

THIRSTON PARISH COUNCIL

At the Parish Council Meeting held at Pumpkin Pie Nursey, URC Hall, West Thirston on Thursday 15 August 2019.

Present: Cllrs S Allan, E Davidson, D Green, T Jackson and J Marshall.
The Parish Clerk in attendance – Mrs L Hamlin

Cllr Marshall took the Chairman's role in the absence of Cllr Lindley.

34 Apologies for absence – Cllrs H Lindley and County Councillor Sanderson

35 Declarations of interest in items on the Agenda – Cllr Green – Matters Arising (b) Light in Eshott Village, (k) Mirror request at Eshott Junction, (l) Advisory speeding sign in Eshott.

36 Mr Rob Murfin, Director of Planning, NCC

Cllr Marshall introduced Mr Murfin and thank him for attending the PC meeting following on from an initial meeting with NCC where various planning issues were highlighted that are of concern to the Parish. Mr Murfin gave a brief overview of his background before starting at NCC.

He has met with a number of PCs and the common feedback is that there is a lack of faith in NCC planning and especially in terms of enforcement.

NCC Planning is there to get the best quality scheme for an application and NCC want the help of PC's and residents' voices to get the best out of planning situations. Planning is a binary decision-making process ultimately but there is a need to be able to ensure people have had their say whatever the outcome.

Mr Murfin is a big advocate of Neighbourhood Plans (NP) and if a Parish has an NP he wants these to be statutory consultees with the same weight as other so they can request applications go to Committee. NPs would also enable a parish to benefit from S106 agreements if there is a "shopping list" of pre-arranged benefits for the parish.

Major applications have generally kept pre-app advice with NCC but by next month any big developments will require developers to give a presentation to NCC and PC's so local issues can be discussed/addressed at the pre-app stage.

NCC want to make decisions on applications more transparent.

It is accepted that some mass house building schemes have been of poor quality so NCC want to work with builders and developers to improve quality and design.

Enforcement is an issue and the general perception is that there is not enough pre-emptive enforcement and that only the easy complaints are tackled. NCC is restructuring the Enforcement Department to improve this area. He is aware that some issues should have gone to prosecution earlier and the enforcement strategy is being reviewed.

This is part of the start of real change with the relationship between PCs and NCC. Planning will always be a big part of PCs and NCC want to capture issues that the PC's and residents are aware of, however NCC has to ensure a balanced approach to avoid any potential pre-determination accusations.

Cllr Marshall then asked the Councillors if they had any issues they wished to raise.

Cllr Jackson raised the issue of the Burgham Park housing which is now on phase 4 of decisions. He felt it was obvious the previous applications were going to be approved despite not having the demand for housing as some houses at BP had been on the market for over 10 years.

Mr Murfin stated NCC has a presentation on how decisions are made. If a scheme is in accordance with the Development Plan there have to be significant reasons to refuse an application and they have to be justified. Weight is attached to material considerations and can attract different weights depending on circumstances but within the realms of reasonableness.

Cllr Marshall raised the issue of applications being swayed unduly by promises of job creation and this does not appear to have been tested or proven to be the case.

Mr Murfin stated that NCC looks at economic benefits and need to show a sound business case. He said due weight would be given to this but it would be more thoroughly tested.

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Cllr Marshall states conditions have been attached to applications but not enforced and in one case a condition was discharged by NCC without being undertaken.

Mr Murfin stated you can vary conditions but have to ask would you have approved the application if the condition has not been in place originally. Some conditions are not enforceable. Therefore NCC are drawing up a new set of "market tested" conditions which are enforceable and are setting up a forum to discuss the proposed conditions.

Cllr Jackson asked given the move to save the planet will this outweigh the need to protect old buildings ie replacement of single glazing.

Mr Murfin stated there are much better products now so in some instances products would be suitable in conservation areas and it is beginning to happen.

Cllr Marshall asked, going back to enforcement, the best way of dealing with the number of complaints re the airfield, especially as some now complain direct to the PC. How does the PC make sure NCC are fully informed so that proper regard can be had to these in any subsequent decisions.

Mr Murfin states when giving temporary planning approved it is to see if you can run with no issues as is stated in the planning application. Concerns raised by public have become realized. Material considerations and hard evidence are required by NCC. The use of the land is historical and predictably there could be some level of intensification but if it goes beyond then NCC need to look if they would have granted permission in the first instance. The Clerk asked about the Planning Inspectorate appeal and whether the deadline for submissions of comments can be extended due to NCC not putting out notifications in the correct timeframe. Also how does the PC get sight of the applicants appeal as this is not on the NCC planning portal or PI portal. Clerk to email Mr Murfin with details.

Clerk

37 Public Questions (max 5 mins per person) –

It was asked of Mr Murfin of how the planning system works as the impression is that when the Planning Officer recommends to Committee to approve an application there is not enough information of support for those objections raised. In the past Committee Members were given all the comments it now appears it is up to the member to look at info online.

Mr Murfin stated it is not the number of objections but the issues raised. Different authorities run Committee meetings in different ways however NCC are looking at the current system to remove the 5 minutes time limit and review the number of speakers allowed. He suggested the PC raise this with NALC as an issue that Thirston PC would like reviewed.

Clerk

It was stated in relation to the airfield that NCC persuaded the airfield to submit the application re change in flying hours as NCC were receiving lots of complaints.

Mr Murfin stated that sometimes to make enforcement possible conditions need to be updated. Conditions need to be precise, enforceable and relevant. The new conditions being looked into (as mentioned above) should make conditions more enforceable.

In terms of temporary conditions does this open up the opportunity to open up all the conditions to be reviewed.

Mr Murfin states that the applicant needs to apply for either an extension to the temporary approval or for permanent approval. At this point new cohesive conditions would be drawn up.

38 The minutes of the meeting 4 July 2019 were signed as a true record.

39 Matters Arising therefrom:

- a) **Bus stop sign replacement of** – still outstanding. Mr Easton from NCC is investigating as he believes this should have been done by now. Clerk
- b) **Street light in Eshott Village** – no progress on this despite repeated requests from the Clerk. Clerk
- c) **Street lights around the rockery** – new larger baffles have been promised which are larger and should block some of the light. Resident has been informed and will keep the Clerk updated on the situation. Clerk
- d) **Bottle Bank Area** – bramble removal and flytipping sign relocation – no response from NCC on this issue. Clerk
- e) **A1 highways and footpath request update** – The Project Manager for Highways

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England can confirm the existing footpath on the northern riverbank of the River Coquet, reference 115/009 (located in the parish of Felton) will be maintained. The footpath will be extended beneath the new road bridge, which will be constructed to the east of the existing road bridge. The existing footpath on the southern riverbank of the River Coquet, reference 422/002 (located in the parish of Thirston) will also be maintained. However, the alignment of the footpath will be altered to remove the need to cross the A1 carriageway. The footpath will be extended beneath both the existing and new River Coquet road bridges. They can confirm that the A1 Morpeth to Felton improvement scheme will not include a new pedestrian footbridge. The public desire for a new footbridge to connect the footpaths on the north and south riverbanks of the River Coquet has been captured as part of the statutory consultation and documented in the Consultation Report, which will form part of the Development Consent Order (DCO) application. Highways England is investigating the opportunities to obtain additional funding for enhancement in this area.

- f) **Road to Longhorsley to Burgham complaint** – the NCC team did the work on this road and Mr King (NCC) has asked that this be looked at for possible remedial works. He has passed this on to the project manager and is awaiting a response Clerk
- g) **Wintrick Junction** – white lines request – NCC has stated they will try to look at the markings as soon as they can. Clerk
- h) **NCC Historic Landscape Character Map** – this was brought up at the NCC Planning Meeting but Planners did not take this map into consideration when considering applications. It is still incorrect information on the NCC website thought. As NCC are not prepared to revise this map if applications are submitted relating to this map it should be pointed out that the map is incorrect. Clerk
- i) **Grass Verges into West Thirston** – cutting of – NCC has agreed to cut the verge from Thirston New Houses to the footpath into the village. The Clerk is still trying to get agreement for the verge to be cut up to the bus stop. Clerk
- j) **The Bridge Newsletter** – online and interactive request – A response was received stating “we have not had a meeting since the time of your first email. Will have one after the summer holidays and will discuss it then. Please thank the councillors for their suggestion. The reason that we stopped publishing online was due to the small numbers of the bridge team and relevant expertise. Surely facebook Felton & Thirston matters has replaced the function for immediate news. Will give you an update on any plans as soon as we have had the meeting. The printed form (while not perfect) gets to everyone whether they have a computer or not.
- k) **Eshott T-Junction mirror request** – NCC state the rules on mirrors are very strict as they are considered to be a distraction and people rely on them too much. There has to be a history of accidents where the main factor is lack of visibility and then all other avenues must be explored first (e.g. vegetation clearance). As things stand NCC wouldn't consider this junction a priority for action but the PC can always put it in their LTP priorities. Clerk to contact land owner to request cutting back of vegetation in first instance. Clerk
- l) **Eshott – advisory speeding signs** – NCC state there are no permitted traffic signs advising people to slow down, except for the 'SLOW' road marking. The Parish Council could put up its own signs, but bear in mind these will be illegal, so if someone objects to them they may have to come down. If signs were visible from the road but actually in people's gardens you'd be okay.

