

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF RINGWOOD TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Wednesday 22nd February 2023 at 7.00pm at Ringwood Gateway, The Furlong, Ringwood.

PRESENT: Cllr Gareth Deboos, Town Mayor
Cllr Rae Frederick, Deputy Mayor
Cllr Andy Briers
Cllr Hilary Edge
Cllr Jeremy Heron
Cllr Peter Kelleher
Cllr Darren Loose
Cllr Gloria O’Reilly
Cllr Tony Ring
Cllr Derek Scott
Cllr Glenys Turner

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr Chris Wilkins, Town Clerk
Mrs Jo Hurd, Deputy Town Clerk

ABSENT: Cllr Philip Day
Cllr John Haywood
Cllr Steve Rippon-Swaine

**C/6915
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was one member of public present.

**C/6916
APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs Day, Haywood and Rippon-Swaine.

**C/6917
DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were none declared at this time.

**C/6918
MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 25th January 2023 be approved and signed as a correct record.

**C/6919
RECREATION, LEISURE AND OPEN SPACES COMMITTEE**

Cllr Briers presented the minutes of the Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee held on 1st February 2023.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces Committee held on 1st February 2023 be received.

**C/6920
PLANNING, TOWN AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

Cllr Frederick presented the minutes of the Planning, Town and Environment Committee held on 3rd February 2023.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Planning, Town and Environment Committee meeting held on 3rd February 2023 be received.

**C/6921
POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE**

Cllr Heron presented the minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee meeting held on 15th February 2023.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the Policy and Finance Committee meeting held on 15th February 2023 be received.

**C/6922
GRANT AID AWARDS**

It was noted that a Grant Aid award of £300 had been made to Bickerley Green Care Home towards the cost of its 50th Anniversary Celebrations.

**C/6923
PLANNING APPLICATION 21/10042 LAND NORTH OF HIGHTOWN ROAD**

Cllr Ring stated that as a member of the District Council's Planning Committee he would listen to the discussion but not take part or vote. Cllr Heron also abstained from voting due to his position as a District Councillor.

Members considered the draft revised observation (*Annex A*).

RESOLVED: That the observation at Annex A be submitted to NFDC.

ACTION Jo Hurd

**C/6924
DEVELOPMENT PROJECT AT LONG LANE**

The Town Clerk reported that the artificial turf pitch was now complete and in use following a soft launch by the Community Sports Trust. There will be a full press launch when the pavilion is completed, which is currently estimated to be in November 2023.

The Town Council had been invited by NFDC to take over the lease extension in respect of the 10-acre field and Members would be updated on this in due course.

There was some discussion about the floodlights and it was noted that although the new lights are required to have a maximum capacity to meet league requirements, they don't have to be operated at that capacity and will be turned down for training sessions. There was not currently sufficient power on site to use both sets of floodlights at the same time.

RESOLVED: That the verbal update be noted.

ACTION C Wilkins

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C/6925

COMMUNICATIONS TO BE RECEIVED

The Town Mayor reported that he and the Deputy Town Mayor had opened the new post office facility at Lunns (13-15 Christchurch Road) and was very pleased to welcome this to the town centre.

He also reported that, further to the Council's representation to HCC to take action to retain the current direction of traffic flow in Meeting House Lane (one-way southbound) when the temporary Traffic Regulation Order expires, HCC had stated they have no resources to make a new Permanent Order at this time, so the direction will revert to one-way northbound at the end of June. He hoped this could be resolved with the help of the County Councillor.

C/6926

REPORTS FROM COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

District Councillor Ring reported that an order would soon be placed for the Michael Lingam-Willgoss memorial bench. Additional funds may be required if the HCC charges could not be waived. He noted that sat-nav companies would be changing the algorithm to deter motorists from using residential streets and back roads, and hoped this would benefit local roads such as Northfield Road and Hightown Hill.

District Councillor Heron reported that Cabinet had recommended to Full Council an increase in budget of 2.99%, which represented an increase of £5.63 for a Band D property to £193.99. He further reported that a draft Planning for Climate Change Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) would be released for public consultation in May.

C/6927

REPORTS FROM TOWN COUNCILLORS

Cllr Scott gave an update on Ringwood Twinning Association. Thanks to a generous grant from the Town Council, preparations were underway for a visit in May (27th to 29th). Membership was growing and it was hoped to reach the target of 40 members by the end of the year. The AGM would be held at 7pm on 2nd May at Ringwood Gateway; all members welcome to attend.

Cllr Turner reported that the Queen Elizabeth II memorial oak tree had been planted on the middle section of The Bickerley and a bench would be positioned nearby at a later date.

C/6928

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

Recreation, Leisure and Open Spaces	7.00pm	Wednesday 1 st March 2023
Planning, Town and Environment	10.00am	Friday 3 rd March 2023
Staffing	7.00pm	Wednesday 15 th March 2023
Policy & Finance	7.00pm	Wednesday 22 nd March 2023
Full Council	7.00pm	Wednesday 29 th March 2023
Planning, Town and Environment	10.00am	Friday 31 st March 2023

There being no further business, the Town Mayor closed the meeting at 7.27pm.

APPROVED
29th March 2023

TOWN MAYOR

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Chairman's initials



Ringwood Town Council observations

on **Planning Application 21/10042 – land north of Hightown Road** – for up to 400 dwellings and 3 hectares of employment (Class E and B2), access, open space, landscaping, alternative natural recreational greenspace (ANRG) and drainage attenuation (Outline Application with details only of Access)

Our initial observations made in April 2021 was Refusal (4) for the reasons highlighted at the Extraordinary Meeting of Planning, Town & Environment Committee on 20 April 2021. This was an initial observation as it was anticipated that new information would become available in due course and that the Town Council would continue to engage with NFDC officers in order to get the best outcome for Ringwood.

Following such engagement and in the light of further documents submitted by or on behalf of the applicant, Ringwood Town Council maintains its objection.

Our role as a Town Council is to bring to the attention of the Planning Authority matters that are within our local knowledge which may not be immediately apparent to either the applicant nor (with respect) to officers. We are also entitled to express our views about the application more generally and this is what we now do.

We do however note that at the time of writing, we have not been made aware of any further comment from the Environment Agency and reserve our position to make further comment in due course in the light of any response from the EA.

1 - Overdevelopment / out of character

We remain of the view that the proposed development of 400 houses with commercial areas and minimal greenspace (see further below) is not in accordance with the definition of a “well designed new development” which responds positively to the features of the site itself and the surrounding context beyond the site boundary, as outlined in the National Design Guide.

The proposed density is much higher than surrounding residential areas and will compromise the quality of the build. It is also significantly higher than the indication of “at least 270” stated in the Local Plan regarding this site.

The site is on the edge of the New Forest National Park and the NFNPA’s original concern about the quantum of development and amount of greenspace provision is shared. We remain concerned about other issues such as the impact of light pollution on the National Park and the adverse effect on wildlife - we maintain our concern for species not identified in the applicant’s Wildlife and Ecological Assessment (e.g. buzzards, pine martins, owls and jays), and for loss of ground nesting species due to the extensive network of footpath proposed.

Consideration should be given to extending hedging at the east and west side of the north border hedge, prior to building starting, to allow species to easily migrate away from the roundabout area. Hedge and tree removal work should be carried out outside of the nesting season. Installation of bat boxes in tree locations adjacent to the site to facilitate migration of Bechstein and other bats before any development takes place.

2 – Flooding, surface water drainage and sewerage

We again note that at the time of writing, the Environment Agency has not commented on the revised proposals. The Town Council notes that the Applicant has not addressed the issue of drainage south of the site. Despite work undertaken when the Linden Homes/Beaumont Park development was completed and regular maintenance by both Hampshire County Council and local volunteers, the stream running along Crow Lane (which would be the natural outlet for surface water drainage from the site) still regularly floods and indeed, has been impassable to all but the largest of vehicles on at least 4 occasions in January 2023 alone. Unless appropriate plans are proposed to address the issue of flooding on Crow Lane, we consider this of itself to be a proper ground for refusal of the application.

Further, it is clear that the proposed mitigation schemes will require long term maintenance at no doubt significant cost. We consider it imperative that an agreement is reached with the developers to ensure that such costs do not in future fall onto either the District nor the Town Council.

We are also concerned about the disposal of foul water (sewerage) from the site. We note and understand that it is incumbent upon the statutory undertaker to provide appropriate connections etc and what is said about upgrades to the sewerage facility at Hampshire Hatches. However, the fact of the matter is that despite extensive works carried out in recent years at the Bickerley, raw sewerage has still flooded out onto public highways in that area and we find it difficult to accept that this proposed development will not substantially exacerbate existing problems.

