



Blockley Parish Council

DRAFT Minutes of an Extraordinary Council Meeting of Blockley parish

01.06.23 7.00PM THE ROBINSON ROOM, ST GEORGE'S HALL, BLOCKLEY,

Agenda items & corresponding minutes as follows

1. **Welcome and apologies for absence**

P.Baines, T.Bradley, E.Thorneycroft, Nikki Holt

2. **Items for Any Other Business**

None

SN: Thanks to previous councilors & contribution from members of the public, hopes to improve and preserve good work conducted already

3. **Declarations of Interest and Dispensations for items on the agenda** - Councilors must declare it if they have an interest in any matter before the council either at the start of the meeting or prior to commencement of discussion of the topic in question.

Cllr Turner – Partner Conducted Ecological assessment for Haberdashers

4. **Public Participation**

Public participation, SN recites comments received from Parishioner Michael Reid:

SN Noted: it seems that EN7 (and the natural spring that Stuart Pearson referred to) has been overlooked

I have read the comments sent by BPC to CDC on this proposed development asking if the new plans are an improvement on the extant old plans that could be implemented. As the appointed architects made plain in the initial public consultation documents, the original plans cannot be implemented. It therefore follows that any compliant new proposal must be an improvement. I am unsure what BPC's purpose is in mentioning that parishioners have sent it detailed comments or commented on tree loss, without expanding further on that advice. As consultee, the PC is being asked for an opinion on relevant planning matters concerning this development which I trust will follow after the EGM.

Some comments, now that formal plans have been submitted:

May I confirm that I am not opposed in principle to development on this site but seek improvements to a number of elements in the proposal so as to remediate harmful defects. Some of the matters raised in my comments on the initial consultation have since been addressed in the application bundle and their contributions are incorporated in this update.

1. **ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS.**

The site lies at the centre of our village and it is paramount that any development here is sensitively considered to make a positive contribution to the life of our village. CDC describes its proposed Local Plan update as "Green to the Core". Its planning decisions should demonstrate such an aspiration really is more than just posture.

a. **TREES AND HEDGEROWS.**

- i. CDC Policy EN7 requires trees that are removed to be compensated by replacement planting. The Arboricultural Report identifies some 22 trees or tree groups including one (T20) on adjacent land. It is proposed that 20 of the remaining 21 will be removed and compensated by 4 new trees (cf. Proposed Block and Roof Plan).

It is considered such compensation does not accord with the conditions of EN7 as a whole because the new planting quantum does not adequately balance the loss. While individual extant trees are not of the highest quality, it is self-evident that, taken as a whole, they do contribute considerably to the green character of Blockley's central skyline and act as a windbreak to the centre of Blockley village (rf. Evidence Paper on Green Spaces). Further, the size of the new trees is unspecified and so any mitigation they might afford is unclear. It is considered that 4 new trees will not meaningfully contribute to the requirements of Policy EN2 (nor NPPF 12) that requires proposals to respect amenity in regard to garden space, privacy, daylight and overbearing effect.

- a. It is also considered important to consider the totality of the trees as a group and within the context of their setting surrounded on the whole of the West and part of the North sides by the Thames Water Community Green Space with its established habitats and biodiversity which in turn will be impacted through development and pollution caused by noise, light and human activity and the removal of animal commuting routes. The Ecological Impact Assessment is considered inadequate because its scope essentially considers impact on the site and not meaningfully that emanating out from the developed site onto surrounding land. The CDC Local Green Spaces: Evidence Paper Update 2017 document notes the tranquility of the Designated Green Space; *"At night, the only sounds near the site are likely to be from owls or deer, together with the frequent sound of the westerly wind whispering through the trees"*. The same document notes that of 27 species of birds identified on an informal survey, at least 7 were red-listed birds and 8 were orange-listed while other priority species included *"hedgehogs, toads, frogs and various bats"*. It is common-sense that the proximity and scale of development here will cause harm to the adjacent Green Space and that further screening and mitigation measures to protect it should be required through planning conditions. Furthermore, there does not appear to be any quantifiable assessment of biodiversity loss let alone a 10% gain as will be required under the Environment Act from April 2024. It would be perverse not to take into account CDC's present goals to mitigate environmental harm and ensure the habitat is in a better state than before development.

b. FLOODING, CONTAMINATION AND DRAINAGE.