40 Report by County Councillor Sanderson

Key things on the go at present:

- I am working up a scheme for traffic calming through West Thirston. I will let you see a copy of the plans when the drawing is done but I am hoping to get things in place by the late autumn. This will need to be financed through my members scheme budget - councillors get £15000 a year for community improvements - and I expect it will take most of this years' total.
- The bridge is going along ok - I have email some pics of the parapet works going on separately. Cllr Marshall stated the parapet reinstatement looks excellent and thanks to

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go to Glen Sanderson for all his hard work in getting these much needed works undertaken.

- I think we had a pretty good meeting with NCC about planning matters and I am glad that Rob is coming to the meeting.

41 Report back from Meetings and Representations on behalf of TPC

Meeting with NCC Officers and CC Sanderson – This as a good meeting and covered the issues raised above by Mr Murfin in item 36.

Cemetery Joint Committee Meeting – Cllr Davidson attended. Nothing to report.

Recreation Field Meeting – Still to be held.

42 Potential Projects

a) Footpaths/Rights of Way – No issues.

b) Landscaping – No issues

c) Neighbourhood Plan Update – The Clerk has forwarded the responses on the suggested settlement boundaries to the consultant for inclusion in the draft plan. Clerk to request a Screening Opinion from NCC under the Habitats Regulations (this needs to be a separate email in which we would formally request a Screening Opinion in relation to HRA). SEA is a separate process to this but it is important that HRA is carried out first (the outcome of HRA screening can have a knock-on effect on the result of SEA screening). In order to carry out HRA and SEA screening, NCC need a copy of the Plan (most recent version), plus any policies maps we may have. Clerk is actioning this.

Clerk

43 Planning:

a. To report on any planning decisions:

19/00935/FUL – Aircraft Hangar, Eshott Airfield – Increase hard standing by hangars – no objections submitted however concerns were raised in the item in the Design Statement under “objectors”. - APPROVED

19/01342/VARYCO – 9 Bridge End – Vary Cond 3 e Parking – no objections - APPROVED

19/01348/VARYCO – The Old Farm Byre, East Thirston – vary conditions 10,11,15 & 16 – REFUSED

19/01984/FUL & LBC – Old Farm House, West Thirston – kitchen/orangery extension incl new timber doors to rear and a glazed lantern - REFUSED

b. Planning applications pending:

17/02923/VARYCO - Burgham Park Golf Club - Vary Cond 13 - remove holiday restriction – objections submitted – to be decided by the Local Area Council

18/03534/FUL - Bywell Shooting Range - retro - retention of ground butt

18/03562/FUL - Bywell Shooting Range - Form mound, widen paths, erect 16 shelters

18/03736/FUL - Felmoor Park, East of A1 - 24 lodges, 10 caravans, miniature golf – Site visit undertaken – no objections

19/00300/PREAPP – Burgham Park Golf Club – Erection of 56 dwellings and improvements to course and club house – objections submitted and request for inclusion in pre-app discussions.

19/02000/FUL – Rosslea, West Thirston – Remodel existing roof to raise rear eaves lines, 2 dormers to front including resizing of existing. Reduce porch footprint and remodel.

Formation of mono pitch roof to existing garage conversion flat roof.

APP/P2935/W/18/3217291 – Northumberland Estates application for housing - Planning Inspectorate appeal pending – This has been submitted and any new comments to be sent in by 4 September. Clerk requesting details of the appeal letter from NCC to ascertain if there are any new issues that the PC can respond to

Clerk

c. Planning Issues

New Beer Garden – Northumberland Arms – Clerk is pursuing this still with NCC as no retrospective application been received despite this now being the time of year the beer

Clerk

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garden will be in use. Clerk has raised this outstanding issue with Mr Murfin.

