

**EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE
WOODSTOCK TOWN COUNCIL
HELD AT 7.30 PM ON TUESDAY 28th MAY 2013
IN THE MAYOR'S PARLOUR, WOODSTOCK TOWN HALL**

PRESENT:

Cllr J Cooper (Mayor)	Cllr C Carritt	Cllr E Poskitt
Cllr P Jay	Cllr T Wray	Cllr Mrs P Richardson
Cllr S Parnes	Cllr B Yoxall	

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: 28 Members of the Public and County Cllr Hudspeth.

WTC/30/13 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs M Robertson, Mrs E Stokes, Fleetwood and Mrs V Edwards.

WTC/31/13 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr P Jay declared a general interest in Agenda Items 4, Motions presented to Council and 5, Possible Development on the Field Adjacent to Marlborough Place off Shipton Road because he lives at The Retreat, Banbury Road, Woodstock and this neighbours the proposed development. Cllr S Parnes declared a general interest as he resides on a development near to a field where development is being consulted upon by a developer.

The Mayor said unfortunately Huw Mellor of Kemp and Kemp had been unavailable to attend this meeting. The Mayor reminded members of the public that written notice of the wish to speak and the subject matter must be received by midday on the morning of the day before the meeting (WTC Standing Order 1 (d)).

WTC/32/13 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Cllr Parnes declared a general interest.

(i) Mr Andrew Partridge

Mr Partridge said that he and other residents of Marlborough Place had the following overall concerns about the proposed development on the field between Marlborough Place and Budds Close:

1. The current capacity of both schools. The current plans for their expansion are based purely on the organic growth of the population and are not a licence to expand the area.
2. The congestion in the Hensington Road area particularly during school opening and closing times is, in his view, an accident waiting to happen.
3. Current planning trends. Mr Partridge considered that the approval of the Holdings development from five to over double the number of dwellings has opened the flood gates to similar applications, represented by a recent application to build eight flats directly opposite the Primary School. There is a weakness in the current planning process that is likely to be exploited by all builders driven by profit. If planning permission is given for the development or the area around Marlborough Place is placed on the Town plan for future development business economics would suggest that they will then try and increase capacity on the grounds of economic viability. Mr Partridge was concerned that this was not a well spaced out 64 home development but that, like The Holding, the developers eyes are looking long term at the prospects of doubling the number of houses on that sites and that because of the current planning laws all they would have to do was 'jump through a few well accustomed hoops to get what they want.

4. The inability of the road system within Marlborough Place to cope with current traffic. This means that it wouldn't be able to cope with increased traffic or for sustained heavy plant traffic.
5. Access from the Shipton Road on to the Upper Campsfield Road is likely to make this area an accident black spot.
6. Environmental considerations about the detrimental effect on the wildlife that thrives in the Old Woodstock Line (OWL) Nature Reserve and upon the very rare 'bee' and other orchids that grow on the field that is being proposed for development. Concerns were raised about the potential loss of this tranquil and peaceful area.
7. The loss of a recreation facility and the impact on the wider community.

Mr Partridge asked WTC to fund the commissioning of Mr Huw Mellor, the Councils planning consultant to help develop the case put to WODC by residents. He said that a reference made by a Cllr at the last meeting to the Marlborough School reflected the views of one non-resident and not that of the school.

(ii) Mr Nathan Clark

Mr Clark spoke about the following four concerns:

1. The Use and Safety of the road. Mr Clark said that the proposal is to use Randolph Avenue and Spencer Close as the leading access to the development and that this road is not suitable for sustained use by construction vehicles and the increased traffic that would result upon completion of the development. He explained why the road surface was not suitable for this type of traffic and noted that the road had already been subject to several repairs. Mr Clark had serious road safety concerns for residents as there are no footpaths on the development and families therefore have to walk to school and nursery on the road. Children would therefore be sharing the road with lorries and increased traffic.
2. The Infrastructure of Woodstock. Mr Clark considered that the Woodstock infrastructure could not cope with the development. Parking is already a problem in the town and the doctors surgery would struggle to cope with more patients. The Primary School is currently being expanded due to being subscribed.
3. Developers Greed. Mr Clarke could not believe that The Blenheim gate development was allowed to proceed without any affordable housing despite WODC requiring that up to 50% of new homes be classed as affordable. In his view this was ludicrous. He spoke about the 'get out clause' and that any money arising from this was not directly ring fenced to Woodstock but can be spent elsewhere in the district. He said that Blenheim Palace say that the sale of land to Pye Homes would help restore and maintain the Palace. It was Mr Clarks view that this should not be at the expense of the Woodstock. He said that in order to maintain Woodstock as a great town residents needed to say 'thanks but no thanks' to developers.
4. Conservation. Mr Clark spoke about the threat to wildlife in the UK and how valuable to our countryside and wildlife 'Green Land' is. Pye have claimed in reference to the site north of Marlborough Place that "The majority of the site is not a good wildlife habitat". Mr Clark said that this claim was incorrect and extremely naive. Any green area is a valuable wildlife habitat and that he had seen foxes, badgers and buzzards in the field. He also noted the great work of the OWL Nature Reserve. In addition to its value to wildlife this land is also important to many dog walkers and residents who use the field for recreational purposes.

