



MINUTES OF THE BIGGLESWADE TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 9 JUNE 2020
AT 7PM VIA ZOOM WEBINAR FUNCTION

PRESENT:

Cllr D. Albone
Cllr I. Bond
Cllr K. Brown
Cllr G. Fage (Vice Chairman)
Cllr L. Fage
Cllr F. Foster
Cllr M Foster
Cllr M. Knight
Cllr M North
Cllr R. Pullinger
Cllr H. Ramsay
Cllr M. Russell (Chairman)
Cllr D. Strachan
Cllr C. Thomas
Cllr J. Woodhead

Mr P Truppin – Acting Town Clerk, Biggleswade Town Council
Ms N Villa – Interim Deputy Town Clerk, Biggleswade Town Council
Mrs S van der Merwe – Meeting Administrator, Biggleswade Town Council

Members of Public – 7

Meeting Formalities:

Following a reminder that this is a formal Town Council meeting, the Mayor advised that members of the public will be given an opportunity to speak during public open session but not at other times. The meeting is being filmed and by being present attendees are deemed to have agreed be filmed and to the use of those images and sound recordings. The Mayor advised that Councillors and members of the public should not disclose any personal information of individuals as this might infringe the rights of that individual and breach data protection rules. The Mayor asked everyone to mute their microphones when not speaking, to help eliminate background noise.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None

ABSENT WITHOUT APOLOGIES

None

2. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

a. **Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item:**

None

b. **Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item**

None

3. **TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

None – no civic events have been held.

4. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

The IT Administrator advised members of the public wishing to speak to use the “raise hand” function on screen.

a. **Mr. D. Webb:**

Mr Webb raised concerns about the access point onto the Hallam development behind Furzenhall Road. Mr Webb stated that the planned access point would not be able to cope with the additional traffic burden nor be a safe exit onto an already busy road. Mr Webb has lived here 38 years and feels traffic has doubled in that period, with mention of recent incidents of children being knocked over near Edward Peake School.

b. **Mrs M. Best:**

Mrs Best stated that her primary concern is with the access from the Hallam development onto Potton Road, she feels that the junction is really dangerous, even more so with cars parked on the side of the road. Mrs Best’s second issue is that on the north east side of Biggleswade, there is no consideration for environmental issues. Around Saxon Gate they have Jubilee Park and she asked the Members what allowances are being made or planned for the north east side for recreational facilities.

c. **Mr & Mrs T. Handley:**

Mr and Mrs Handley have recently moved to Biggleswade to a property overlooking a field adjacent to the proposed development. The environmental report for the property states that it is in a moderate to high-risk flood area but that the field in question was a mitigating environmental run-off point for rain and flood water, reducing risk to properties on the area. Mrs Handley stated that Hallam’s development shows no soak-pit tests for the lowest point of the land (next to the garages on the Handley’s land). The only soak pit test on record for the second lowest point failed the soak pit test. She believes this build represents a considerable natural upheaval presenting a significant threat to her home.

Mrs Handley believes local services are currently operating at maximum capacity – the two GP surgeries are full and there are no plans to build more surgeries and schools. Mrs Handley is interested to know what the proposed solution is to offset current maximum service capacity given the proposed number of homes to be built.

Mrs Handley also expressed her concern about potential loss of privacy and loss of light should the Hallam development proceed.

Mr Handley stated the natural space around them has been very important over the period of the Covid 19 – the proposed loss of space would be a great shame.

d. **Mr S. Denchfield:**

Mr Denchfield took part in the consultation webinar that Hallam hosted on their development brief. He and a number of people raised the traffic issues, especially the poor transport assessment based on 9 year old data. Mr Denchfield feels that Hallam are not concerned about the access point issues because they are convinced the planning application will be passed. He believes there was no detail in their transport assessment relating to mitigation for the local road network and that the report has very little on how to deal safely with the potentially 600 to 800 additional cars to the road network. There was also little comprehension on Hallam’s part that the residents will have a number of sewage tankers exiting the estate every day. Hallam keep coming back to the “emerging local plan” but there may be alterations and amendments to the emerging local plan which may be relevant.

Mr Denchfield questioned how the community can make CBC Highways officers take note of the traffic and impact on the community. He feels that CBC are not listening to the residents.

e. **Mr Howell:**

Mr Howell feels that with 400 houses there could potentially be 600 extra cars on the development. Mr Howell stated he has written to Hallam asking about whether they have instituted an air quality study to ensure air pollution levels during peak hours will be below the government guidelines. The Government have committed to improving air quality and he asked what reassurances Hallam can provide on air quality.