3 – “Open Space” within the site

The Town Council note with considerable concern that much of the ANRG and other open spaces will in fact be used for flood mitigation with in many cases, ponds that are expected to be about 1 metre deep at all times (increasing to 2m in times of heavy rainfall). There are two consequences – the amount of available and usable green space for residents to walk, exercise their dogs or play informally appears to be substantially less than policy dictates.

Further, such areas pose a real danger to children who might be living on what is after all proposed to be a development to cater for families. Fencing off these areas might alleviate the risk of drowning (or falling through ice in wintry conditions as happened recently) but would only further reduce the available open spaces.

The Town Council also notes that no formal recreation areas (e.g. sports pitches) are proposed either within or outwith the site. Ringwood as a whole fails to meet national standards in terms of the provision of such areas and the absence of provision will simply exacerbate the issue.

4 – Transport and Access issues

The Town Council notes the revised proposals and the comments of the Highways Authority. Our concern here is that all of the proposals relate to either the area north of the site or the immediate area (e.g. Eastfield Lane and the northern part only of Crow Lane from the “Elm Tree junction” south to the principal entrance into Beaumont Park.

The Local Plan in designating both this site and site 13 (land north of Moortown Lane) envisaged a southern access into and egress from the site that included a new road from Crow Lane into the centre of site 13 and then two roads within that site – one to the north west into the Wellworthy estate and the other at the southern end of Moortown Lane. The proposals for site 13 include only the access onto the southern end of Moortown Lane and even this envisages significant works to provide footpaths and an improved junction with Christchurch Road.

Unless the issue of a southern access into and from the proposed development is resolved, the scheme is not in accordance with the Local Plan and should again be refused for that reason.

Further, no regard appears to be had to the fact that there is no footpath (let alone a cycleway) along much of Crow Lane which is also unlit and poses a danger to pedestrians even now.

We are also extremely concerned at the suggestion that the access into the site directly from the A31 might not have to be completed until some 200 homes are occupied. Realistically, that would mean that all construction traffic would either be routed along Eastfield Lane (with its direct access to the A31) or along Moortown and Crow Lanes which can be best described as precisely that – “country lanes”.

If the Planning Authority is minded to grant the application we would urge that this be conditional on the construction of the direct access onto the A31 at the very beginning of the scheme.

5 - Insufficient community infrastructure

We note that contrary to Policy SS14, the plans do not include any provision for a community hub as outlined in the Policy. We appreciate (and accept) the proposal for a s.106 agreement to provide community facilities outwith the site but there are local concerns about the lack of provision in Ringwood for medical, dental and other facilities such as schooling.

Given the scale of this development, we would urge the developers to consider the inclusion of a small community facility in the centre of the site to include perhaps a convenience store and a medical or dental facility (or both).

The original proposal to site a primary/junior school on land south of Moortown Lane on what is currently formal recreation space appears to be undeliverable for a number of reasons and that needs to be taken into account in any s.106 agreement.

6- Affordable Housing – Viability Statement

It is noted that there is no current overall viability statement associated with this application and that the applicant may perhaps have underestimated the costs of building the new roundabout at the A31 junction and indeed, the cost of flood alleviation (and other works). Should the NFDC Officer recommendation be to approve the outline application, a condition should be included that a Viability Appraisal will be required and that the increase in the cost of ‘abnormals’ (referred to previously) will not be the basis of any negotiation aimed at a reduction in the adherence to NFDC or local policies, as the cost of the increased ‘abnormals’ at SS14 is known to the applicant prior to this application being heard by NFDC Members. If this is not accepted by the applicant, then the application should be withdrawn.

For example, the Town Council strongly supports NFDC's policy of requiring 50% "affordable housing" but are concerned that a future assessment of the viability of this proposal might be used to diminish the percentage of affordable dwellings. We would therefore urge that if any application is granted, it be on condition that at least 50% of the dwellings be "affordable" in line with policy. We note that provision of "affordable housing" was decreased at SS18 in Fordingbridge due to high 'abnormals' which will lead to lower than policy "affordable housing" provision in the vicinity of Ringwood.

Conclusion

The Town Council acknowledges the need for additional housing both nationally and locally and that this is not either a site within the Green Belt nor the National Park.

However, we have serious concerns about the application as it currently stands for the reasons mentioned above and, in particular issues that are within the Town Council's knowledge (e.g. recent flooding on Crow Lane and the outflow of raw sewerage in the vicinity of the Bickerley) but may not have been previously brought to the attention of the applicants or officers.

We therefore reiterate our original recommendation that this particular application be refused.