

Cowley (& Birdlip) Parish Council

Clerk: Mrs. E. Lavington | 07941258052 | cowleypc@hotmail.co.uk

MINUTES

Minutes of virtual meeting - Annual Meeting of the Parish Council on Wednesday 16th June 2021 7.30pm Marquee in Car Park of the Clavell and Hind Brewery Birdlip.

Present: Cllrs. Julian Lavington, Eileen McKay, Peter Ritchie, Dawn Collings, Tim Knox, Paul Vogel Linda Dawson District Councillor Julia Judd and 14 members of the public.

1. **Apologies** received from County Councillor Joe Harris who had hoped to attend.
2. **Minutes of last meeting** Signed
3. **Signing of Declaration of Acceptance of Office (Chairman & Vice Chairman)** Signed
4. **Declarations of Interest** None
5. **Matters arising not included as an agenda item**
6. **Bus Shelters & defibrillators:** To note that the 3 bus shelters, defibrillators & and kiosks have been inspected since the last meeting. Noted.
7. **Community Speedwatch** Cllr Collings proposed the Parish Council Purchase a Speed gun to be used by volunteers. Community Speed watch training with the police had been planned. The purchased was agreed subject to confirmation that no liability would fall on the Parish Council whilst volunteering for speed watch. Clerk to confirm.
8. **A417 Update** Cllr Lavington confirmed DCO had now been submitted which would then enter into the detailed design phase if approved. Cllr Lavington had spoken with Cllr Harris regarding speeding issues in Birdlip and parking issues in Cowley. These issues could possibly be resolved as part of a Ward wide TRO in the future.
9. **Planning**
1/01995/FUL Erection of single and two storey rear extensions. Erection of single storey side extension. Erection of pitched roof over existing flat roof to side projection. Insertion of 1 no. dormer window to front elevation at Ivy Lodge Farm Stroud Road Birdlip Gloucester Gloucestershire GL4 8JW **Supported**
21/02304/CLEUD | Certificate of Lawfulness under Section 191 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 for use of land as garden and creation of a pond | Birdlip House Birdlip Gloucester Gloucestershire GL4 8JH **Supported**
10. **Finance**
I)GAPTC Independent Internal Audit Annual Governance Statement – receive update – Cllr McKay distributed the Auditors report to Councillors, no concerns. Annual Governance agreed for signing.
II) Annual Accounting agreed for signing.
III)Add and remove Councillor bank signatories David Metcalf was removed from signatories and Cllr Collings added.
IV)To agree the Clerk's pay and expenses and issue cheques £200.80 and £34.34
V)To authorise payment and issue cheque: GAPTC Internal Audit £175.00
VI)To note Zurich Insurance replacement cheque issued noted £308.15
11. **To take any questions from the public.** None
12. **Items for the next agenda** None
13. **Date of meeting Wednesday 18th August 2021 Venue TBC**

The meeting closed at 8.05pm and was Followed by a residents meeting with a presentation on Neighbourhood Development Plans from the Chairman – attached.

Signed.....

Date.....

Parish Council Meeting: Neighbourhood Development Plan ('NDP') 16th June 2021

Background

Before I explain about what is a NDP and why I think our community would benefit from one, please can I ask that you indulge me in a little 'misty eyed' reflection on the history of Cowley Parish and how I think our community has changed over the last 60 years or so. Also how I think it will change again once the A417 Missing Link Scheme has opened.

So Elaine and I moved to Birdlip in 1995 and even then the community seemed different. We had a village shop, a number of local businesses such as a garage (not supplying fuel anymore) and a couple of locally owned building companies in addition to the traditional farms and farm supply businesses. I think it's fair to say we felt like 'incomers' with a lot of the residents having multiple family connections spanning many generations.

Since then the shop and most of the businesses have gone and with the new development and the expansion of the school, the village is now a more diverse community with a wide range of generations from young families to retired couples. A lot of the residents now work outside of the village, some like myself, prior to lockdown, commuting long distances for work.

Now I am sure that Elaine and I's experiences over the last 26 years have much in common to the residents of Cowley as well as the residents of Brimpsfield. However whilst I am sure we all enjoy living in the Cotswolds that is what our villages have now become, a desirable place to live and bring up our children but they are no longer the location where we earn our living neither are we able to shop locally for food or other basic essentials.

So, as I said the Cotswolds is a desirable place to live and so with rising property and land prices it is also a lucrative area for developers and those who are looking to capitalise on the high demand for property. Developers are also well aware of the current trend to, and quoting a well-known TV programme: 'Escape to the Country'

However, one issue has dominated all the Parishes in our area and that is the impact of traffic and the A417.

When Elaine became the Parish Clerk for Cowley we were given the Council minute books going back to 1905. These make remarkably interesting reading. Not just the key historical moments like reading what the Parish did on the Queens Coronation in 1953 (it actually rained a lot but this didn't seem to dampen everyone's spirits) but the most interesting aspect was the impact that the A417 has had in the past on village life and residential development.

Prior to 1990 there was very little development in Cowley Parish as the A417 ran through the centre of Birdlip and before the current Missing Link and the dual carriageway through to the M4 was built, life in our area was pretty miserable with congestion, heavy lorries, pollution and some horrendous accidents being commonplace. Also, the congestion led to rat-running through Brimpsfield and Cowley to avoid the congestion in Birdlip. Sounds familiar? Not much different to the situation today some 30 years on.

However, once the current A417 route was opened (and even a few years before) something significant happened. There was a sharp increase in planning applications for multiple homes, some applications small and others very large and into 3 figures. Most were unsuccessful but I ask you why was this? Any thoughts?

The answer is that that developers could see the change coming to the village and the impact on property prices coupled with increased demand to live in our area.

At the time there was no overall local plan. Planning applications were speculative and relied on landowners looking to capitalise on land values. development was proposed on farmland, former land from the Manor at Cowley and brown field land such as the Ridgeway Close development on the old Birdlip garage and builder's yard.

So here we are today, the proposed new A417 project looks set to trigger a new property boom as it did before in Birdlip and beyond as the surrounding villages become more remote from the A417, no longer the centre of a long line of congested and polluting traffic or plagued by rat-running.

On the positive side the new A417 scheme I believe will change the character of our community, no longer will we be dominated by traffic just 'passing through', it is likely that increased tourism in the form of what is known as 'WCH' (that's walking, cycling, horse-riding) visitors will be attracted by the reduced traffic and the new leisure facilities such as the proposed Air Balloon Way. This is the new proposed WCH route that will replace most of the current single carriage way route of the existing A417.

Where do you think this property boom will happen?

The answer is wherever a developer can gain planning permission. There will be no holistic consideration of any cumulative impact on the area, the impact on the environment, any detriment to the character and vernacular of the community, any increased local traffic or any infrastructure needs or even the local water supply!

Over the last 15 years Cowley Parish residents on the Electoral role have increased by over 40% and in the last 5 years Birdlip has seen 21 new properties either built or currently in the planning stage. Also, and this applies to Cowley as well, a lot of existing properties have been improved and extended. If you look at the planning applications a lot of small cottages have ended up as large executive homes, worthy of a slot on the programme 'Grand Designs'

And before anyone says anything I accept that Elaine and I have contributed to this ourselves as our home, Rose Cottage, was originally a two up two down labourers cottage.

I am certainly not criticising individual desire to improve their own properties but we need to be mindful that the best sustainable communities have a good range of houses of varying sizes and prices to suit young, old, families and professionals alike. I for one would not want to live in a community where the average house price was over £1m or predominantly consisted of the retired or very elderly and where there was no demand for a village school. The answer I believe is to ensure all future development contributes to the overall balance and mix of properties to meet the community needs. If we can make this happen then I am sure developers will respond if this is the only type of development permitted

So now I have set the scene.

What is a NDP?

In some ways it's easier to say what it isn't.

It's not a plan to stop all development. There is a national presumption of housing development more or less everywhere in the UK now or in the future

An NDP does not empower the Parish Council to permit or reject all planning applications in its area. My guess is that if that were the case then NIMBYism would prevail and there would be no development anywhere!

So first a brief summary of Planning Policy

Currently National Planning Policy is set by the NPPF. The National Planning Policy Framework. This sets general requirements but there is a presumption of new development to meet the UK's future housing needs. This policy empowers District, Town and City councils to set Local Plans for their area.

The Local Cotswold District Plan runs from 2011 to 2031. It is wider than just housing, it covers commercial development, infrastructure such as schools and shops and environmental requirements amongst many other areas.

The Local Plan decides the areas for Principle Development. In the current Local Plan these are shown as in Cirencester and in Moreton in Marsh. Cowley, Birdlip and Brimpsfield are classed as Non Principle Settlements. This definition does not prohibit new or speculative housing development in our area but there are conditions such as the need for supporting infrastructure. However, for our area any specific development areas are not defined and it is difficult for CDC to consider the impact of cumulative small developments over time.

Overall whilst the views of individuals, the Parish Council and other stakeholders are considered, the decision is made by CDC and sometimes planning decisions seem to not reflect local views.

However to be fair to CDC the scatter gun approach by developers, the high cost and high success rate of any planning appeals and I suppose the range of objections for reasons that are not valid for example there is no right to protect a view, make CDC's job very difficult.

So a NDP adds a third layer of planning policy that gives CDC further direction when deciding on planning applications.

A NDP has to be supported by 80% of residents in a Designated Area so CDC can be confident that it is underpinned by the majority of the community and this then gives them very strong direction when considering planning applications.

It is possible, but unlikely, for the Planning Authority to ignore the requirements of a NDP.

So key aspects of a NDP

Its needs 80% support by way of a local referendum as I said before.

The Designated Area does not need to be a single or even the whole of a Parish. Cowley and Birdlip could join with Brimpsfield. Cowley village area could decide not to be included. The residents of the Designated Area only are those who decide on the content of the NDP.

We will need to decide on a Statement of Commonality. This is an agreed statement of common objectives and concerns and how we hope to address them, it's this that usually dictates a given Designated Area

We will probably need to do a Housing Needs Survey to understand what future development demands are and most importantly what type of development is needed such as the mix of large versus small homes or maybe the need for houses, bungalows or cottages etc. etc.

We need to look at areas for potential development and areas where development would be detrimental to the overall needs of the community. This means looking at Site Allocation and talking to landowners.

Any proposed development sites need to consider the mix of development using the Housing Needs Survey. It may be that more affordable housing is needed but that could be Affordable Market Housing as our area is unlikely to be viable to a developer based on normal affordable housing criteria.

Traffic considerations are key. In Birdlip, for example, traffic around the village school is a safety hazard so development that increases traffic in this area would be undesirable, however improved parking for parents dropping off children maybe something that people want to consider.

In looking at traffic we need to look at the wider area. For example development in Brimpsfield that results in increased traffic through Birdlip High Street would be an issue for Birdlip and would increase the hazard for WCH on unclassified roads. However, development that follows the line of the B4070 or that is closer to the new access to the proposed A417 could avoid these issues. In Cowley a development may need to consider the impact on the many unclassified roads as well as safe access in and out of the village which is predominately on to the A435

Finally, it is possible for a NDP to put conditions on future development such as improvements to local infrastructure such as the need for local shops, increased car parking, improved water and sewage plant and the style of any development relevant to the character and architecture in the area.

So what Next

Preparing and getting agreement on a NDP is a major task that involves the whole community in the Designated Area, it's not just a Parish Council initiative. It will cost money and grants up to £10K are available up to 2022. We would need professional support such as legal or land/planning expertise. This can be bought in but many NDP's have used expertise from professionals in their own community assisted by experts in the District Council and the GRCC.

It will take a number of years to complete the process so before commencing so we need to ensure there is large support from the community even before we have tried to scope out the details and prepare a draft NDP.

So to gauge the overall level of support to a NDP for the residents of Cowley and Birdlip I ask we gather as many emails from residents as we can indicating that they support the principle of a NDP. Once we can obtain, I would suggest, support from at least 10% of residents, we can consider a more formal survey including a potential Designated Area.

If this goes ahead producing the plan will take more than the resources of the Parish Council. Therefore, anyone who would like to volunteer any support would be most welcome. This could be help with the survey or support with any professional services. If we do go forward, we will need to look at maps of the area and talk with local landowners.

So what if we do nothing?

Local housing development will also certainly happen irrespective of whether we have a NDP. History has shown that this will be the case. However, the development will be speculative, and we will struggle to have any impact. Most importantly, as a community we can only react as applications are made. The consequence will be that we will no opportunity to influence landowners or developers as to where or what they include in any planning application prior to an application being submitted to CDC. The consequence of voicing any local concerns after the planning application is contentious and large developers will already be prepared to appeal against any refusal by CDC.

Also, any future housing development will be dictated by the market which currently results in developers striving to maximise profits made by building the maximum number per acre of mainly luxury executive style homes. It is unlikely we will be able to influence housing mix, design or gain any concessions on support to local infrastructure.

So, I think the bottom line is that even if you don't want any development in our area it's better to support a NDP than do nothing.

In conclusion if you are motivated and feel supportive of the need for a NDP please could you email Elaine at Cowley PC with your support and also advise if you would like to get involved.

For myself I am happy to talk to any of you personally and if you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me via the Parish Council.

Thank you for listening

Julian Lavington Chair to Cowley and Birdlip Parish Council