44 Services

- **Repairs to drain close to Glenshotton** – still outstanding. No update from NCC on timescales Clerk
- **Steps covered in debris** – This has been cleared.
- **Weed spraying issue** – West Thirston now seems as if all weeds have been sprayed.
- **Weed spraying outside 30mph signs** – NCC has confirmed they will spray the weeds along the footpath edges once the weather permits.
- **30mph flashing sign obscured** – A written request has been sent to the owner of the hedge requesting works are undertaken to cut back the hedge. If works have not been undertaken by the end of the month Clerk to pursue. Clerk

As there are a number of longstanding issues relating to West Thirston the Clerk suggested a village walkaround with NCC be requested. As last time one was undertaken a lot of work got completed. This was agreed and Clerk to arrange. Clerk

45 Requested Agenda Items:

- **Defib Machine** – following a health and safety check of Pumpkin Pie it was identified that the defib machine could house child pads in the event of it being needed in the Nursery. The Clerk has investigated this and the adult pads can be used but a switch needs to be changed over in the event a shock has to be given to a child. The Clerk has arranged for training of the Pumpkin Pie staff to be able to use the machine.
- **Requests for posters in noticeboard** – The Clerk is now receiving an increasing number of requests to put up posters advertising various charities and initiatives which are highly coloured and expensive to print off. The Clerk has asked those sending through requests to post out a poster if they wish it to be included in the noticeboard – to date not have been received. It was agreed to continue the practice of requesting hard copies from third parties (except NCC) as it is too costly for the PC to be printing out these colour posters.
- **Planning Application process for comments** – The process for planning applications is not working that well and we need to address the best way to comment on applications. It was agreed that NCC portal links be sent to Councillors (as well as hard copies) and Councillors to review the online applications and comment to Clerk including all Councillors so if not all Councillors respond at least a majority decision can be sought. If applications are too complex to review on line then Councillors must keep the hard copies circulating and if they are away let the Clerk and other Councillors know.
- **Footpath along A1 request** - Following two people with pushchair walking down the middle of the A1 this request was forwarded to the Clerk. The Clerk responded to state the police should have been informed of this incident and that A1 Highways would probably not look at this due to the potential of A1 dualling.

46 Correspondence:

- NCC – Local Transport Plan request and feedback from 2018 request – Defer to next meeting. Clerk
- NCC – Rough sleeping questionnaire – No response required as no rough sleepers on the night in question.
- NCC – Love Northumberland Awards with poster – closing date 2/9/2019 – has been put up in the noticeboard.
- NCC – Review of Polling Districts, Polling Places and Polling Stations – Already circulated but does not impact on Thirston Parish.
- NCC – Northumberland Day 2020 Parish Challenge – NCC wish to pass a flag between parishes in unusual ways and are looking for ideas from parishes. Councillors felt this is not something the Parish Council would wish to do but residents may wish to arrange something so notice to be put in noticeboard. Clerk
- NCC – Waste Leaflets and Stickers – distributed to Councillors.
- NCC - Annual Town & Parish Council Conference will be held at County Hall on Thursday

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3rd October at County Hall. The format will be as the previous year with Marketplace from 2pm followed by the conference session in the Chamber from 4pm. Refreshments will be available in the marketplace. Clerk to forward exact details when they are received.

Clerk

- Age UK Northumberland – how you can help older people – also via email and poster request – poster to go in noticeboard if hard copy received,
- NALC – Website Data for Thirston Parish Council Website – interesting data. From 1 April to 30 June there have been 153 visitors of which 125 are new users, 778 visits with an average of over 5 minutes spent per visitor. 76% of visitors are from the UK, 22% from USA.
- 2 x letters for information from resident re Felton Youth Club
- Copy email sent to Mr Murfin at NCC in relation to Eshott Airfield

Emails Forwarded:

NALC Newsletters

To Circulate:

CPRE Newsletter – Summer 2019

47 Finance

(a) **Financial Summary** was reviewed with no issues and the current balance stands at £14,863.41.

(b) **Payments** - The following list was put before members and was approved:

Payments this meeting:		
IB69	L Hamlin Salary	334.85
009	The Bridge Newsletter Donation	100.00
010	Felton & Thirston Fair Donation	100.00

(c) **Receipts** – Groundwork UK (Neighbourhood Plan Grant) £3,165.00

The Standing Order for Mr & Mrs Bates needs a second authorization to enable it to be set up. Clerk requested Cllr Marshall do this.

48 Urgent Items

FOI request received after Agenda published. This was received in relation to Eshott Airfield pre and post new operators. It was agreed that this information be provided but an equality of information be given ie, if three years of new operators then the last three years of previous operators. Clerk to provide within 20 days of request.

Clerk

Pot holes on the road to Wintrick are getting worse and need to be filled. Clerk to contact NCC.

Clerk

49 Items for next agenda

Meeting dates for 2020

NCC LTP Request

Apologies from Cllr Jackson

Chairman closed the meeting at 9.25 pm

Date of Next meeting: Thursday 19 September 2019