

MINUTES OF THE ONLINE MEETING OF ECCLESTON PARISH COUNCIL held
TUESDAY 8 DECEMBER 2020 at 7.30pm
VIA ZOOM

PRESENT: Cllr Sims (Chair)
Cllrs Ashcroft, Cass, Skepper and Williams
Janet Anderson (Clerk)

20.16 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllrs Gray-Williams, Haw, Kempself, C Pearl, G Pearl and Watmough

20.17 DECLARATION OF INTEREST

Cllr Ashcroft declared an interest in item 20.26 – Planning Applications.

20.18 MINUTES OF MEETING HELD 10 NOVEMBER 2020

Resolved that the minutes be approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

20.19 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

20.20 RESIDENTS' ISSUES

A resident had emailed the Clerk regarding the crossing at the junction of Burrows Lane and St Helens Road. He explained that on the War Memorial side there was no crossing to activate to safely cross Burrows Lane or St Helens Road. The Clerk referred the issue to St Helens Council. A reply had been received from St Helens Council stating that, at the moment, there was no money to upgrade the crossing. If money became available from Liverpool City Region funding, then they would look at the possibility of improving the junction for cyclists and pedestrians. The Clerk had informed the resident.

20.21 POLICE REPORT

The latest crime figures had been received. Cllr Cass pointed out that there had been an increase in anti-social behaviour and associated crimes such as vehicle interference. Cllr Williams reported that again, there had been gangs of 15-20 people around the shops in Walmesley Road. He had reported the incident to the police. Cllr Sims added that she had also asked the police to attend Walmesley Road shops after reports of groups gathering there.

20.22 REPORTS

Resolved to note the following:

Smithy – all Councillors had been given a copy of the Curators' Report. The following points were discussed:

- Curators requested information/memories from Councillors regarding Eccleston and the surrounding areas that they could upload to the Smithy website and social media.
- In order to engage with schools at this time, Curators were thinking of asking schools to get involved in the collecting exhibition. Any stories and images could be used on the Smithy website and social media.

- Curators asked whether they could look into involving a volunteer to assist with the Smithy side garden (when restrictions allow). If not, then they would like to discuss with Parish Council the maintenance of the garden. **Councillors would look at this in spring.**
- Curators asked whether Parish Council would like to put up some pictures in the hall once the decorating has been completed. They had been donated to the Smithy from the Seven Stars pub. **This would be discussed when the redecoration had been completed.**
- The Smithy alarm had gone off on Sunday 29 November. Vicky attended but found nothing out of place.

Ecclesfield – Tuesday 1 December 2020 at 7pm via Zoom – Cllrs Ashcroft, G Pearl and Sims along with the Clerk attended. The following items were discussed:

- The Caretaker had reported no problems with the changing rooms. No games had been played for 4 weeks due to lockdown rules.
- The roof had been replaced and the car park re-surfaced. The flagged area at the front doors and around the sides needed to be completed. Cllr Sims had been in contact with St Helens Council and it was reported that the work would be completed within the next few weeks.
- Bleak Hill Rovers had emailed explaining their situation regarding storage. The view of Eccleston Parish Council remained the same. Cllr Sims quoted from the Management Agreement, which was to 'provide an efficient, maintained changing facility'. The Clerk had emailed a draft reply for Councillors' comment. **It was agreed the Clerk would send the reply to Bleak Hill Rovers.**
- A sign for the exterior wall was discussed. A size had been suggested by sign designers. The Secretary had been waiting for a reply from St Helens Council to inform whether planning permission would be required.
- Proposed budget for 2021/22 presented to Councillors – in summary: no increase in hire fees; no increase in Parish Council's contribution; no increase in caretaker's salary and secretary's honorarium.

20.23 VILLAGE HALL REDECORATION

Work had started on Tuesday 1 December 2020 and was expected to finish by Friday 11 December.

20.24 DEFIBRILLATORS

Two defibrillators and 2 metal cabinets had been ordered.

20.25 ANNUAL MAGAZINE

The Clerk requested articles to be sent in by the end of January 2021. The Clerk asked Councillors to contact groups/clubs to request short articles for the A5 format.

20.26 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Resolved to note the following:

Delegated

Woodland, Park Ave

Works to assorted trees covered by a tree preservation order

Refer to Trees and Woodlands Officer

Eccleston Park Golf Club

Hybrid Planning Application comprising of Outline Consent for up to 646 dwellings (Parcels 1(a), 2, 4, 5, 6 & 7) up to 4,000 Sq ft of Convenience Retail (E(a) Use) and up to 7,100 Sq ft E(f) Nursery. Detailed planning permission for 168 dwellings (Parcel 1) and 186 dwellings (Parcel 3), including access road in detail from Rainhill Road and Portico Lane, landscaping, scale, design and associated infrastructure (EIA Development).

- **We strongly object to proposals to develop the Eccleston Park Golf Course site. The land in question sits entirely within the Green Belt and therefore any plans to develop the site would constitute ‘inappropriate development’ according to St Helens Council's own adopted Local Plan (Core Strategy - 2012). Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved under any circumstances.**
- **The site is also so-called ‘safeguarded’ within the emerging Local Plan (Submission Draft) until at least 2035, which has just been submitted to Government. This means that any development proposals should be refused outright by St Helens Council.**
- **In our assessment, there is no evidence to suggest that ‘very special circumstances’ exist in order to justify building on the Eccleston Park Golf Course site. Unlike most areas, St Helens has an abundance of brownfield land, and a ready supply of sites available for housing. Instead of being viewed as a hindrance to future development, this land should be viewed as an opportunity to assist in regenerating our Borough, to help revitalise St Helens Town Centre, to improve our local environment and protect our Green Belt.**
- **The site has significant infrastructure constraints, namely highway issues. Apart from the proposed new road linking Rainhill Road to Portico Lane, which is what you would expect on a development such as this, there is no reference to any major improvements to the local road network. The local road network surrounding the site is already grid-locked and the introduction of over 1200 extra vehicles onto Rainhill Road, Portico Lane, Two Butt Lane and others (UK average: 1.2 cars per household) would be highly irresponsible from a road safety perspective.**
- **Rainhill Road, especially at the junction with Elton Head Road (B5204) is a particularly busy junction and the prospect of hundreds of extra cars in this locality is deeply concerning, especially given the location of the existing access to the golf club site and its proximity to that junction by the Black Horse Public House. The road network can barely cope with the volume of traffic that exists currently, and there is nothing to suggest that it is adequate for an increased volume of traffic that would be generated from the potential development of the site.**
- **The notion of an access point on Portico Lane is also highly questionable. Indeed, given the physical geography of the area, the only position that an access point could realistically be placed is close to the sharp bend heading towards the nursery, which is already a dangerous ‘pinch’ point on the local highway network. Portico Lane and Rainhill Road are already heavily congested and as such, we are deeply concerned about how this road is expected to cope with what would be a substantial increase in traffic.**
- **The egress onto Portico Lane does not have a good visibility splay and as such could well prove hazardous to motorists. The approach is on the brow of a hill in one direction and close to the junction with Portico Avenue. There is also a bend further down the road which when you negotiate it has a number of vehicles along which the nearside has parked vehicles.**
- **We would also question the supposed ‘benefits’ of the proposed new road linking Portico Lane and Rainhill Road, which in our view would likely increase traffic on the road network, rather than regulate or suppress it, making it less safe for both vehicle users and pedestrians.**
- **Furthermore, with thousands more cars added to the local road network by the potential development of the site we have major concerns about how this would affect the response time of emergency services when they need to access the busiest roads in the area. Both Rainhill Road and Portico Lane are key routes to Whiston Hospital and extra traffic on those roads has the potential to increase response times considerably.**

- Consideration must also be given to the impact on the local environment. The site is the ‘Green Lungs’ for our local area and should be protected and enhanced, not developed. St Helens has one of the highest rates of respiratory diseases in the country and the development levels being proposed within the LPSD would result in a dramatic increase in dangerous CO2 emissions, as well as an increase in noise pollution across the Borough. In July 2019, St Helens Borough Council declared a ‘Climate Emergency’, committing our Borough to reach a zero-carbon target by 2040. It is essential that we tackle climate change, but we can only do that if we protect our natural environment.
- Post-COVID-19, having more Green Belt land will be a valuable asset not to be sacrificed needlessly. The release and erosion of Green Belt land is not sustainable in the long term. A higher percentage of Green Belt land is a positive and should be considered as such for promoting St Helens as an agreeable and healthier place to live.
- The site is also a habitat for a vast array of wildlife, including trees, plants and animals which should be protected for future generations to enjoy. The plans are not sustainable and should be refused.
- Effect on local school places and education. There is no mention of a new school to cater for what is a major development proposal of 1000 new homes. That is simply not acceptable.
- Many parents across our local area already struggle to secure a school place for their children, and all of our local schools are at full capacity. As such, we have serious concerns about school places and local education. This is compounded by the impact of other local residential developments that have been completed or have received planning permission in recent years in Thatto Heath, Prescott, Whiston and surrounding areas.
- As a local community we have embraced development and supported it over the last decade and more. However, we have reached the point where enough is enough. You cannot just keep building houses and other facilities without putting the necessary infrastructure in place. The build first, deal with the consequences later policy undertaken by St Helens Council is not sustainable and needs to be urgently addressed. Without clear and concise information relating to school places and education, any notion of development taking place on this site should be discounted entirely.
- Concerning health provision, again, whilst there is reference to ‘improvements’ within the local NHS there are no concrete plans for a new health centre, a new GP surgery or a new dentistry. Local residents in our community already struggle to get appointments with their local GP or dentist. The idea that we as a local community can absorb that level of housing without clear and concrete plans is simply not acceptable.

Cllr Williams asked if there had been any information regarding St Benedict’s Wood. Cllr Sims and Cllr Cass both informed Councillors that, as owners, the Woodland Trust had commented, via media, that there had been no agreement with developers.

135 St James Road

Demolition of existing conservatory and erection of a single storey rear extension

N/O

14 Ackers Lane

Single storey side extension to both sides along with a single storey rear extension

N/O

2 Albany Ave

Part two storey, part single storey rear extension and detached garage in rear garden

N/O

10 Tamarisk Gardens

Two storey side extension along with a single storey rear extension

N/O

2 New Road

Demolition of existing single storey rear extension and erection of new single storey rear extension along with additional window openings

N/O

168B Kiln Lane

Retention of render to front façade

N/O

12 Coalport Walk

Single storey extension to side and front elevation

N/O

153 St Helens Rd

Demolition of existing single storey extension and erection of a single storey side and rear extension

N/O

Plot 1, 14 Central Ave

Erection of detached garage

N/O

Former Christ Church

Reserved matters (appearance, landscaping, layout and scale) application for the erection of 6 detached dwellings pursuant to outline planning permission P/2018/0749/OUP

N/O

20.27 ACCOUNTS

Resolved to note the following:

Received: Village Hall Hire £0; R Kelsey PAYE £79.40; Interest £1.10 and 0.01; Windle PC £31.81; HMRC £370.31

Total Receipts

£482.63

Payments

GPS Telecoms – clerk phone Oct	46.01
SSE – electricity Aug-Oct	381.54
SSE – gas Oct	75.16
P & S Landscapes – VH ground maintenance	175.00
J Chamberlain – December + bonus	232.28
L Poole – December	377.77
J Anderson – December	1317.97
V Griffiths – December + bonus	232.28
Merseyside Pension Fund – employer and employee contributions	471.74
St Helens Council – cleaning December	380.40
H M Revenue & Customs – PAYE & NI – Oct-Dec	1566.62
J Anderson – defibrillation machines and cabinets	1977.20
L Belshaw – refund of bond for Village Hall	25.00
Total Payments	£7258.97

RECONCILIATION – The Clerk reported that as at 30 November 2020 the Balance in the Current Account was £6,500.00, Reserve Account £61,752.94 and Capital Deposit Account £466.94.

PETTY CASH - Expenditure for the month of November 2020 £0.00

Approximate balance at the end of November 2020 £24.51

20.28 CORRESPONDENCE

Resolved to note the following:

- **Emailed letter from Windle PC** to Chairman asking for EPC'S view of the development that Bleak Hill Rovers would no longer have storage facilities after summer 2021

- **Eccleston Library** – the Christmas tree had been delivered on Friday 27 November
- **St Helens Council** – request to book the Village Hall for polling next year (6 May 2021). The forms had been completed and Caretaker informed

20.29 DATES OF MEETINGS

Resolved to note the following:

Parish Council Tuesday 12 January 2021 7.30pm Online via Zoom.

A Finance Sub Ctte would be arranged in January 2021

The meeting closed at 8.40pm.

SIGNED DATED