Mr Howell also questioned how vehicles would be able to exit the estate if there is a crash, emergency, or gas leak, blocking the only planned access point.

f. **Mrs S. Litchfield:**

Mrs Litchfield asked what facilities will be provided for children or young adults in all the new estates planned for Biggleswade. There is a skate park, plans for 3G pitches seem to have stalled and Mrs Litchfield travels to Baldock and Stevenage for sports facilities for her sons. Mrs Litchfield asked what teenagers are going to do at night time? In other places there are lots of things to do for young people.

5. **INVITED SPEAKER**

Hallam Land Management to consult with Council on the Development Brief submitted for Land North of Biggleswade

Tom Thornewill – Strategic Land Promoter: Hallam Land Management
Mark Hyde – Partner: Planning & Development: Carter Jonas
Rob Rasberry – Associate Urban Designer: CSA Environmental
Julian Clarke – Director: Transport Planning Associates

Kelly Linay – Director of Community Engagement – Athene Communications

The Development Brief has been submitted to Central Bedfordshire Council together with an Outline Planning Application but the consultation is on the Development Brief alone.

Consultation has also included an online webinar, information delivered to the 1,000 homes closest to the site and email letters to key stakeholders. The consultation period for the public closed on 1 June 2020 and they are analysing feedback.

Rob Rasberry from CSA advised Members that a number of amendments have been made to the development brief in recent weeks following feedback from CBC relating to:

1. The need to investigate minerals resource (page 7).
2. The need to investigate archaeological remains (page 10).
3. The need to respond and respect the existing residential sites along the southern boundary.
4. Making a stronger commitment to providing custom and self-build housing (page 16).
5. Changing all references to stipulate a maximum of 2.5-story dwellings.
6. The need to mitigate impact on local and *strategic* road networks (page 27).
7. The need to detail the relationship with the Lindsell's crossing (page 27).
8. Comment on how the development brief process feeds into the planning application process (page 33).
9. All plans marked as "illustrative" per CBC request (pages 12, 14, 15 and 20).
10. Include the anticipated application documents supporting the outline planning application (page 36).
11. Removing photographs illustrating the potential appearance of the homes.
12. Removing an indicative species list.

Additional amendments include:

- i. Tests results noted on page 12 were removed relating to "soakage at source" a filtration basin has been replaced with plans for a wildlife pond;
- ii. Inclusion of a foul-pump station in South West corner.

Questions:

Councillors asked whether feedback from the community and BTC had been actioned as Hallam had previously cited GDPR reasons for not being in a position to share that feedback to Members. The only information Members have is what has been included on the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) that Hallam has been preparing.

Mr Hyde commented that some of the reported concerns raised were:

- the relationship between existing dwellings and the development area;
- length of back gardens;
- provision of bungalows in areas closest to existing houses;
- car parking provision and standards.

Kelly Linay confirmed that all feedback included on the Statement of Community Involvement is collated by Athene and this is an independent and true indication of the feedback provided. Mr Hyde stated that a revised Statement of Community Involvement will be submitted to CBC shortly.

Members of the Council considered and Hallam responded on the following matters:

Transport links:

Mr Clarke advised he has been in consultation with CBC about the fine details of bus and transport provision but there are no definitive plans around modification or diversion of services. They are awaiting CBC's response re transport services.

Access road width:

Members of the Council discussed additional access road concerns, including construction vehicles and sewage tankers and asked Hallam to publish what concerns the public have raised and what steps they are taking to address those. Mr Clarke stated that access for construction and other heavy service vehicle traffic will need to be discussed with the Highways access team at planning stage, including discussions around width of the road, differential timings for parking along the road etc, but that Hallam have reviewed traffic reports, consulted with CBC and taken on board the community feedback. Mr Clarke confirmed the intention is to provide a 6.5m wide access road, in keeping with CBC standards.

Cllr M Russell stated that Hallam seem to be focusing on traffic calming in Furzenhall Road and other nearby roads, but this fails to deal with the volume of traffic. Also, any parking restrictions proposed for Potton Road would severely impact the nearby businesses. Mr Clarke stated Hallam's traffic models failed to show a risk of higher traffic volume and that CBC are actively promoting proposals for a 20mph speed limit along that stretch of Furzenhall Road.

Emergency vehicle access to the Estate:

Mr Clarke stated that drawings currently show the required 6.5m wide access point and he is aware of issues that could pose a risk to blocking emergency vehicle access to the estate. Mr Clarke stated CBC standards have changed significantly regarding on-plot parking and he does not see that there will be parking problems if the current CBC standards are adhered to. It was highlighted by Members that the brief shows the access point to be 5.5m wide in Section 9.2. Mr Clarke stated the intention within the proposals is to provide a 6.5m wide road with a footway along the eastern side.

Electric car charging points:

Mr Clarke confirmed there is a commitment in the development brief for electric charging points for dwellings.

Footway, bridleways, cycle way paths and Lindsell's Crossing:

Mr Clarke stated the scheme will comply with CBC's estate road design guide in consultation with the Rights of Way team. Following Cllr R Pullinger's question about safety of the users of the bridleway along Furzenhall, Mr Clarke confirmed the CBC Rights of Way Officer had a number of comments and suggestions which were catered for in their latest submission, to which CBC had not yet responded.

Cllr R Pullinger addressed the Lindsell's Crossing issue, and Mr Hyde confirmed Network Rail have stated this needs to be replaced if the development is to go ahead and the current plan for replacement is in 2023.

Traffic impact on the surrounding road network:

Cllr. D. Albone expressed concern about the traffic impact on Lime Tree Walk and Banks Road and asked whether this had been considered. Mr. Clarke stated that CBC have not raised concerns and would need to raise this with Hallam.

Revisions to the Development Plan:

Cllr M North stated Hallam appear to be relying totally on the emerging Local Plan on which the Inspectors have raised many issues. Mr Hyde confirmed that the Examination in Public has been adjourned for further information to be provided but that he believes that the Plan will be approved.

Green Space and Leisure Provision:

Members questioned Hallam's provision for natural green spaces, parks, and recreational facilities. Mr Rasberry stated Furzenhall will remain as a "green" corridor, there are no rights of way being terminated and there will be new cycle routes through the proposed estate. Play areas and exercise stations are proposed in the plans.

Archaeological Findings:

Cllr I Bond referred to the importance of the adjacent Biggleswade Common and the proposed development site in English Heritage's ranking of archaeological sites in the UK. However, the archaeological report for the site has not been published on either Hallam's or CBC's websites. Mr Hyde said he would send the report to the Acting Town Clerk.

Heating Provision:

Cllr I Bond also requested details of Hallam's plans for heating for the new dwellings in light of Government's regulations for future developments to include natural heating and not gas. Mr Hyde said that that detail would be for the actual developer to decide and will be regulated by the CBC to ensure conformity with building regulations.

Traffic Assessment Audit:

Cllr M Russell confirmed that both she and Mr Hyde had been in the room when CBC had admitted they had only done a desk-top assessment of HASO2, rather than a proper traffic assessment.

Cllr G Fage noted that BTC had commissioned a technical audit of Hallam's Traffic Assessment Report and asked if Hallam would respond to it. Mr Hyde said that, as it was sent to CBC Highways and not directly to Hallam, they would engage with CBC to raise any points relating to the audit.

Cllr G Fage noted that Hallam appear to be depending on the Land East of Biggleswade development proceeding. Mr Clarke clarified that they presented four different scenarios to CBC to give a full and transparent analysis of what impact Biggleswade East would have, what impact Land North would have, and what the impact of both would be. Each scheme will have different levels of financial contribution and highways works to be agreed with CBC. Mr Clarke said that BTC's transport audit is misleading in that Hallam's assessment follows an accepted methodology accepted by CBC. Hallam have submitted a report to CBC on BTC's submission and they are awaiting a response from CBC.

6. **MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

There were none.

7. **MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS**

Members received the minutes of the Council Meeting held on **Tuesday 26 May 2020** via Zoom online webinar.

The following amendment was proposed:

- **Page 2: Item 5.a.ii.** - Cllr F Foster – Cllr K Brown, not I Brown.
- **Page 5: Item 13.b.iii.** - Cllr F Foster clarified the date should be 9 June 2020, not 9 June 2019.

Subject to these amendments, the minutes were approved as a true and accurate record.

8. **MATTERS ARISING**

None

9. **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

a. **CB/20/01657/LB - 4 London Road, Biggleswade, SG18 8EB**

Listed Building Change of use only - from A1 Retail (Beautician) to revert to C3 residential. No development, construction or alteration required, no materials to be used.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this planning application although concern was expressed over the inadequate parking provision.

b. **CB/20/01658/FULL 21 Durham Close, Biggleswade, SG18 8HZ**

Single storey side extension.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Town Council has **NO OBJECTION** to this planning application provided there is adequate onsite parking for this property.

10. **ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

a. **Lord Lieutenancy of Bedfordshire**

The Lord Lieutenant is keen to recognise people who have made a significant contribution during Covid-19. Cllr M Russell invited Members to consider anyone deserving in the community and to submit their thoughts to the Acting Town Clerk.

b. **Public Notice – A0034 Orchard Close, Grosvenor Gardens and Hitchmead Road, Biggleswade**

Cllr M Foster clarified that this item was discussed in the Highways meeting today and will go ahead as planned.

11. **ACCOUNTS**

a. **Financial Administration**

Members **RECEIVED** and **ADOPTED** the following accounts:

- i. Detailed Balance Sheet to 30/04/2020.
- ii. Income and Expenditure by budget heading 30/04/2020.
- iii. NatWest Payment Listing to 30/04/2020.
- iv. Lloyds Bank Payment listing 30/04/2020.

Cllr M Russell advised Members that she has spoken with Natwest on three separate occasions relating to the transfer of funds following their request to speak with a signatory. They have now confirmed everything to be satisfactory so the transfer should take place in the next week.

12. **PLANNING APPLICATION OUTCOMES**

There is still no outcome on Bonds Lane. Cllr I Bond has sent an email to CBC to find out what is happening. He hopes to have more information at the next meeting.

13. **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

a. **Grants 2020 – 2021**

Noted.

b. **CB/TCA/20/00242 - 40 Shortmead Street, Biggleswade, SG18 0AP**

Noted.

c. **Street Naming and Numbering - 115 London Road, Biggleswade, SG18 8EX**

Noted.

d. **Market Defibrillator:**

The Acting Town Clerk advised that the model number has been identified. Quotes for a replacement came in at £995 plus VAT. The Office Manager has been in touch with BTC's insurers, Aviva, who confirmed that "unexplained absence" is not an insurable event. The Acting Town Clerk confirmed that a letter is being submitted to all CBC Ward Councillors to ask for support towards funding this but the order for the replacement will be submitted shortly.

e. **Market:**

The Town Centre Operations Manager has had to take emergency leave but has been working on another layout to ensure proper social distancing can be observed. The Risk Assessments are works in progress and Members will be updated when we have further information, but the resumption of the full Market is planned for 1 July 2020.

Cllr M Knight said that the Secretary of State had confirmed that non-essential shops are able to open on 15th June 2020 and asked how many traders have indicated they would like to return. Cllr M Knight asked if traders' wishes will be given high priority and he thought it would be wrong and something of an anomaly if market traders were denied the opportunity to trade and earn a living when shops can choose to reopen from 15th June 2020.

The Acting Town Clerk advised that although shops can open on that date, that is not to say that they will or must open. Members discussed risk assessments felt that the Market Traders should submit and monitor their own risk assessments since the area is an open space. The Acting Town Clerk advised that the layout of the Market is important and the TCOM needs to factor in queue lengths, shape of the market and impact of queues of the surrounding retail stores. The Acting Town Clerk will investigate plans to go forward with other BTC Managers.

The Acting Town Clerk's view is that this will be done as quickly as practicable.

14. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

To adjourn for a period of up to 15 minutes to allow members of the public to put questions or to address the Council, through the Chairman, in respect of any other business of the Town Council.

a. **Mr S. Denchfield:**

Hallam advised in their presentation that they have submitted "illustrative" plans at the request of CBC. Mr Denchfield does not have any faith that what Hallam are putting on the drawings will actually be delivered at the end of the day if they are selling the land, with planning consent, on to a developer. Mr Denchfield questioned how CBC can be made to understand the depth of feeling of residents and the Town Council about this development since illustrative drawings are not definite plans and as such Hallam cannot be held to what they have promised.

b. **Mrs S. Litchfield:**

Mrs. Litchfield queried whether the Tennis Courts are open. The Acting Town Clerk advised he will be reviewing access to the site (given shared access to the council yard) and will update Members separately in the coming week. It was suggested that Mrs. Litchfield email the Town Council and she can then be notified.

15. EXEMPT ITEMS

The following resolution will be **moved** that is advisable in the public interest that the public and press are excluded whilst the following exempt items are discussed.

- a. **Appointment of a new Town Clerk**
- b. **Other staffing matters**

Pursuant to section 1(2) of the public bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 Council resolve to exclude the public and press by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted.