

**Minutes of the Meeting of the Parish Council of Berkswell,
held in the Reading Room, Berkswell, on 17th October 2013
at 7:50 PM**

1. Attendance

Cllrs Benton, Hitchcock, Howles, Lloyd, Lock (Chairman) and Meeson.

Members of the public: 57 plus three representatives of C-Zero Ltd.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Diccico (SMBC).

3. Declarations of Interest

None.

4. Confirmation of minutes

The minutes of the meetings of the Council held on 5 August and 5 September 2013 were approved as true records and signed.

5. Public opinion

Proposed development of the field next to the church, Meeting House Lane

Due to the large public interest, the Chairman took Public Opinion on this matter first, inviting Mr Linford to describe the proposal on behalf of the developers, C-Zero Ltd.

Mr Linford described the proposed development as small, sustainable, low-carbon, and efficient. The company had done a similar development on an exception site in Diss, Norfolk. He believed there was a need for lower cost housing in the area, that the scheme partly satisfied the need, and that this area of Greenbelt would be developed sooner or later anyway. He thought their market survey had confirmed the need, and several larger houses were needed to subsidise the "affordable" dwellings.

In response to a question from Cllr Bell (SMBC), Mr Linford said it was coincidental the plans had come forward at the time the Solihull Local Plan was being examined.

It was confirmed that the proposal is being developed with the Trustees of the Archdiocese, and not through the local church of the Blessed Robert Grissold.

In answer to Mr Dick, Mr Linford said C-Zero was prepared to repeat the opinion survey with full disclosure of the scheme location.

Mr Linford explained in answer to Mr Burrow that the site hadn't been offered in the process leading up to the current Local Plan due to the slow pace at which the Archdiocese pursued such matters. He also said that covenants restricting purchase to local people would prevent mortgages being obtained, though sales could be directed to local people initially.

Mr Tindall (BCVRA) enquired why the scheme in Diss has failed to meet its original targets for affordable homes. Mr Linford said there had been problems obtaining finance, and the local authority had been forced to grant changes to the planning consents to increase the number of higher-value houses.

the proposed scheme had 24 "open market houses" (13 3-bedroom, 2 2-bedroom, 9 4-bedroom) and 16 houses valued at less than £200k. Of these 6 would be for rent through a housing association, 6 would be shared ownership, and 4 discounted market sale. Cllr Bell pointed out the first version of the scheme had been for 44 dwellings.

Mr Linford responded to Ms Cambage by saying the discussions with housing associations had been preliminary and did not indicate the scheme had progressed beyond the concept stage.

Mrs Watkinson asked about traffic and flood risk. Mr Linford said the site access had been discussed with Highways, but not traffic aspects. Mr Dallow pointed out the proposed access into Meeting House Lane was in a traffic pinch-point, and elsewhere speeds were high even though the lane was used by groups of school students. Mrs O'Sullivan queried whether the access between protected oak trees had been drawn properly. Cllr Lock remarked that numerous residents had written in with concerns about traffic, and Mr Linford responded by saying that access would be developed with the Highways department, and could include further measures to slow vehicles down.

Ms Cambage said drainage was problematic and that soakaways would be insufficient.

There was applause when Mr Dallow said there should be no further building within the Greenbelt.

Mr Tindall, Mr Burrow, and Cllr Meeson made points refuting description of the field as "of low amenity value". In contrast, the field was heavily used by sports teams, community groups, schools, and dog walkers.

Mr Hare-Scott and Cllr Hitchcock recalled the previous planning application for the site in the early 1990's, which had been rejected on the grounds of Greenbelt and lack of local need. Mr Everson pointed out there had been 400 objectors to the earlier scheme. Cllr Hitchcock said the absence of local employment opportunities meant that any new residents would have to commute. Mr Linford reiterated the market research would be re-done, but work opportunities were outside their remit.

Cllr Lock summed up by saying that C-Zero could see they would have a battle to convince the local community. There had been no response when Cllr Hitchcock asked for those supporting the scheme to raise their hands. Cllr Lock said there were major concerns over traffic, road safety, amenity value of the site, drainage, and local need.

Mr Linford said he would report to the Archdiocese and give a response back to the Council within a month. He suggested a split between housing and community use might be possible, but this was not met with enthusiasm.

Cllr Lock concluded by thanking the C-Zero representatives for coming along to make their case.

Correspondence on this matter is noted in item 8, and the Council's discussion is reported in item 9 below.

Other matters

Mr Cairns noted the proposed C-Zero scheme was on the agenda for Balsall PC on Monday 21 October, and urged the Council to report its position to them. He observed there were houses in Bannerbrook available for much less than £200k.

