

Minutes

The Minutes of a Special Meeting of Ampfield Parish Council held in the Village Hall, Ampfield on Wednesday, 24th October 2012 starting at 8pm.

PRESENT: Miss M.I. Rothwell (Chairman) – Presiding
Mr E. Butcher, Mr A. Clark, Mr P. Edwards,
Mr M. Hatley (from paragraph 1934) Mr J.A. Jones,
Mr B.W. Nanson, Mr G.C.A.Roads,
Mr D. Stevens

9 members of the public were also in attendance.

1929 Chairman's remarks

Miss Rothwell welcomed everyone to this special meeting of Ampfield Parish Council which had been convened to discuss the suggested development of Ampfield Recreation Ground. Proposals from a group of residents, outlining the scheme for development, had been widely distributed. A paper produced by Council about the proposals had been available before the meeting; additional copies were distributed at the meeting. The paper would be presented formally to Council after which the meeting would be suspended to allow members of the public to ask questions. Once the question and answer session had been completed the meeting would be re-convened and Council would decide on the recommendations in the paper.

1930 Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Hampshire County Councillor Alan Dowden.

1931 Declarations of Interest

No pecuniary interests in the proposal were declared by Councillors.

1932 Future of Ampfield Recreation Ground

Mr Nanson reminded everyone about the history of the Recreation Ground and that cricket had been played there for over 100 years. The land had been purchased in 2003 with a substantial loan to safeguard its use for the community for recreation purposes. An application for a housing development on the field at Morleys Lane had been submitted for planning permission. The developer had considered Morleys Lane to be the most suitable of the 12 sites offered in Ampfield, under the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA), by their owners. The Recreation Ground was not one of the 12 sites, Council not

ever having considered putting it forward for housing development. Following the application to develop the field at Morleys Lane, a group of residents had proposed instead that the Recreation Ground be developed with 12 to 14 houses being built on the southern side, over the football pitch. The development would also include a shop, pavilion and village hall at the northern end of the ground. It was suggested that the housing development would realise £1million pounds. As this potential financial benefit to the Parish had been raised it was important that Council fully investigated the proposal.

The investigation was restricted to the housing development as the provision of a shop, village hall and sports pavilion was dependent of money accrued through the sale of the houses. Pre-application advice had been obtained from Test Valley Borough Council's (TVBC) Planning Department. Other aspects needed to be considered such as the views of the Cricket Club, the re-siting of the playground and the fact that the Recreation Ground was in the conservation area.

Mr Clark went on to highlight some of the key issues from the pre-application advice and other consultations, the most significant being that TVBC considered the scheme unacceptable on the grounds of the loss of recreational space and the lack of justification for that loss. Such loss would be counter to the guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework. There were landscape issues with building so deep into the Recreation Ground and concerns expressed about encroachment into the countryside. Vehicle movement into and out of the site would require a road where 2 vehicles could pass; this in turn raised issues about highway safety in protecting moving vehicles from cricket balls. The Cricket Club had also expressed concerns about safety, and about a reduced playing and parking area and the need for a new square. TVBC Highways had advised that the height barrier and security gates at the new entrance would have to be removed to allow uninterrupted access to the site by emergency vehicles; this would mean that the area was completely unprotected and a potential target for unwanted visitors.

Looking at the plan, the proposed village hall appeared very large and would dominate the street scene, whereas the sports pavilion was 50% smaller than required and would be unable to accommodate youth teams. The National Policy Framework stipulates that the loss of the football pitch would need to be replaced and, as the owners of land to the south and west of the Recreation Ground had both indicated their unwillingness to sell, this loss of facility could not be economically replaced.

In conclusion, Mr Clark said that policy conflicts, environmental, safety and security concerns, and the loss of recreational facilities, made the scheme impractical. If other sites were needed for development those offered under the SHLAA arrangements should be considered before the Recreation Ground which was not included in those provisions.

1933 Recommendations

Taking all the above into account the recommendations made to Ampfield Parish Council were:

- The proposal to develop Ampfield Recreation Ground is neither feasible nor desirable and should be rejected
- Ampfield Parish Council should confirm the existing policy to maximise, and continue to develop, the Recreation Ground for recreational use
- Ampfield Recreation Ground should not be offered to the SHLAA as a site for future development

(**Note:** the full report, pre-application advice from TVBC, residents' proposals and the response from Ampfield Crusaders Cricket Club were available for reference before and during the meeting, and subsequently on Ampfield's website.)

1934 Question and answer session

Miss Rothwell thanked Mr Nanson and Mr Clark for the review of the situation. Council agreed to suspend the meeting to allow members of the public to speak and also to suspend those standing orders which limited the time available for public involvement. This was done to ensure members of the public had as much time as required to take part in the discussion. The meeting was adjourned at 8.20pm and questions were invited through the Chairman.

Mr Trotter thought that the investigation and report had been done well but expressed concern that it had been necessary in the first place over what he thought was a "hare-brained" scheme. It had been a waste of Council's time and of parishioners' money and he did not want it to happen again. Mr Birtwistle pointed out that Ampfield had had a village shop before and that it had not been viable and had closed. Mr Clark replied that he had looked briefly at the proposal for a shop but, as there were other shops on Winchester Road, Viney Avenue, Woodley and in Hursley already for passing traffic to use, it didn't seem feasible.

Mr Sorrell, Ampfield Crusaders Cricket Club, said they had been consulted about the proposal and their views were included in the report. He added that the Cricket Club had played on that ground for over 100 years, they loved it and believed that there was nothing the proposed development could offer them that would make up for the disruption and loss of amenity it would cause. As there was no one in attendance to support the proposed development, and there were no further questions, Miss Rothwell resumed the meeting at 8.25pm.

1935 Voting on recommendations

Councillors confirmed that they had all read and understood the paper and the recommendations made. Miss Rothwell asked Councillors to vote on each of the 3 recommendations in turn (see above). Councillors voted unanimously in favour of each of the recommendations.

1936 Date of the Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of the Council would be held on Monday, 12th November 2012 in the Village Hall, Ampfield starting at 7.00pm

1937 Closure

Miss Rothwell thanked the members of the public for attending the meeting and for their input. The meeting closed at 8.35pm.

Chairman.....

Date.....