice documents published by the Government since the Planning Brief of 2004 have stressed the need for achieving good design and a quality living environment as well as making the best use of brownfield sites in sustainable locations. Although this is a village location, this particular site is almost self-contained with its only reference being the houses on the opposite side of Stratford Road. Mr Mark Strawbridge, the council's Urban Design adviser, has been involved in pre-applications discussions with the developers on this site and has not raised any concerns on density.
- 5.2.4** Cllr Townsend reported that she had arranged a meeting to discuss these items with Mrs Whitfield on Friday 15 February.
- 5.3** The Chairman confirmed that he had looked up the brief from May 2004, at which time only two people had objected to the removal of the trees, and these objections had been answered by SNC.
- 5.4** The Chairman reported that the corner of the site currently occupied by The Swannings was now to be included in the development, which would give rise to a further 14 units, increasing the proposed total to 138.
- 5.5** The meeting attended that afternoon by the Chairman and Cllr Bottomley included Mrs Whitfield and Richard Amor of SNC. At this meeting the representatives of Roade Parish Council had stressed that the scope of intensity of the development is completely out of line with the rural environment and that, if it were to go ahead as planned, would mean that the population of Roade would be increased by 15% or one-seventh, all in that one location. This did not take into account the application (anticipated to be submitted shortly) in respect of The Leys, which would provide for yet more housing. The Chairman's request that these applications be considered in tandem was denied, not least because of planning laws and also because the applications would be made by separate developers.
- 5.6** The Chairman confirmed that the planning documents had been received at 8.00 pm on Tuesday evening and therefore there had so far been very little time to examine the paperwork closely. However it is hoped that a response can be formulated before the end of this month, after which time a village-wide meeting could be organised in March although this will depend on what and how much more material emerges.
- 5.7** The Traffic Assessment figures seem not to tally with the congestion from which the village already suffers along the A508 every day. Cllr Townsend confirmed that in a similar situation in Blisworth, an independent survey had been carried out (at a cost to SNC) which had led to revised figures being used. Cllr Dudman suggested that two or three independent experts be approached and asked how they would investigate traffic numbers both now and with the addition of 138 dwellings, and to give a costing for such a piece of work. Any new survey would have to be carried out quickly, given the timeline within which we shall have to work. The Chairman confirmed that any such assessment should be carried out throughout the village and not just at one or two points, as the traffic build-up affects all roads into and out of the village.

5.8 Cllr Bottomley confirmed that the Parish Council needed to submit its comments by mid-April, which would allow for a village meeting in late-March/early-April. SNC have 13 weeks within which to give their initial response, with the clock already ticking.

5.9 After some further discussion, Cllr Mann proposed that the Chairman should contact Peter Brett Associates in Blisworth with a view to arranging an early meeting to discuss the practicalities of organising an independent Traffic Assessment. At the same time the Chairman was asked to contact Mrs Whitfield of SNC, quoting the precedent of Blisworth, and asking whether SNC would also, in the case of Roade, be prepared to underwrite the cost of an independent review. Cllr Dredge seconded and, with all in favour, it was agreed.

JG

5.10 The Chairman reported that the planning department at SNC had not picked up on the fact that the proposed blocks of flats did not have lifts. This would immediately exclude the elderly, and would make life very difficult for younger residents struggling to manage several flights of stairs whilst possibly dealing with small children, pushchairs and shopping. Also in, say, a three-storey block, one staircase would be serving 9 flats, giving rise to considerable health and safety concerns. Whilst reluctant to reduce the height of the blocks because of the drop off from Stratford Road down towards the railway line, the argument that they would provide a noise barrier was spurious. The four proposed wings would themselves be exposed to noise and would reflect the noise between any two of the wings. Although it was proposed to place “uninhabited rooms” closest to the railway, the plans themselves show living rooms next to the railway. Although it was emphasised that only 3-storey dwellings were being proposed, the plan “Street Scene J” clearly showed 4-storey dwellings.

5.11 Of great concern was the fact that there is currently only one access road into and out of the site. There is no provision for emergency vehicles should that access become blocked, although at a meeting he attended in November 2007, the Chairman had asked that this be given urgent consideration. The Chairman confirmed that the fire brigade and the police had not yet been given the opportunity to comment on the proposed development.

5.12 Parking was expected to throw up more problems because the design did not allow for on-street parking (no comments had been provided on the policing of this plan!). The provision of (wider) disabled parking bays would probably reduce the number of spaces. Most spaces will not be pre-allocated so, with the Government guideline of an average 1.5 spaces per dwelling, any spaces intended for visitors are unlikely to be available for them. As it is an almost self-contained area, there would be no other places in which to park.

5.13 No thought had been given to providing bungalows which would allow elderly people wishing to downsize their homes to remain in the village, at the same time freeing up larger dwellings for younger families wishing to trade-up.

5.14 It was noted that there is currently an excess over-demand for flats, not only in Northampton but nationwide. It was therefore unlikely that such a high density of flats in Roade would be taken up by local people. Cllr Bottomley confirmed that by pressing for the provision of lifts in apartment blocks, this may have the effect of reducing the number of units in the blocks. He also noted that the planning application is still under live consideration as SNC themselves are still not happy with some aspects of the application. Although he had had only a brief look at all the documents provided, Cllr Bottomley believed that the Transport Assessment provided for a priority junction at the site entrance, although he would confirm this on further reading. Given the current volumes of traffic on the A508 between, say, 7.30 am – 9.30 am and 4.00 pm – 6.30 pm, he believed that even more problems would arise than are currently experienced along

the A508 throughout the village.

Cllr Bennett noted that scientific advances in the production of, for example, acoustic boards, meant that sound-proofing was much better than in previous years.

5.15

The Chairman noted that the SNC Planning Department had to be very careful when considering planning applications since it was itself liable to expensive legal costs in

5.16

cases where submissions had been refused and subsequently developers have had decisions overturned on appeal. They must constantly be mindful of planning legislation.

In terms of making their views clear, Cllr Dudman emphasised that local residents should write to SNC to lodge their comments, observations and/or objections, and not simply speak to the Parish Council. It was also possible to organise a Village Poll which could be set in motion by 10 electors writing to the Parish Council requesting such a Poll. This would be paid for by SNC.

5.17

All

The Chairman re-iterated the need for keeping up the momentum and invited all Councillors to contact him the next day with their thoughts and suggestions for inclusion in further meetings and correspondence with SNC.

5.18

Cllr Thake noted that the local bus service was reasonable for those people working 9am – 5pm in either Northampton or Milton Keynes, but that anyone working outwith these parameters would need cars, thus exacerbating the traffic/parking problems.

5.19

Cllr Beech left the meeting at 8.45pm.

5.20

Cllr Bottomley noted that there are enough brownfield sites within the village fully to accommodate housing requirements up to the end of the 2026 Planning cycle without having to touch any greenfield sites at all. These sites could accommodate both housing and light industrial units to provide employment.

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GD

5.22

Cllr Dudman agreed to provide a flier for the next edition of Roade News (to be published at the end of February) telling villagers how and where to send their written and or electronic comments on the development to SNC.

6.

Any Other Business:

6.1

Mr Peter Bennett of 32 Stratford Road thanked the Parish Council for the pro-active steps which they were seen to be taking in respect of this development.

6.2

In response to a criticism regarding the advertising of this evening's meeting, Cllr Dudman reminded the meeting that notices had been published on all noticeboards on Saturday morning and in the library as usual, and that the information had been passed on by word of mouth where possible. At that time, the paperwork for the application had not been received. Villagers were encouraged to read their noticeboards and to ask councillors for information on meetings.

6.3

Cllr Bennett offered to supply the names of independent companies who might be called upon to provide a brief for carrying out a traffic assessment.

DB

6.4

It was noted that Peter Brett Associates have been involved on many projects with Taylor Wimpey in the past, although this should not preclude them from being asked to quote for an independent traffic survey.

7.

Date of next meeting: Monday 11 February 2008 at 7.30 p.m.

The meeting closed at 9.00 p.m.