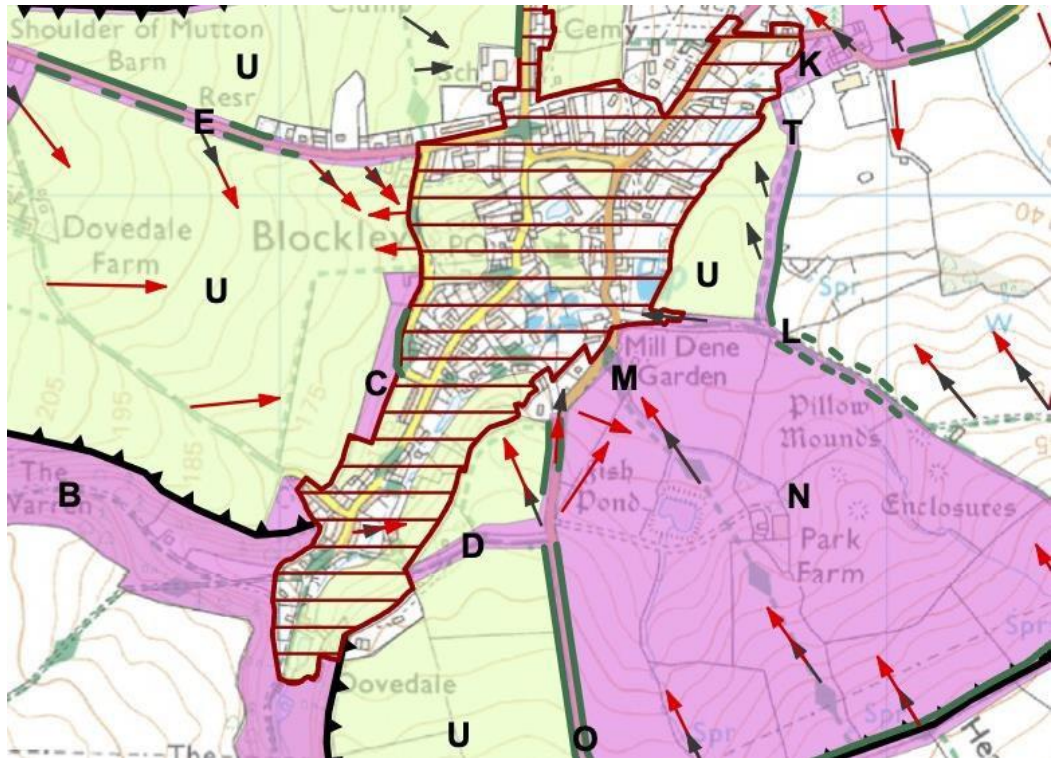
- i. The CDC Environmental Health Officer and Drainage Consultee have both required further information. The latter notes no flood history on the site but does not appear to consider the overall setting of the site. The same Evidence Paper previously mentioned also notes that the immediately adjacent Thames Water Board Designated Green Space is towards the lower end of a long sloping upland catchment area, starting well above the village to the west. It goes on to note that the Thames site vegetation plays an important role in holding back surface water from flooding in the centre of Blockley. Blockley village suffered significant flooding in July 2007, almost all caused by runoff from very localised rainfall. Given the proximity to the Thames Water Board extraction site, any proposals should be evaluated for construction impact on underground water courses by Thames Water as a consultee and perhaps the CDC Drainage consultee might consider the wider setting for surface water impact prior to approval.

b. LIGHT AND NOISE POLLUTION.

- i. Controls are addressed in the Ecological Impact Assessment. Relevant planning conditions should be applied to mitigate both light and noise harm during construction and in the long term and proposals should be set out in detailed plans.

c. HERITAGE ASSETS AND SETTINGS.