Mr Lupton said he had written to the Council regarding the speed limit on the Coventry Road approaching Berkswell crossroads. A 50mph repeater sign was positioned on the downhill section not far before the 30mph speed restriction. He felt that a "Reduce

speed now" sign would be more appropriate. **Cllr Bell agreed to discuss the matter with the Highways Dept.**

Cllr Lock announced that with the departure of Mrs Wyldbore-Smith, the Council would be recruiting a new Clerk. Details would be produced shortly, but in the meantime, he would be pleased to hear from anyone interested in the position.

6. Matters arising from previous minutes not covered elsewhere

All matters were covered under the relevant agenda items.

7. Accounts for payment

It was resolved to pay the following invoices:

<u>Chq no</u>	<u>Supplier</u>	<u>Gross</u>	<u>VAT</u>	<u>Reason</u>
1605	The Bugle	£100.00		Summer edition, S19/040
1606	GR Mowing	£870.00	£145.00	Mowing Sept-Nov, 19185
1607	WTP	£35.00		Budget course, Cllr Benton
1608	WTP	£35.00		Planning course, Cllr Benton
1609	2gee Design	£31.68		Update website, 1435
1610	G Dawson	£684.00	£114.00	Churchyard mowing Jul-Sept
1611	Grant Thornton	£360.00	£60.00	External audit

8. Correspondence received

The Council noted considerable correspondence objecting to many aspects of the proposed C-Zero development in Meeting House Lane. Correspondents included: Mr & Mrs D Couchman, Mr R Davis, Mr D Deanshaw, Mr S Green, Mr A Hamilton, Mr R Harrison, Mr H Holleran, Mr S Jones, Ms S Morris, Mr R Peacock, Mrs A Santos, Mr K Shaw (Berkswell Society), Mr R Stephens, Mr S Tidy (Balsall and Berkswell Hornets FC), Mr M Whitfield, and Mrs J Whittlesey.

Solihull MBC has written to the Council proposing the diversion of Footpaths M217 and M229 at Cornets End. It was **agreed to put the proposed diversion on the agenda of the next meeting.**

9. Proposed development of church field, Meeting House Lane

The proposed development was discussed. The information supplied by C-Zero and the representations by residents were noted. The Council's stance on affordable housing had been set out at the last meeting, and the assessment was that there was an adequate supply in the pending Local Plan, infill sites, and neighbouring areas.

Cllr Lloyd felt the location had insuperable difficulties from the viewpoints of access and community amenity. This was reinforced by the objections from a large number of local residents. Cllr Howles reiterated the Greenbelt status of the site, and expressed concern the developer had not followed the Localism Act procedure. Cllr Hitchcock said that all the major trees had statutory protection, and that they could be damaged by any change in the hydrology.

The Council resolved **to write to the Archdiocese to advise them that the scheme could not be supported, and to ask for their views on how community enjoyment of the field could be preserved.**

10. Proposed development by Cassidy, Duggins Lane

The developer had held an information event at Nailcote Hall on 15 October, which had been attended by many residents and councillors. The latest plan had been described as the 17th version, with the number of dwellings reduced from 33 to 29.

Cllr Howles reminded everyone that this was still Greenbelt land. Cllr Lloyd expressed concern that the latest plan had several properties opening onto Duggins Lane where there was restricted visibility. He was also dissatisfied that the proportion of tandem parking bays had been increased, which he felt was inconvenient and would lead to more vehicles being parked in undesignated areas.

Mr Hickin (Berkswell Society) observed that an earlier scheme had proposed 66 dwellings, without adequate parking, so ideas were moving the right way.

It was resolved the Council would **write to Cassidy and Solihull MBC saying it was minded to support a residential development, but with a 50% split between "affordable" and "market" dwellings, and with improvements to the proposed layout.**

11. Vacancy on Council due to resignation of Cllr Burrow

Cllr Lock said that the Council would advertise, in accordance with the Local Government Act, for candidates to fill the casual vacancy created by the resignation of Cllr Burrow.

It was resolved that Cllr Benton should replace Cllr Burrow on the Staffing Committee.

12. Heritage and community

12.1 Berkswell Museum

It was agreed Cllrs Benton and Lock would meet the Museum committee, but the suggested dates were unsuitable. Cllr Bell undertook to remind Solihull MBC that the Museum was the only museum within the Borough, and to see if any support for it could be obtained.

12.2 Maintenance

The grass-cutting arrangements had been reviewed by the Costs Working Party, and discussion of the proposals was deferred to the next Council meeting. Also deferred was discussion of the maintenance of the notice boards in Balsall Common centre, at the British Legion, and at the Church.

12.3 Highway signs at Carol Green

No update.

12.4 Pony patrol

No update.

