

# WIDFORD PARISH COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Extra-ordinary Parish Council Meeting Wednesday 15th June 2016 at 7pm in the Village Hall

**PRESENT:** Cllr Jill Buck, Chairman (JB); Cllr Barbara Edwards (BE); Cllr Glen Parcell (GP);  
Cllr Paul Riddle (PR)

Ten members of the public

Clerk: Colin Marks, Clerk to the Parish Council

The Chairman welcomed everyone and opened the meeting at 7pm

**ACTION**

**16.076 Apologies for absence**

1. Councillors: None – all present
2. Others: None

**16.077 Declarations of Interest and requests for dispensations: None**

**16.078 Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting, 10 May 2016**

Being proposed and seconded, it was unanimously **RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting held on 10 May were a true and accurate record.** The Chairman signed the Minutes

**JB/Clerk**

**16.079 Minutes of the Parish Council Ordinary Meeting, 10 May 2016**

Being proposed and seconded, it was unanimously **RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Parish Council Ordinary Meeting held on 10 May were a true and accurate record.** The Chairman signed the Minutes

**JB/Clerk**

**16.080 Planning Application**

**3/16/1164/FUL Land South of Martlets:** Erection of 1no 5 bedroomed dwelling, 5no 4 bed roomed dwellings, 5no 3 bed roomed dwellings, 5no 2 bed roomed dwellings and 2no 1 bed roomed dwellings. Widening of vehicular and pedestrian access from Hunsdon Road, landscaping, surface water drainage, and car parking.

In her opening comments, the Chairman said the purpose of the Extraordinary Meeting was to give everyone an opportunity to express their thoughts and concerns about the Stonebond planning application so that the comments made to East Herts Planning by the Parish Council, in their capacity as a statutory consultee, would be as representative as possible. The Chairman noted that current development pressures coupled with the failure of East Herts Council to meet their 5-year housing stock requirement, and a new District Plan not yet adopted, left the parish vulnerable to aggressive development.

The Chairman proposed to open up the meeting and it was unanimously **RESOLVED to open the meeting for public comments.**

A parishioner asked for councillor's views on the plans.

Cllr Babs Edwards said that under the present circumstances, as outlined by the Chairman in her opening comments, the parish may have to accept that this is the way things are going to go. Being on the edge of the village, this plan probably limits the negative impact on the village as a whole.

The Chairman said the Parish Council is in a bit of a cleft stick. On the one hand the Council is in favour of some development, but wants it to be towards affordable housing rather than the large properties favoured by developers. Stonebond have incorporated 7 affordable properties in their plan, but with other sites lining up for development, there is much to play for in establishing a mix of housing that is best and most suitable for the village.

A parishioner said It must be acknowledged that there is no infrastructure to support high levels of local development. Schools are at capacity and parents cannot even get their first 3 school choices, with some children being sent 10 miles to Hoddesdon.

CLlr Paul Riddle said the SLAA (Strategic Land Availability Assessment) identifies room for approximately 50 new houses in the village. There is no mechanism for drawing a line when targets are met. East Herts have intimated this application will get the go ahead. The original Stonebond proposal was for 17 houses, and it was East Herts who increased that to 18 to help meet their target. The only application they turned down was Greenacres because there is a gap of land between the proposed location and the village. Sustainability is arguable, but EHC know a lot of people commute and travel everywhere by car.

A parishioner said East Herts are riding roughshod over everyone because they don't have a 5-year plan in place. Stonebond is a very professional upmarket developer. The site is too small for the number of houses proposed, but it may well be that people are prepared to live that way. Herts Highways are at fault as a consultee because the sight lines are appalling. The development would generate at least 150 vehicle movements per day. The number of proposed parking spaces on the site is unrealistically small and parking will inevitably overflow on to the High Street and nearby lanes. Double yellow lines will be needed to prevent this and will have to be rigorously enforced; police will be called daily if not.

Another parishioner reiterated that the potential number of increased traffic movements and the resolution of parking concerns are paramount. It was also pointed out that the development's sewers will feed into the existing system, which is already to the point of overflowing. Affinity Water is about to meter existing customers in an attempt to limit the dwindling supply of water because of too much development already.

Other points and concerns that were raised included:

The publicly owned footpath at Priory Farms is privately owned and therefore probably cannot be used as an alternative access.

It was felt that the District Councillor does not have the interests of the village at heart and has not represented parishioners' concerns.

The Parish Council was urged to present the residents' concerns about the scale of development, the traffic levels and related consequent safety issues, problems and safety issues related to inadequate parking proposals.

It was believed that Stonebond had paid EHC for a pre-application discussion in January and that the application had almost certainly been signed off already.

That Highways are failing in their duty as a consultee by ignoring obvious safety concerns and not making their approval conditional upon traffic speed calming, road layout and parking requirements.

That objections being raised were not from a NIMBY position but out of genuine concerns that people could be killed on the roads unless the aforementioned matters are adequately addressed.

That applications are viewed by EH Planning in isolation without taking account of the larger picture of adjacent development.

That applications and permissions are for far too many houses squeezed into a small area. It was suggested the Martlets development should be for only 12 houses maximum.

The Parish Council was urged to maximise community benefits through a Section 106 agreement, in particular for the laying and maintaining of decent footways. CLlr Paul Riddle said the Parish Council had a list of benefit possibilities, and footpaths and a carpark for site visitors could be added (although it was acknowledged that an effective sized carpark would not be received favourably by the developer).

That East Herts has increasingly got things wrong. Large scale new development is probably the way to go, which would serve the villages better. The Parish Council was implored to make a strong case on the points raised during the evening.

As a pressure point, developers should be pressed to use their frontage as a layby because they are vulnerable to highways and safety concerns. This thought met with a lot of agreement from those present.

There were reports of a deliberate policy for basically continuous development from the A414 to the A120, Widford being in the middle of that plan.

The Town & Country Planning Bill currently going through Parliament would limit Parish Council consultation to only the initial outline planning stage. There will be NO place for Parish Council comments at the second, more detailed, planning stage.

The present traffic calming arrangement in the village is actually dangerous, forcing vehicles into the path of cars exiting from side roads. There have been a number of near accidents. This must be addressed, and now is an opportunity to make the roads much safer. Without that being done, the proposed plan will add significantly to the dangers.

On a different matter, the Parish Council was asked to keep up pressure on the Pegs Lane situation.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and for the many observations that contributed to the discussion. The Parish Council would endeavour to reflect them in its consultation comments to East Herts Planning.

**16.081 Date of next meeting:**

Tuesday 5th July at 8pm in the Village Hall

The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.05pm.

**Signed**.....**Dated**.....