

MINUTES FOR EXTRAORDINARY PARISH COUNCIL MEETING

HELD ON FEBRUARY 9TH 2021 VIA ZOOM

Apologies: None

Present:

Cllr Bell, Cllr Head, Cllr Parris, Cllr Marr, Cllr Savaryn, Cllr Rimmington, Cllr Baker, Cllr Gray, BCllr Davis, BCllr Dalton. 8 members of public

Cllr Bell, members of the public will not be able to speak tonight and are muted.

2 Items to discuss: **The new village hall.**

The footprint of the new hall would fit on the footprint of the old Jubilee Hall. The plan needs to be surveyed professionally. Will have to apply to change planning permission as it has been 15 years since the social club was there.

Asks all 7 Councillors to comment on the repositioning of the hall:

Cllr Head: For the benefit of everyone, late last year, whilst looking for something else we discovered a covenant on the Rec to say it could not be built on, we have asked Trenport to vary the covenant to allow for a new hall. The covenant was originally put there to prevent the PC making a lot of money by selling the land for building, Trenport have said no, they will not vary the covenant.

However, the social club sight was bought separately and as there was already a building on the site, there is no covenant preventing building on this site.

Our Village Hall has come to the end of its life. Ofsted are not happy with the nursery being in there. The sale of the hall will pay for the new hall.

Cllr Baker: If we apply for planning permission to put a new hall on, would it be modular or brick built? It will be modular as we cannot afford a brick built one. It would lose 7 spaces; disabled bays would stay and could possibly be used for electric charging spaces.

Where we hoped the hall would be required a lot of ground works, water and electric would be expensive to install, whereas the car park area have power and water right underneath and there is a possibility that gas could be installed. (as it is closer to the High St.

Cllr Parris: There is talk about a new heat source which should be investigated. By relocating the hall play equipment would not have to be moved. Also points out Ofsted are not happy with the old hall, considers the village needs a nursery class and youth club. Asks who was the Rec purchased from? Trenport.

Cllr Marr: Would have preferred the Rec, however would just like to see it built.

Cllr Gray: Thanks the VHC for all the work they are putting in to get this done. Thinks it is a shame Trenport have refused permission and that we should be looking at our BC's and MP to support us to overturn this decision. Personally concerned about the residents that the hall would overlook. It is not a profit making exercise it is a Community initiative. Would there be scope to extend the car park? If the spaces were re-marked and average car space sizes used these numbers would probably

be found. Discusses additional users and spaces lost in the High St thinks we should consider extending the car park.

Cllr Rimmington: Thinks this needs to go back to the residents to get their feelings, are we sure we have bottomed out the situation with Trenport? Asks Roger Dalton his opinion. He does not think they will change their mind. Are we considering adding on changing rooms still? No, we would stick to the original plans. Cllr Head: Had to satisfy Sports England to say we were not taking away too much green area, if it is not now going on the grass there would be no need to add a changing room, there would not be room on the footprint as you have to have outside space for the children.

Believes there used to be pavilions on the Rec. which may be one way out. Cllr Gray asks if we could get Tracey Crouch involved to ask Trenport to support us. Clerk to write to MP to ask if they can help in any way. We have been working on this for 2 half years so anything is worth a try. But we have to push ahead with a new plan in case we do not get the support. Will run the 2 projects side by side.

Is the plan still to put a brick skin on it? Not at this time, the modular building has a 25 year guarantee

Cllr Savaryn: Happy that we have an alternative site which sounds more cost effective with mains drainage, it is behind the pub where there was a building anyway.

Chair: Arrange for plans to be drawn up, contact TMBC re planning application. BC Davis, ask the planning dept to make sure there aren't any other problems. Clerk to arrange.

Meeting with Trenport.

Three Councillors and the Clerk had a meeting with the new Planning Manager for Trenport, Eilish Smeaton. At this meeting when the PC asked about lifting the covenant, she mentioned other areas Trenport are considering building. She spoke about building on the allotments, she mentioned 4 areas, Southern Extension, Bell Lane and Allotments in Wouldham that she would be working on.

Bushey Wood and Bell Lane were developments that would have appeared in the Local Plan. The Southern Extension and the allotments were not in the Local Plan. The Local Plan will not probably now be ratified until December 2023. Therefore, Trenport have an opportunity to apply for pre application advice from TMBC and a possible planning application. TMBC have said they discounted the allotments because there was no access except through Oldfield Drive, so they would need a new entrance. Therefore, the PC need to have a plan in place in case Trenport put their plan in place.

BC Davis: Agrees this is the case, old Local Plan ran out of building land, new plan is on hold from Government inspectors so Dec 2023 looks likely.

TMBC have to work with the National Planning Policy Framework. If they cannot, a developer can put in any plan they like and TMBC cannot turn it down. They are hoping Trenport will withdraw from the Southern Extension.

It is unlikely TMBC could find a viable reason to turn it down. Planners are unable to negotiate with Trenport to get any benefits for the local area.

BC Dalton: In the final call for sites, over 500 plots of land, 50% were rejected. Although the allotment site is not in the Local Plan, this does not mean that it would not get planning permission. Reads from call for sites for the allotment area.

Developers all over the Borough are putting in applications, knowing that TMBC does not have a 5 year housing supply. We are heading for urbanisation of the East Bank and the A20 corridor.

Cllr Rimmington: Taking into account Eilish Smeaton's planning experience and the fact that she is a Town Planner, thinks they will go further than the allotments. Like the horse's field. Thinks Trenport were hoping we would capitulate because of the situation with the VH and the Rec. Thinks we will struggle to defend certain developments.

Cllr Head: We asked Eilish Smeaton to send through an idea of their plans for the allotment site, they sent through a map with an arrow which indicated an entrance into the allotments. If we do not want any traffic through Oldfield Drive, a road as shown on their map would mean the whole field could be opened up. Suspect that stage 2 would be the field between kennels and Oldfield Drive, then the power station and the nursing home, then by the new school in front of Ravensknowle. Considers they are after as many planning permissions as they can get so they can move onto Bushey Wood. There are other areas TMBC could look at before looking at Wouldham. E.g. Kings Hill, Tonbridge. Is for making a stand against any further development in Wouldham.

The field used for horses is part of the allotments and Graham West who owns the pit behind the Tramway has indicated that he would not be against a bypass as it would give him another entrance to his land.

The top road is still available for a bypass.

Chair: This is why we have to have a plan in place if a plan appears.

Cllr Gray: Back to Trenport expanding, 2018 call for sites called as undeliverable due to access but as we now know, Trenport own the fields surrounding except the school playing field but this has to remain a playing field. Where would the suggested access road go? There is room between the playing field and the kennels which would break up the field and open it up for other development. It would have to bend to cover land that Trenport own.

Cllr Parris: Building on the allotments is a very contentious idea and, in my opinion, as I've said before to offer to lift the covenant on the rec and to build us a village hall if we support Trenport is totally wrong and paramount to blackmail in my opinion. More importantly is a bypass and this is our only chance to get Trenport to provide this. This is our bargaining tool. I would support the build (reluctantly) only if Trenport will provide a bypass. They own most of the land for this to be viable. No bypass, no more houses. We should also bear in mind that as major landowners in the parish and more and more houses needed in the borough that building on the allotments could just be the tip of the iceberg and we could end up with a proposal to build on all Trenport owned land eventually. As I say, no bypass, no build. There is a strip of land on the west side of Hall Road that used to be allotments so perhaps this could be an area to relocate the allotments (Trenport owned). Fight it unless we get a bypass or the older part of Wouldham will be swallowed up.

Cllr Baker: How likely is this to happen in the next 2/3 years? How much opposition from the village?