- i. The site lies within the Blockley Conservation Area and is close to numerous listed buildings, Public Rights of Way (e.g. Monarch's and Diamond) and numerous views into and within the village. Many of these latter are shown in the following excerpt from the 2014 RPS Report on the Extended Conservation Area Commissioned by BOC. There does not seem to be any meaningful assessment of the BCA and heritage assets, their sightlines nor settings in the proposal as required, merely superficial assertions of suitability. The advice of English Heritage or other suitably qualified consultees should be required.



d. ACCESS AND HIGHWAYS SAFETY.

- i. Forward visibility and visibility splays at the junction with the main road have now been considered. The Proposed Block and Roof Plan, however, does not show any safe pedestrian walkways on an estate where subdued lighting is desirable for ecological reasons and where reverse parking manoeuvres will be necessary. There appears to be a bottleneck outside house 5 which indicates the potential danger of vehicles and pedestrians occupying the same area while also illustrating the difficulty of incorporating pedestrian walkways within the current proposed design. It is further unclear how house 1 vehicles will exit the estate in a forwards driving position from the furthest parking space. The present layout appears a fundamentally unsafe design.

e. SUSTAINABLE ENERGY, RECYCLING AND WASTE.

- i. Electric vehicle charging and sustainable energy measures as described should be incorporated in planning conditions. CDC provides some 8 receptacles for waste and recycling per household, (1 x grey bin, 1 x green bin, 2 x black boxes, 1 x white bag, 1 x blue bag, 1 x black caddy 1 x green caddy). Five households will generate around 35-40 recycling/waste receptacles per fortnightly round. Unless the estate road is adopted, the usual practice is to leave such items at the side of the public highway. That suggests these items will be left at the site entrance and is undesirable for two principal reasons. First, such a large array of items will obstruct sightlines and make transport movement unsafe. Second, the entrance is in direct view of the café window and its outdoor seating which would be an eyesore in the heart of the BCA and, if it leaves some mess or attracts vermin, worse. The proposals should incorporate a storage area for such items or some other solution needs to be found.

f. DESIGN.

- i. As is evident from the relevant sections 1 and 4 of the BCA map in the Conservation Statement the majority of private properties enjoy considerably larger garden amenity areas than those proposed and therefore the design appears cramped within its context setting. Of particular concern is the rear garden of house 2 which measures some 18m². By any standard that represents a very small garden and while the Local Plan does not define a minimum quantum of space it does specify that gardens should be adequate for the size of the property. The notional four

residents would therefore have some 4.5m² space each, which is less than that allowed for an English prison cell. Some 4 people notionally in such a small space must potentially cause disturbance to nearby residents and wildlife while also being inadequate in size, unfit for purpose and atypical of the local area. Such a design is not considered to accord with the Cotswold Design Code (page 218) New Dwellings Key Considerations

1.r and 1.s nor the NPPF's requirement "*the desirability of maintaining an area's prevailing character and setting (including residential gardens)*". The national standards relating to gross internal areas for new dwellings indicate a minimum 79m² for a 4-bed space two storey building. It is uncertain that house 2 meets these standards and, even if it did, it shows that it is cramped. It is considered that 4 dwellings on this site would be more suitable and also help mitigate some of the other issues already raised.

- ii. Residents are increasingly concerned by the prospect of further properties intended for second homes, Airbnb holiday lets, and fewer affordable local properties. It is suggested that BPC should request from CDC the number of private households within the **village** of Blockley (not parish) from the latest Census where the property is designated as primary home and the number of households where it is not. The community might look more favourably on a scheme where there was a restrictive covenant, for example, requiring new properties to be designated only as the owner's primary residence. While Blockley welcomes visitors there should be an equitable balance to mitigate the risk of an out-of-season ghost village. It is regrettable that there are no affordable homes proposed.

Public participation, SN recites comments received from Parishioners Maggie & Nick Youell:

1. It appears that one of the terraced properties has a second story - we feel this will be too high and impinge on all the neighbours' privacy – it is our intention to object to this design.
2. It appears that at least 2 old trees which make up a beautiful copse will be felled and we would hope that they could be retained.
3. Regarding the terrace of 3 'cottages' - We are concerned about the lack of space between the rear wall of these properties and the boundary of the development.
4. We cannot see any landscaping plan – as close neighbours of this development we wish to receive more detail of planting to shield us (and the purchasers) along the boundary wall / fence .

We are mainly concerned about the roof height of Plot 1 – but also a little concerned about the roof heights of Plots 4 and 5.

The document list mentions a 'screening option' but the associated doc does not mention screening (as far as I read it).

We shall not oppose the development as such and can see that much work and thought has gone into it – but we do wish to ensure that all neighbours are 'protected'.

Of course when building works start we would like usual terms re working hours and deliveries agreed – as well as the 'making good' of the inevitable damage to the surface of Bell Lane!

Public participation, SN recites comments received from Parishioner Fiona Broughton Pipkin:

SN Noted: raises concern about the green space and the felling of the trees.

Follow up:

I have previously voiced my concerns about the trees to you both, in that they are fully mature conifers - none are native and the groups are made up mostly by leylandii. We haven't heard from the immediate neighbours to the left (on the corner of Back End) regarding the impact they have on natural light to their properties.

Fully mature Leylandii are a universal problem and a threat to property in extreme weather events. Perhaps we can develop a compensatory planting policy that can help any parish residents that may have an issue with these types of trees.

Initial submission:

I must apologise for my very late submission of comments for the special meeting regarding planning consent for the proposed "Haberdashers" site this evening. I had hoped to be able to attend, but now find that I cannot.

I am not a specialist in planning matters, but it appears that two potential areas of considerable concern have somehow been overlooked in the documents submitted. The first is that the neighbouring Thames Water Coneygree Mill site is a "Designated Local Green Space" (CDC's Local Green Spaces update of 2017). The planning application includes, as is required, an "Ecological impact assessment" but the "Assessment of Effects", states that there are no protected sites bordering or close to this development site, which is frankly wrong. I know that others will be discussing this in detail, and will not reiterate those arguments, but the Assessment must clearly be re-visited.

Secondly, I am very surprised by the proposed felling of such a high proportion of the mature trees on the site, especially when they include a clear group of tall trees, including the Red Cedar. It is my understanding that established groups of trees should be regarded as entities in their own right, subject to specific consideration by CDC, but this appears not to have happened.

I am also very concerned about the acute impact on the centre of the village of the contractors' traffic during any redevelopment. I remember all too well the impact of the recent building of a single new house on Backends/Chapel Lane, in terms of mess, damage to the green, noise and disruption to local traffic. The site of the entrance to Haberdashers is such that the disruption would be far worse. A proper management plan, again open for discussion, would be extremely important

Public participation, SN recites comments received from Parishioner Sheila Weir:

SN Noted: Expresses concerns about the impact of the green space during and after building and reminding that the site used to be the village garage and petrol station - there is no mention of this in any of the books published by the Heritage Society, and are unable to find any published photographs of the white house either

Other material considerations are the lack of garden space and affordability.

Dear members of the Parish Council,

I wish to confirm my concerns about the above planning application, on the following grounds:

1. Size :

Cramming five dwellings on such a small site is detrimental to the safety of this important and busy village centre. Parking for 12/13 cars will dangerously increase traffic movement on a pavement free, single lane, blind bend one side, and increasingly busy parking congestion on the other. Already traffic is regularly at a standstill and the road blocked when delivery lorries attend our very popular shop and cafe.

2. Impact on adjoining protected Green Space:

None of the applicant's 'expert' environmental surveys seem to be aware of its existence, despite it abutting the development. To pronounce that light and noise pollution from three houses won't impact on the existing wildlife, especially during what will be a lengthy construction time is surely misleading. Reducing the number of houses by at least one, would enable them to be moved further away from the boundary.

3. Pollution risks and inevitable construction delays and costs.

The technical reports acknowledge there is a medium risk of Arises ground contamination, given the land's former use as a garage and petrol station. There is even a recommendation that gardens be given an extra metre and a half of topsoil to mitigate against radon! The measures needed therefore to counteract this and other hazards must result in seriously high construction costs.