Mr Clark asked the Council to fight for Woodstock.

(iii) Dr Bob McGurrian

Dr McGurrian is the Chairman of the Woodstock Action Group (WAG). He spoke in support of the residents of Marlborough School and Shipton Road. He reminded residents of WAG support for Cllrs in the 2004 elections. WAG would like WTC to more aggressively represent the wishes of a large segment of the Woodstock-Old

Woodstock electorate. He noted that a few of the current Cllrs are pro-development and that one had recently met with the Pye-Blenheim Consortium in a private capacity. He expressed concerns about a recent item about the Pye-Blenheim plans on the WTC web site and suggested that this went against WTC policy. He asked that WTC publish a public proclamation via all local media of its unwavering support for the residents of Marlborough Place and Shipton Road in, what was in his view, their valid objections to the Pye-Blenheim current proposal and any future ones. And also, the Hill Rise residents fight against Blenheim's proposal to stop up an age-old, well –trodden, footpath.

(iv) Mrs Trish Redpath

Mrs Redpath said that her views were reflected by other residents. Mrs Redpath said that she was not against all development and had actively promoted the Marlborough Place proposal. Mrs Redpath is against developers promoting for their own gain to the detriment of the locals and said that Woodstock is seen as a cash cow as the yield is higher than average. She spoke about the inquiry on the station site and how the inspector had fell for their 'flannel'. The prices of the resultant development were way beyond what they said could be achieved as some of the houses are currently being rented out for £3k a month. Although the modest houses in Marlborough Place are not in the same prime location they were marketed above the normal price for comparable dwellings. She would like to confirm with Mr Mellor that we are still fighting getting this (or any other Pye/Blenheim proposal) into the local plan. Mrs Redpath said that last time Mr Mellor had said that it was unrealistic to assume that there would be no development in Woodstock until 2019 and thought that proposals for one to three dwellings were likely to arise. He seemed aware of the additional allocation of a site for 70 dwellings that was being proposed on the back of the Town Partnership. Mrs Redpath noted that the new builds were almost exclusively for the Hensington corner of Woodstock which had been subjected to a 27% increase in housing stock since 2006 with no infrastructure changes. This proposal would add to the log jam and is not fair. She found the justification being put forward by Blenheim that they need the money to upkeep the palace insulting especially as residents already put up with canon fire etc. at weekends whilst events are held at the palace. Mrs Redpath suggested that the next proposed development would be the South East field with access to the Shipton Road. She asked WTC to employ a planning consultant to obtain a good traffic assessment of the effect on the roads in the immediate vicinity i.e. Shipton Road and also Banbury Road/Hensington Road.

(v) Mrs Yvonne Murphy

Mrs Murphy was concerned about the increased levels of traffic that already affect the area around the schools particularly between 7.30 – 8.30am during term time. She said that this was an accident waiting to happen and that any increase in traffic would antagonise the situation. She thanked Cllrs for the hours that they spent working on behalf of residents.

(vi) Mr Richard Benham

Mr Benham echoed the views of the previous speakers and said that he had particular concerns about traffic especially at peak times and said that the Marlborough Estate Road was not fit for Pyes intended use as access to the proposed development. It would be too dangerous to children, other residents and pets. He was concerned about the inevitable disruption to the species inhabiting the OWL Nature Reserve, its bordering hedgerow and the other local wildlife and fauna living in around the field. He referred to Bob Pomfret, the voluntary wardens, regular reports that record species and environmental activities in the area. He noted that specialists have suggested that the 'bee' orchid could be unique to Britain at this site. Mr Benham asked that WTC employ its planning consultant to help residents to respond to any application that might arrive in a concise and professional fashion.

He noted that WTC has gone on record opposing further development and asked what pro-active action the Council will be taking to back up the objections of the Council and residents to WODC.

(vii) Mrs Jayne Bullock

Mrs Bullock thanked everyone for attending the meeting. She expressed her concern upon receiving the 'Community Newsletter' that had been produced by Pye/Blenheim as this was an obvious marketing campaign. She reported upon the presentation residents of Marlborough Place were invited to attend at the Marlborough School in April. She thought that the Pye representatives at this meeting seemed unaware of residents concerned and were unable to answer their questions. She said that after the meeting she'd leafleted the estate and over half of the households had responded. She subsequently arranged a meeting which WAG attended. Mrs Bullock described the background to the existing development and also what it was currently like to live there as a resident. She noted that it was a peaceful and tranquil place based around a 'green' and a great place to live. However she also talked about the current traffic issues and lack of parking and noted that a resident was recently knocked down by a van from the Holdings site. Mrs Bullock said that Woodstock had fulfilled its quota of development in accordance with the local plan and noted the growth rate in the Hensington area. She said that a Housing Needs Survey had not been done to support the Pye claims about affordable housing. Mrs Bullock hope that WTC would appreciate the concerns of residents and support them accordingly when the proposal is submitted to WODC.

WTC/33/13 MOTIONS PRESENTED TO COUNCIL

Cllrs Parnes and Jay declared general interests. The following motion was submitted by Cllr Parnes and seconded by Cllr Fleetwood (prior to the meeting).

The Town Council should engage the services of previously engaged specialist planning consultant Mr H Mellor, including by requesting his attendance at the next Town Council Meeting or a sooner meeting; this, for provision of expert guidance to support Council's efforts of monitoring, understanding and responding to submitted, anticipated and/or prospective developer planning application(s) for substantial residential development (i.e. field between Marlborough School and Budds Close, Hedge End, Old Woodstock, football pitch, and elsewhere throughout the Town).

The Town Council notes its precedents of similar engagement on record, in relation to the Station site in 2008, and Local Plan in 2004.

Cllr Jay proposed an amendment to that the following words were inserted after the bracket and before the final sentence of this motion "and for sharing the same with bona fides residents." Cllr Wray seconded this motion and Cllr Parnes accepted the amendment. Discussion followed during which many Cllrs reiterated the views and concerns of local residents. Cllr Carritt also clarified that although he supports the Local Plan and limited development he does not support this development because of the loss of green open space, traffic concerns and because the highways infrastructure in the field would be unrealistic. He said that he supported a lot of the issues raised but would abstain from the vote as the motion opposes all development. A Cllr asked for a named vote the result of which was as follows:

For: The Mayor and Cllrs Jay, Parnes, Poskitt, Mrs P Richardson, Wray and Yoxall..

Against: None

Abstentions: Cllr Carritt

RESOLVED

That WTC passed the motion above as amended by Cllr Jay.

ACTION: *The Town Clerk will ask Mr Mellor for his availability to attend a Town Meeting to hear the concerns of residents and provide information about the following:*

1. The field and adjoining OWL nature reserve are home to rare orchids (such as Bee Orchids) and some creatures such as slow worms, therefore Mr Mellor will be asked to determine whether the existing or any new species are protected by legislation.
2. The potential effects on the services such as the Doctors surgeries and the schools
3. Traffic and potential parking problems in the area of Shipton Road but also in the middle of the town as these might be exacerbated by the new development.
4. Budds Close is an exception site therefore Mr Mellor will be asked whether developers are permitted to refer to/include this area on their planning submission.
5. Blenheim Estates are making a unique pitch and trying to argue for this development to be seen as an exception as the income would benefit its World Heritage Site. Mr Mellor will be asked to prepare a defence against this pitch.

WTC/34/13 POSSIBLE DEVELOPMENT ON THE FIELD ADJACENT TO MARLBOROUGH PLACE OFF SHIPTON ROAD

Cllrs Parnes and Jay declared general interests.

Cllr Jay asked the Mayor to confirm that Mr Mellor's expenditure does not need to stand until the next ordinary meeting under SO13 (d). The Mayor said that there is already a £6k provision for specialist planning advice within the WTC budget and so SO 13 (d) does not apply to this situation.

The meeting rose at 8.30pm.

Signed Date