Cllr Savaryn: How often do Local Plans get reviewed by the Government? Starting with 2011-2031 hold ups are not from TMBC. London cannot make its housing need so developers are pushing into the green belt. TMBC just had a review looking at the Gov white paper who are trying to speed up planning permissions to remove locals views.

Discussion on missing County Councillor and MP has maintained a presence.

Cllr Marr: Representative on our allotments. Is sure all the allotment holders will be horrified and the residents of Oldfield Drive. Considers Jenny is right in that they will expand and expand. Allotments are an easy target for developers. Looking to get as much revenue as they can before moving on to

their next project. Does not like the idea of trading with them, anything they say different to that would probably not be the truth.

Consider the 2 options: fight any plan or sit down with TMBC and Trenport to see what we can get out of it for the residents of the village.

Discussion on Peters Bridge, who paid for it and why.

Reads out Trenports invitation to join in with design and layout.

Would like to put it to the village, to give an opinion. Chances are High St residents will want a bypass and Oldfield Drive residents would not want more houses.

Questions the best way to canvas village opinion, it is decided that door to door is the only way to get a full response. What do they see as the future for their village and collate all the views?

We do not exactly know what they are planning.

Trenport were up measuring the allotments last year.

To sum up. In the main, the PC are against more houses unless there is something concrete for Wouldham to get out it, but the PC have to do what the residents want. Public meetings can turn into near riots. Some formula laid down beforehand. We are just speculating on their intentions.

How are we to reply to Trenport? Can the PC be at the pre application meeting with TMBC and Trenport? (no) What sort of things do Wouldham want which would feed into the planners. BC's do not have an input until a planning application is on paper.

Devils advocate: there are things Wouldham needs, for example more parking, 2-bedroom bungalows, a bypass.

Chair: the allotment site talks about 134 dwellings; thinks we would not get a bypass for that many houses, this amount would need to be doubled or tripled. Once you allow the bypass it opens up all the other fields for building.

Cllr Parris: Chris Hall, Trenport, once said 700 houses to pay for a bypass. The top road is still available for a bypass and when the High St has been closed traffic has been fine. (considers less traffic due to covid emergency)

Question: Do the PC want to accept Trenports invitation to join a workshop on design and layout?

6 Councillors say no 1 says yes.

At this stage the PC ask the members of public what they think.

3 members of the public who are still at the meeting consider that "knowledge is power" and that we should agree to be part of the workshop. The more we know and the sooner we know it the sooner we can have a plan.

The Borough Councillors ask if we have considered a village plan? This has been discussed at length and the PC thought it was too involved, too expensive and we did not have the expertise.

Discussion on possible new site for allotments, the rep from the allotment association thinks all available sites are too far out of the village and along with Cllr Gray state that a lot of allotment holders have put in a lot of work on their site and have been moved once already.

The opinion of the Borough Councillors is "it's good to talk"

Following this debate, Councillors are asked once again if they think we should join in with a Trenort workshop.

6 Councillors say yes with reservations 2 say no.

How we respond will be important. Letter formulated by clerk. Cllrs Head and Rimmington to look at the letter and decide wording.

Meeting ends 21.51

Councillor Votes:

EB /yes with reservations

JH no/yes with reservations

DP no/yes with reservations

AM no/yes with reservations

TG yes/yes

AB no/yes

SR no/no

MS no/no

Comments from members of public:

1. If pre app is going in we will get an idea anyway which serves the same purpose as joining the workshop. Given that the pre app will not be made public we should get involved in the workshop. Burying heads in the sand is not an option, Trenport will keep us in the dark till its too late. Then we can meet based on that.
2. If they build we have to make sure they do not come through Oldfield Drive, Villages opinion should be canvassed by door to door with clipboards. No forms and no meetings. Volunteers to go door to door.
3. (via chat) You must be mad to not consider doing the workshop, knowledge is power.
4. Agrees knowledge is power and need to know what Trenports intentions are. The more we know and the sooner we know it the sooner we can action. It might be beneficial because they might give more information. Other allotment areas suggested are too far away and people give up and then allotments go down.