4. Limited contribution to the village needs for affordable housing.

In view of the cramped nature of the site and it's likely construction costs it is highly likely that the dwellings will only benefit wealthy second home owners or air B&B landlords. Blockley has enough of these already.

On a final point, if the land containing the old petrol tank is unadopted, as acknowledged in the reports, who is responsible for it and the inevitable safety measures needed to remove it?

Public participation, Parishioner Stewart Pearson recites comments received from Parishioner Chris Walters:

I will make only 3 comments in order to meet the 3-minute rule, although there are many more comments for others to make.

First, in all of the relevant 46 accompanying documents I have read to date, no reference is made to the fact that the adjacent Thames Water Coneygree Mill site is a "Designated Local Green Space" as is confirmed by Cotswold District Council's Local Green Spaces update of 2017. It was described by CDC as having tranquility, wildlife with seven red-listed birds reported, together with tawny and little owls, hedgehogs, toads, frogs and various bats. Specifically, the "Ecological Impact Assessment" included with the Haberdashers application and relating to the "Assessment of Effects", together with several of the other 46 documents, state that there are no protected sites adjacent or close to this development site. This is clearly incorrect and has major implications regarding the reported minimal impact of the proposed development on the local environment. As a result, many of the given answers to the relevant questions in, for example, the important "Ecological Impact" and "Bio-Diversity Self-Assessment" documents are erroneous and need to be re-visited by us and by CDC, together with a full "Environmental Impact Assessment", extraordinarily considered to be un-necessary by CDC.

Second, several of the documents refer to the Coneygree Mill pumping station as belonging to Severn Trent Water, whereas it is fact part of Thames Water's site. This is worrying as it suggests that the contributors to these documents are ignorant of which water company is responsible for which facilities (water supply or sewerage together with some drainage). It also implies that, if the pumping station is owned by Severn Trent, then the adjacent land will also be. This is clearly incorrect. Have both water companies been officially and correctly informed in due time about this application and its implications for each of them?

Finally, I remain very concerned about the proposed demolition of almost every mature tree on the development site, including the very visible "Group" of tall trees behind the existing Haberdashers property, including a Red Cedar. Groups of trees are supposed to be treated by CDC separately from individual trees and this is a classic case. Also, if the proposed house to be built in the south-west corner of the site (ie behind the existing property and adjacent to the Thames water site) was excluded, many of the mature trees could remain untouched. Five houses on the site are anyway too many and, in my opinion, this is a classic example of maximising financial return coming before protection of the environment.

Nick Williams Ellis

Existing planning consent ok, concerns over nature and density of proposed plan – terrace of properties – 2m gap for boundary treatment – no landscape plan for boundary treatment, images with no description. Concern of 3 story end terrace house – over dominant, ground higher than neighbours

Christopher Francis

Original 20 year old plans – terrace now moved closer to northern boundary, 3 story house objection over cedar tree location, necessary?

Stewart Pearson, of the planning application:

- Missing reference to local green space and natural spring immediately adjacent
- Site can benefit from regeneration – needs to be of sympathetic manner to local area & community
- Garden sizes disproportionate to properties – conducive to holiday rentals
- Trees – borderline irrelevant, no benefit. Felling of all but 2 mature trees – current dominant in village sky line, considerable rainfall absorption giving consideration of 1flooding challenges, current site offers habitat for wildlife, provides greenery in the middle of changing local landscape over recent years.
- Over-crowded – match development of site and natural habitat – do not see that here.
- Congestion in centre of village – changed from last 20 years. Not acceptable precedent - Post office apartments, shop & café/restaurant.

Last resident (Name not captured)

Creating issues with over-development of sites – no consideration for people wanting to stay in the area e.g. downsize – taking advantage of development. Concerning trend leaning to properties with small gardens not suited to permanent residents more suited to holiday lets.

Clare Turner, Cllr CDC – offered input on role of council and due process.

Reflect what is a fair comment from the community as a whole. Only comments linked to policies will be given weight. Element of balance as to which is given more weight. Trees – compensatory replacement will be required. Discuss with planning officer to get feedback.

Process – look at all documents and pass comment