13. HS2

Cllr Lloyd said the current fresh consultation on Property Compensation would run on until 4 December. At the Solihull MBC HS2 Working Party meeting on 16 October, it was agreed Solihull MBC should ask for a 200 m geographical limit for eligibility for the Property Bond option. However this did not accord with the recognised extent of property blight, which could occur 1000 m and more from the line.

Cllr Lock asked whether Solihull MBC had consulted on the proposed geographical limit. They had not. Cllr Bell said there might be an opportunity to influence the response at a later stage. It was agreed Cllr Lock would write in, **asking that Solihull MBC request a Property Bond based on market value effect, rather than geography.**

Cllr Lloyd reported he had briefed the Working Party on the cutbacks to local services foreseen in Centro's "Connectivity package". They would be asking Centro to respond at a later meeting.

Cllr Hitchcock warned that, based on his experience of the building works next to his property, the construction of HS2 would have an horrendous impact on the whole area.

14. Airport

Cllr Lloyd reported that the November meeting of the Consultative Committee had been cancelled, as new terms of reference were being developed by the Government, and a report from the Airports Commission was awaited.

15. Footpaths

Cllr Lloyd said that Hampton-in-Arden PC were still considering the proposed waymark for the Packhorse Way. They believed the route should be extended to link Berkswell and Hampton Stations, and this was agreed to be a good idea.

16. Street maintenance SMBC

16.1 Flooding

Cllr Lock said that Solihull MBC had still not published the results of their survey of flooding issues. He believed the issues were clear enough and Solihull MBC should be working directly with residents to achieve improvements. Cllr Bell said he and Cllr Diccio **would progress the matter within Solihull MBC.**

16.2 Hedge trimming

Cllr Lloyd said the hedges at various places along the A452 were blocking the footway and obscuring vision for pedestrians crossing the road. When work was done, little growth was removed, meaning the problems quickly recurred. Cllr Bell **agreed to discuss the issues with the Highways department.**

16.3 Balsall Common Library Car park

Mr Tindall reported on a meeting between residents and Solihull MBC. It had been agreed to the lighting would be switched on and some speed bumps installed. The Police have identified possible offenders and are prepared to seek ASBOs. Mr Heard is to write again on behalf of BCVRA, and in response to Cllr Lock, Cllr Bell will hasten matters within Solihull MBC.

16.4 Lorry traffic - Truggist Hill Farm

Apart from the increase in lorry traffic to the site, residents have been concerned by construction works undertaken without planning approval, and by the felling of an oak tree on the Kenilworth Greenway. These matters have been raised with both Solihull MBC and Warwickshire CC (who own the Greenway). Responses are awaited.

17. SMBC proposal to restrict parking in lay-bys on A452

Solihull MBC is proposing to make Permanent Traffic Regulation Orders restricting the parking periods in lay-bys to 1 hour. The closing date for objections (to Mr L Stevenson) is 1 November.

Cllr Lloyd said the proposal would prevent people accessing public footpaths and ran counter to the Government's campaign to persuade people to take proper breaks when tired. He pointed out the lack of rest areas from Hilton Park southwards on the M6.

Cllrs Benton and Howles said the lay-bys became filled up with over-nighting HGVs.

It was resolved that **Councillors would try to develop a common representation on the matter.**

18. Neighbourhood planning

Cllr Howles explained that Balsall PC would clarify matters with Sara James of Solihull MBC, and then Sara would have a joint meeting with one representative from each Parish Council, to discuss whether and how the councils could work together on an NDP.

19. Administration

Cllr Benton reported that the Annual Return had now been approved by the External Auditors, and it now needed to be displayed on the notice boards.

The Working Party on cost savings for the next financial year had concluded its investigations on 9 October, but discussion of the findings was deferred to the next meeting.

There was a brief discussion of the key Risks that had been identified. It was agreed that the play equipment in Pound Close was out of repair and hazardous. It was resolved that **the equipment should be removed as soon as possible and that immediate neighbours would be notified by leaflet.**

It was also agreed to **write to Centro to advise them of the trip hazard presented by some electrical fittings on the bus shelters.**

Cllr Hitchcock expressed continuing concern about one of the trees opposite the Reading Room. Ownership was unclear, but Cllr Lock would discuss it with Mr N Parry of Berkswell Estate the following day.

WALC had notified the Council of its AGM, to be held in Warwick on 13 November. It was agreed it was unnecessary for the Council to be represented.

20. Next meeting

The next Ordinary Meeting of the Council will be held on 14 November 2013 at 7:45 pm, in the Jubilee Centre, Station Road, Balsall Common, preceded by a meeting of the Planning Committee, at 7:15 pm.

21. Exclusion of public

It was resolved to exclude the public in accordance with the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 s 1(2) because confidential staffing matters were to be discussed.

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14 November 2013

(Separate confidential section follows, making a total of 8 pages.)