

Chesham Bois Parish Council

Minutes of the Extra Ordinary Council Meeting held remotely at 8.00pm on Monday 5th October 2020

PRESENT: Cllr C Woolveridge (Chairman), Cllr J Bailey, Cllr D Buckingham, Cllr D Conway Read, Cllr J Harbottle, Cllr R Harrison, Cllr R Hartley, Cllr R Heath, Cllr J Large & Cllr C Thomas.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs S Payne (Clerk); 17 Members of the Public.

54.1 Questions and Comments from the Public.

Cllr Woolveridge informed those present that the meeting was being recorded and the recording would be deleted once the minutes of the meeting had been approved by Council. Cllr Woolveridge asked members of the public to limit their comments to 3 minutes each, focusing on the amendments to the planning application.

A resident representing Protect Chesham Bois Common Action Group read a statement regarding the amended planning application for the redevelopment of the Parish Centre. The parking provision will not be sufficient, especially during peak periods. Rather than reducing the size of the buildings and therefore the parking requirements the amended proposals have extended the parking further into the site harming the Conservation Area even more. No account for the level of traffic flow during peak times and its impact on local roads and overspill parking has been made. The proposed fencing to resolve security concerns will be out of keeping with the woodland environment. Any benefit to the community will be outweighed by the detrimental effect on the village.

A resident and owner of The Old Rectory stated his concern on the increased size of the car park which is 30 metres from his property. The Old Rectory sits on ground 1 metre higher than the car park which can be viewed from the property. The additional parking will increase noise, air and light pollution and have a detrimental effect on the amenity of The Old Rectory, the common and Conservation Area. The addition of a pathway along the property boundary from the prayer room to a fire pit will also increase noise and air pollution. Council are asked to object to the application.

A resident, church member and project manager for St Leonards Church read a statement. The amendments to the application include an increase in permanent and overflow parking which is more than adequate for all anticipated uses. The parking area will be behind mature trees and boundary planting will provide further screening. Council have been circulated today a response to the issues raised in their own independent transport report. Further work has been carried out to demonstrate adequate drainage and boundary treatment and site security. The proposal provides a much-needed multi-purpose facility at the heart of Chesham Bois which will allow greater flexibility and offer community groups vital meeting space as well as a purpose-built pre-school and a café.

A member the St Leonards Youth Group expressed her view that the proposed redevelopment will provide an ideal place to come together and become a hub for the Chesham Bois community as well as the Church.

54.2 Apologies for Absence. Cllr D King.

54.3 To Receive Declarations of Interest or Dispensations Relating to this Meeting.

None received.

54.4 To Approve Council's Response to Planning Application PL/20/0401/FA: St Leonards Parish Centre, Glebe Way, Chesham Bois HP6 5ND.

Redevelopment of the site to create a new multifunctional Parish Centre with café, day nursery building, replacement rectory with detached garage, additional staff dwelling, 2 outbuildings to provide prayer room and substation/bin and bicycle store, associated parking and landscaping. (Amended Proposals)

As Chair of the Council's Planning Committee Cllr Harbottle opened the discussion.

Cllr Harbottle supported the application in the amended form submitted. When the initial application was considered in April 2020 Cllr Harbottle felt there was a need to provide more parking spaces to negate the impact overspill parking would have on local roads as well as the harm caused to the amenity of nearby residents and that the new Rectory was too prominent compared to the surrounding established North Road properties and would cause harm to heritage and amenity.

There are now additional parking spaces all of which work. A parking accumulation exercise has been carried out which has been reviewed by the Council's independent transport consultants who are satisfied that sufficient parking is now provided. The consultants made the point that there will be some events that will not have enough parking, but it will be sufficient for most operations. Following the Amersham Parking Review there will be additional parking restrictions along Glebe Way and Bois Lane which will address highway safety issues.

Cllr Harbottle is disappointed that the applicants have not carried out an assessment of the impact on the local road junctions. Cllr Heath has analysed data from Council's MVAS located along North Road and Bois Lane to calculate average daily car movement. The predicted additional movements from the new development when compared to the existing flows indicated from the MVAS data show a 6% increase in traffic over an average day, although it does not take into account peak traffic flow. For these reasons Cllr Harbottle is satisfied on the parking and highway issues and harm to amenity due to additional traffic on local roads.

The amenity of The Old Rectory is still a concern as is the position of the new Rectory close to the North Road boundary. Council's independent heritage consultants were satisfied that this was not an issue and agreed with the conclusion of the applicant's consultants and the Principle Conservation & Listed Buildings Officer at Buckinghamshire Council was supportive of the application and praised the elegant and modern design of the main building.

Cllr Harbottle stated that the Church is at the heart of the community providing useful services, including pastoral support and other services providing well-being to the community.

Cllr Harbottle felt on balance that the benefits the facilities would provide to the community outweighed the harm to heritage and amenity to The Old Rectory.

Cllr Bailey did not support the application. The design, layout and appearance has not been altered nor its impact on the Conservation Area and local listed buildings. The physical aspects of the development will be detrimental to Chesham Bois with an increase in light, noise and traffic pollution seven days a week. The Council's independent transport consultant's report stated that the anticipated increase in traffic will be equivalent to an additional 100 dwellings and Buckinghamshire Council's request to carry out an assessment on additional traffic on surrounding roads has not been carried out.

Cllr Conway Read did not support the application. The scale of the proposed development is still too excessive for the site and the increase in traffic is still a concern.

Cllr Hartley supported the application. Although the size of the main building and the impact on the amenity of The Old Rectory is still an issue; having considered the points on traffic and highway safety covered by Cllr Harbottle and the benefits a community hub would have for the village Cllr Hartley stated on balance the benefits outweighed the harm.

Cllr Thomas supported the application. The style of building is modern and sympathetic, and it is well-screened. The additional parking will mean less overspill of traffic. The development will have a net positive impact on Chesham Bois.

Cllr Woolveridge supported the application. Although Cllr Woolveridge still had some reservations on the heritage aspects, her concerns regarding parking and traffic have been addressed by recent independent transport reports; therefore, on balance Cllr Woolveridge supported the application.

Cllr Buckingham did not support the application. There had been no fundamental change to the initial proposal. The design and layout will have an overbearing impact on the semi-rural location and the new Rectory is sited too close to North Road. There are highways safety issues due to increase in traffic. The negative impact on The Old Rectory and Conservation Area were also a concern. Cllr Buckingham would support a scaled down development.

Cllr Harrison did not support the application. The additional parking had industrialised the site and the addition of compound fencing would not be sympathetic to the woodland environment. The heritage impact is of significant concern as is the siting of the new Rectory close to North Road and the negative impact the increase in traffic will have in the local area.

Cllr Heath supported the application. The design was striking, and the building will provide a community hub for current and future residents. Parking issues have been addressed and the percentage increase in traffic was minor. Cllr Heath was aware that there were challenges with the impact on the Conservation Area and immediate neighbours, but in balance the benefits to Chesham Bois outweighed the harm.

Cllr Large supported the application. The design of the main building and the benefits it brings to the community would be welcome. Cllr Large's initial concerns regarding parking have been addressed by the amended proposals. The tension between providing appropriate security in the eyes of the Police and avoiding light pollution have been addressed with a better use of light and appropriate use of fencing. Cllr Large had noted the two independent heritage reports which do not identify any major issues regarding the impact on The Old Rectory and heritage and was aware of the concerns of the owners of The Old Rectory. Having listened to the Cllr Harbottle's commentary and further analysis of the traffic report Cllr Large no longer considered this a sufficient concern to prevent her support.

It was resolved with a vote of 6 to 4 to support the planning application.

The response would include an informative comment that the extra parking is laid out and made available at all times and the highest quality of the materials used for all buildings

The meeting closed at 8.55pm