

PUXTON PARISH COUNCIL

Puxton & Hewish: in the North Somerset Council Ward of Congresbury & Puxton

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These minutes are draft until approved at the next meeting of the Council

Minutes of the Meeting Held at 7pm on Thursday April 4th 2024

*All meetings are held at 7.00pm in the Village Hall unless stated otherwise -
Although under no obligation to, Dan Thomas, our NSC Ward Cllr, attends when possible*

Present: Cllrs Lynda Redding (Chair), Jim Corbett, Peter Penfold, Clayton Penfold, Helen Riddell
In Attendance: NSC Cllr Dan Thomas, Don Hill (Clerk)
Public Attendance: 13

022/24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs Butterfield and Ellis

023/24 DECLARATIONS: *(Dispensations Apply To Cllrs Re Percept Setting, and Village Hall Matters)*

Cllrs C Penfold and P Penfold in Relation to Planning Application 24/P/0143/FUL at Minute 026/24 1(a) Below. As Owners of Adjacent Gypsy and Traveller Sites. They Did Not Take Part in Either the Public Session or the Discussion at Minute 026/24i(a)

Cllr Redding in Relation to Planning Application 24/P/0598/CRN at Minute 026/24 1(c) below, being an immediate neighbour.

024/24 PUBLIC SESSION: *15 Minutes - Contributions Are Limited to 3 Minutes: They Should Be Concise and to the Point*

Planning Application 24/P/0143/FUL for a Gypsy and Traveller Park per Minute 026/24i(a) below.

The Site

This proposal represents a commercial venture on land that has already been declined for the purpose by NSC within its Draft Local Plan to 2039.

The land on which the proposed site will rest has recently been used for landfill: there is no knowledge of what potentially dangerous substances may lie in the ground, neither has it yet had time to become compacted enough to support the proposed construction work. There are also reports that rhynes have been blocked during the landfill process that could seriously impact the proposed drainage plan.

Despite the proposed site being on only a small part of the land declined for acceptance for the purpose during NSC's 'Call for sites', it is, as history shows us, inevitable that the whole of the site will become the subject of ongoing applications to enlarge the proposed facility.

The busy and dangerous A370 provides the exit and entry to the site. There is no provision for improving the splays or road markings to ensure safety for those using the entrance or for other road users.

The Legalities

Pitch provision within the existing sites as indicated by the Draft NSC Local Plan to 2039 is adequate to fulfil future needs for the plan period whilst also having cognisance of the legal arguments relating the the balance between travelling and settled communities that has been put forward in relation to another extant planning application and is included in support of the arguments against approval of the application as expressed here.

Some Domestic Realities

The subject proposal is from entrepreneurs seeking to make profit from an investment. The existing adjacent sites are run by members of the Gypsy community for the Gypsy and travelling community. The operating criteria adopted by 'Gypsy' landlords might reasonably be expected to be more paternal than commercial as against those driving a purely commercial venture.

The existing Gypsy/Traveller sites are long established and have become a settled community over the years. The hard-nosed commercial nature of the proposed new venture stands to introduce disharmony between the new and the established communities: a point that perhaps only people from the Gypsy/Traveller communities will be fully sensitive to.

Press Reports

It is unfortunate that the Weston Mercury reported the subject application as being part of Heathfield Park. It is not, and it will, indeed, significantly effect the visual and social amenity of Heathfield park in a way that is more likely to be detrimental than otherwise.

025/24 LAST MEETING MINUTES + Matters Arising

March 7th 2023 minutes were agreed and signed. No matters arising.

026/24 PLANNING *Details at <https://planning.n-somerset.gov.uk/online-applications/>*

i. New:

- (a) **24/P/0143/FUL** Land Adj to Heathfield Park, Bristol Road, Hewish - Change of use of land from Gypsy pony trotting ring and agricultural land to Gypsy and Traveller site for ten pitches and erection of 10 day rooms, creation of hard standing for caravans and car parking, landscaping and other associated works.

This application was discussed during the Public Session at Minute 024/24 above. **Standing orders were suspended** so that the discussion could continue under this Minute. The resultant summary is consolidated into the report of the Public Session as at Minute 024/24 above.

Standing Orders were reinstated and after some further discussion among Members, the Chair took account of the heavy weight of opinion presented to the meeting and summarised the outcome as under:

Needless to say the Parish Council has been sensitive, over the years, to many of the concerns expressed within the Public Session and within this minute during the suspension of standing orders. The current sites are well and peaceably run by local owners: there are pitch vacancies within the present community, so why provision for more pitches beyond the current plan proposals? If there is a further need for pitches, then expansion should take place within the existing planned capacity. The arguments presented during this meeting should form the comment made to North Somerset Planners, together with the legal comment already referred to and presented here as part of these Minutes:

The Legal Case

Below are some of the relevant provisions for consideration in planning law that also cover the concerns of the Parish Council.

This is an application for Planning Permission by individuals of settled status presumably for business interests. Ostensibly, a traveller/gypsy site to accommodate an unsettled population of 10 families/households is the objective.

This use, in this location, has not been in the North Somerset Council Development plan in the last 5 years, nor is it in the emerging plan to 2039.

Given the location and the nature of the location - green field/rural setting in a small village with a low number of settled inhabitants - this is a completely disproportionate and inappropriate use of the land. It runs contrary to the extant planning laws and the guidance note of the Department for Communities and Local Government August 2015 "Planning policy for traveller sites", paragraph 25 of which states that:

"Local planning authorities should very strictly limit new traveller site development in open countryside that is away from existing settlements or outside areas allocated in the development plan. Local planning authorities should ensure that sites in rural areas respect the scale of, and do not dominate, the nearest settled community, and avoid placing an undue pressure on the local infrastructure."

The proposed new gypsy and traveller site will burden amenities, few of which exist in our area; it will create an additional risk and danger to road users due to the egress onto and off the fast and busy A370. The proposal will provide no ascertainable benefit to the local population; indeed it can be argued that it will be to its detriment.

There is no public mains sewage in Puxton and Hewish, although several private systems are linked in to the Wessex mains pipework, as is proposed for this development. It is believed that Wessex are reluctant to allow more private sewage systems to link into their system because it is running close to capacity. If a connection to Wessex is not possible, it is presumed that the project is too large to run on a septic tank system especially given the flood plain issues that prevail in the area.

In the event that permission were to be approved for the project, it should be conditioned to ensure that all aspects of the application - day rooms for example - are completed before any of the pitches can become operational. If this is not done the expensive-to-provide day rooms could end up not being built and the pitches could simply drift into being used as a touring caravan park or park home site.

It is also important to consider not just the Parish limits but the overall population and character of the immediate local area in metres and miles. Nearby there are traveller sites; this would amount to a 4th within just a few square miles of each other. This shifts the demographic significantly towards an unacceptably high level of unsettled v settled populants which is contrary to the planning guidance.

It is worth noting that, a development of a similar scale for a settled population would identify with a number of the concerns above regarding the lack of supporting infrastructure and amenities in the area and burdening the system significantly. Both of which are fundamentally objected to.

This is a further encroachment into the countryside, which will add to an imbalance in community, rural and environmental terms. The local population will have strong views which should be consulted upon. Proposals and developments on the application site have caused a lot of public concern over recent years, and people will feel aggrieved if they are unable to add their views in this case, which is not a simple run of the mill planning application. Wider consultation should be requested so our community can have transparency and that there is accountability for decisions made.

- (b) **24/P/0567/LDP** 1 Council Houses Puxton - Ground floor extension. No objections.
- (c) **24/P/0598/CRN:** Manor Farm West Wick Agricultural building change of use to Commercial Class E (for information). No objections.
- (d) **24/P/0604/FUL** Hewish Barn: Plans for a house to replace the barn next Oakacre. This was discussed during the public session in March at Minute 013/24 as repeats here:

***THE BARN NEXT TO OAKACRE OF A370:** 24/P/0320/LDP (see minute 015/24 below) relates to this barn having permission to be converted to a domestic residence. The owners are seeking to expand the footprint of the barn to a size that will accommodate their granddaughter and her children, who have been forced away from the parish due to a lack of suitable family accommodation being available. It has long been the view of the Parish Council that this parish*

will die if current rigid policies against the provision of housing for its young people continue to be adhered to. The space provision here is being prepared for presentation to NSC as a planning application for appropriate enlargement by the demolition of the existing barn and its replacement by a building appropriate to the needs of a local family. Every Councillor was in agreement that the right and decent thing to do will be not to dismiss the anticipated application out of hand, but to consider it within the context of the community future this parish is so urgently seeking to ensure.

The meeting were unanimous in having nothing to add to that minute beyond giving wholehearted support to the application.

The Clerk to submit the discussion outcomes above, including the Public Session commentary, to NSC Planning.

ii. Decisions Due:

- (a) **19/P/0815/FUL** Puxton Park car park.
- (b) **22/P/3067/OUT** Haybow Village (Banwell PC).
- (c) **23/P/2782/AOC** Discharge of Conditions, Maysgreen Lane barn.
- (d) **23/P/2593/FUL** Land Opposite The Full Quart.
- (e) **23/P/2738/FUL** Villa Farm barn conversions.
- (f) **24/P/0157/FUL** Barn conversion opposite Heathgate Farm.
- (g) **24/P/0320/LDP** Barn next to Oakacre.

iii. Approved:

- (a) **23/P/2556/FUL** The Grange Cider House.
- (b) **23/P/2338/FUL** Mayfield Farm gateway.

027/24

FINANCE

- i. 2023-24 Accounts:** Year end accounts were reviewed and approved to go forward to the Internal Auditor.
- ii.** Cllr Redding reported that we have heard nothing from the External Auditors re the 2022-23 accounts, although it is understood that representations have been made to them about these accounts, as was done perviously with the 2021-22 accounts.
- iii. Payments Due: Avon Local Councils Association (ALCA):** £114.19. Approved.

028/24

PARISH MATTERS

i. A370. Signage and Speed Issues:

- (a) Police DCB (data collection box) erection awaited.
- (b) The NSC grant application was not successful. An application has been submitted to the Avon and Somerset Police Sign Indicator Device (SID) Fund re the purchase of a SWARCO Speed Indicator Device (SID). Outcome awaited.
- (c) Cllr Redding has accessed the outcomes of a St Annes School Parent's Survey relating to the A370 that should prove useful in arguing for improvements.

ii Publicity Flyers

- (a) **Fly-tipping : Village Agent** - these two flyers are ready for printing and circulation.
- (b) May 9th Annual Parish Meeting flyer to be prepared and printed.

Clerk & Cllr Redding to prepare and print the above 3 flyers. Cllr Redding to organise distribution.

- (c) **Wind Turbines:** The NSC position re wind turbines is not yet firm enough for this Council to go ahead with its planned flyer.
- iv. **Dolmoor Lane Fly-tipping:** The Clerk informed NSC about the latest oil tipping report. This has been noted as an "incident" and Avon Wildlife are aware of it. There were 2 places where oil was dumped, one was in an SSSI ditch. There has been no response from NSC about us developing a joint strategy to cope with this ever increasing problem. The reality is that responsibility for keeping such off-highway sites clear rests with the land owners/land managers, so the battle for improvement may more properly lie with working with them. **Cllr Thomas undertook to contact the responsible NSC officer to establish NSC's view on the problem.**
- v. **Removal of Post Box by the Green in Puxton Road:** Cllr Corbett reported that the old box was falling out of the wall in which it was housed, where it had been held in by ivy. It is to be replaced by a new box on a pole.
- vi. **NSC Proposed Car Parking Charges:** Cllr P Penfold summed up this issue by pointing out that there are plenty of places where there is free car parking provision for shoppers and these are likely to benefit from the imposition of car parking charges, at the expense of the North Somerset towns.
- vii. **NSC Proposed 3 Week Waste Collection Cycle:** Whilst this may prove a minimal imposition on small and single households, it may well be a strain for larger households, even if they do adopt more rigorous recycling regimes. There may be issues with flies and vermin and a distinct possibility of increased fly-tipping.

The Clerk will relay the observations at vi and vii above to NSC.

029/24

PROJECTS AWAITING FURTHER ACTION FROM NSC

- i. **Footpaths:** 4 items:
- Path 399628 - New kissing gate overgrown, making access to field impossible
 - Path 398631 - obstruction to access from the road on the corner
 - The roadside path at Puxton Court Farm: fence removal. Re-fit of exposed wires on pole.
 - Path at Wick Lane M5 bridge: Blocked - volunteers to clear (and make-safe trees?).
- ii. **Wick Lane Rail Bridge:** More regular weeding and overgrowth clearance, and clear, well maintained pedestrian markings, and 'Beware, Pedestrians' notices at either end needed.

Progress on some will be hampered by the bird nesting period up to the end of August.

Cllr Redding will get an update about these issues from the responsible NSC officer.

030/24

COUNCILLORS' REPORTS

Cllr Riddell

There continues to be traffic damage to the Puxton Road/Puxton Lane triangle. If a mini-roundabout proves to be the only solution it will mean the loss of the much treasured finger post unless it can be placed far enough back from the highway on the Chestnut Court side of Puxton Lane and also be kept fully visible for traffic.

Cllr P Penfold

A370 Footpath: This is becoming overgrown and dangerous for users again. It is slippery when wet and difficult for users to pass or overtake each other safely, especially if they have prams and children in tow. Surely it is counter-intuitive to expect people to adopt forms of active travel and then refuse - as NSC has done - to keep this one and only walking route between Hewish and Congresbury in a safe and useable condition?

Cllr Corbett

Puxton Road: There is a large pothole on the left as one leaves Puxton Village towards Maysgreen Lane.

Maysgreen Lane: the Cheese Factory bend continues to be a pothole hazard, particularly when water lies there as it increasingly does these days. Surly it would be cheaper to do a proper repair to this bend than to keep filling the potholes with loose clippings that are gone within days of being laid?

Cllr Redding

ALCA Chairmans' Group: Cllr Redding attended a Zoom meeting recently and, although much of it was not of direct relevance to very small parishes, it did give her an opportunity to meet the new ALCA Chief Executive. She also learnt that ALCA tend to take a robust approach to requests they are uncomfortable with, even seeking advice from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) if appropriate. This echos some dozen such complaints made directly to ICO about this Council, which have been handled in a similarly robust way.

St Saviour Churchyard: The maintenance rota for the Churchyard is now in full swing for the season.

031/24 **NEXT MEETINGS - Thursday May 9th 2024** in the Village Hall.

Please not that these meetings cannot be on the scheduled 2nd May as the Hall is booked for the Election of the Police and Crime Commissioner.

There will be three meetings held on May 9th 2024:

At 7pm will be The **Annual** and **Ordinary** Meetings of the Council - These will be held in the Meeting Room.

At 8pm will be **The Annual Parish Meeting**. This is **a meeting of residents of the Parish**, not of the Parish Council. Residents of the Parish will hopefully attend and contribute. This meeting will be held in the Main Hall.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm