

MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY VIRTUAL MEETING OF  
BUCKLEBURY PARISH COUNCIL  
held via Zoom on Monday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2021 at 7.45pm.

PRESENT

Cllr. B. Dickens (Chairman); Cllr. J. Brims; Cllr. L. Clarke; Cllr. A. Hillerton; Cllr. D. Southgate; Cllr. F. MacCallum; Cllr. B. Unamba-Oparah; Cllr. P. Spours; Cllr. H. Cairns; Cllr. T. Slatford; Cllr. R. Ranken; District Cllr. G. Pask; Mrs. H. Pratt (Clerk).

OTHERS

Approximately 86 members of the public.

APOLOGIES

There were no apologies of absence.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

D1. Register of Interests.

There were no changes to the Register of Interests.

D2 Declarations of Interest in Agenda Items.

There were no declarations of interest in any agenda items.

**EMERGING DRAFT LOCAL PLAN**

P1. To receive a summary of how BPC has reached its current position.

Cllr. Dickens gave a summary of what has happened from a BPC perspective; a Working Group (WG) has been formed, online open meetings have been held to inform parishioners and hear their views (attended by at least 150 households) and a planning consultant has been engaged.

Most of the comments received have been against the proposal and have steered the direction of BPC's response.

Parishioners concerns have centred around the following: The Local Housing Need figure (from Central Government), erosion of the strategic gap between Thatcham and Upper Bucklebury, increase in traffic, damage to the AONB and pollution.

A draft of the BPC response has been published on the website. The purpose of this meeting is to receive any parishioner comments on the draft and for BPC to ratify it.

Parishioners were reminded that the deadline for comments to be received by WBC is 4.30pm on Friday 5<sup>th</sup> February.

The meeting was **closed** for parishioners to ask questions and make comment.

P3. Public Session.

The WG were thanked for the work carried out in producing a robust draft response. The 'Bucklebury Parish against Thatcham NE Development' group is keen to work with BPC and has facilities available to energise the community. Cllr. Dickens accepted the offer of working with the group. Cllr. Dickens will talk to Mr. De Lara and Mr. Beeson.

A parishioner asked for District Cllr. Pask's views on the development; District Cllr. Pask declared a personal interest as living in Upper Bucklebury and being on WBC. He commented further that he is listening to parishioners' comments on the proposal.

It was commented upon that the BPC response does not mention SP13 in the objection, which is the first place that SP17 (NE Thatcham) is mentioned; SP17 should be removed from SP13.

Cllr. Dickens commented that this omission would be corrected in the final draft.

A parishioner asked if BPC were still interested in copies of responses being sent to WBC; copies of all responses are very helpful.

It was suggested that it would be better for WBC to obtain a revised Local Housing Need figure as a result of COVID, Brexit and immigration.

A direct "no" to proposed developments, almost always ends up in an appeal which is then "upheld" by inspectors such that WBC has no control over any mitigation measures.

The Local Housing Need figure has driven WBC to consider the SP17 site.

Signature .....

Date .....

A parishioner asked what conversations had taken place with Thatcham Town Council; Cllr. Dickens has had several conversations with the Leader of Thatcham Town Council. Cllr. Dickens raised questions about whether BPC should be in closer concert with surrounding councils, but noted caution on the grounds of interests in other potential development sites. There was a view that the Local Housing Need figure should not be attacked. Support was shown for working with neighbouring parishes.

It had been understood that the NE Thatcham proposal was for a linear development along the valley floor; the development appears to come up the valley sides. Flooding in Thatcham could be a potential show stopper for the proposal.

The world is changing dramatically in the use of cars, but the proposal has been based around people needing cars; it is not practical for people to walk from parts of the new development, over the A4, at both the beginning and end of their working day. Now that there are faster electric and more frequent train services, houses closer to the railway should be considered. Thatcham Town Council are understood to prefer development south of the railway.

The area of the proposed development falls under the catchment of the Burdwood Medical Centre and Chapel Row Surgery; as a result, these two surgeries will need to become oversubscribed (to demonstrate the need) before a new surgery is considered and built.

Given the changes in the high street, it was suggested that more empty shops should be considered for housing; there is housing proposed for the Kennet Centre in Newbury. There is a shift towards single occupancy households which would favour development of flats/apartments in converted commercial units.

WBC had been planning to build homes at the new garden town at Grazeley, but this is now within the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) of AWE Burghfield. The land has now been proposed for a solar farm. District Cllr. Pask commented that whilst WBC appear to set the DEPZ, the Nuclear Regulation Authority set the rules on how the area is determined. A question was asked whether RAF Welford has a DEPZ; no it doesn't, it is covered by different regulations.

Several parishioners asked whether financial support is required and were willing to contribute.

The meeting was **reopened**.

P4. Resolution of BPC's objection to SP17.

It was unanimously agreed that BPC resolves to **object** to the inclusion of SP17 (a development of 2,500 homes to the NE of Thatcham) in the Local Plan Review.

P5. Next Steps.

BPC will be finalising its response to the proposal on Wednesday, with input from the planning consultant, and it would be submitted to WBC by Friday.

It is hoped to form a group, consisting of councillors and parishioners, to prepare a case against the NE Thatcham development (either alone or with adjacent parishes). A number of specialists will be needed to support the campaign.

Project and communication plans need to be in place to ensure that nothing gets missed.

It was suggested that there needs to be at least a monthly update to parishioners on progress.

The meeting closed at 9.55pm.

Future Meetings:

Bucklebury Parish Council:

Monday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2021 at 7.45pm (Zoom).

Bucklebury Planning Committee:

Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2021 at 7.45pm (Zoom).

Signature .....

Date .....