

WETHERSFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

REPRESENTING WETHERSFIELD, BLACKMORE END & BEAZLEY END



MINUTES of the Wethersfield Airbase Scrutiny Committee Meeting held at Blackmore End Village Hall on Monday, 25 April 2022, commencing at 7:30pm.

Present:

Cllr A Hull (Chairman) (Shalford PC)
Cllr R Duffin (Vice Chairman) (Finchingfield PC)
Cllr A French (Shalford PC)
Cllr T Roberts (Toppesfield PC)
Cllr R Aggiss (Salings PC)
Cllr P Kennedy (Great Bardfield PC)
Cllr G Southgate (Castle Hedingham PC)
Cllr Sebastian Harris (Sible Hedingham PC)
Cllr David Coverdale (Finchingfield PC)
Donna Roder (Deputy Clerk)

In Attendance:

Members of the Public: 5

WA1/22-23 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr A Cole (Panfield PC), Cllr J Toocaram (Castle Hedingham PC), Cllr S Moutard (Gosfield PC), Cllr Alan Collard (Toppesfield PC), Cllr Juliet O'Brien (Little Bardfield PC) and Cllr Sue Short (Wethersfield PC).

WA2/22-23 MEMBERS DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

None declared.

WA3/22-23 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 28 MARCH 2022.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 March 2022, copies of which had been previously circulated to Members, were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman. Proposer Cllr R Duffin (Finchingfield PC) , seconder Cllr A French (Shalford PC).

WA4/22-23 TO CONFIRM ADDITIONAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS.

The following additional members were approved to represent their Parish Council.

- i. Sible Hedingham PC - Cllr M Lee
- ii. Sible Hedingham PC - Cllr S Harris

WA5/22-23 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- i. A member of the public asked about the two mega prison proposals, and the difference between WASC and SWAP.

WA6/22-23 CLERKS REPORT

CORRESPONDENCE

WASC and DIO. Discussion ongoing around permission for access to the site to complete WASC surveys.

BALC: Meeting follow-up of 30 March 2022. With the exception of Little Bardfield (Uttlesford District Council) and Wethersfield PC. I have confirmation that all other WASC PC's are members of BALC. Renewal letters and invoices have been sent by the BALC Clerk to all PC's. Wethersfield PC will add to their next full council agenda for agreement.

WASC meeting with BDC Senior Business Development Management, Emma Goodings and Christopher Paggi: The meeting will take place face to face on April 25th, together with WASC's Technical Sub-Committee.

WASC email sent to Councillor Peter Tattersley for a retraction of WASC's position to both BDC and the MOJ sent 24 March 2022. A further response was received from Cllr Tattersley, requesting information on all members of WASC. On March 30th, Cllr Tattersley further commented that those individuals named in his initial response, he had wanted to be clear on who's behalf they were speaking at BDC's Council Meeting.

Shalford PC are planning to send an update in their next Magazine/Newsletter clarifying who are WASC and who are The Fields Association/SWAP.

SWAP

Banners are available to purchase at a cost of £45, and have asked if all WASC PC's will do so and display outside their Village Halls. I am awaiting images, and will distribute to all WASC Clerks for follow-up.

Annual Parish Council Meetings 1st May – 1 June 22. SWAP have requested to present at these meetings for the electors next month in each Parish. Communication has been sent to all WASC Clerks.

Chris Packham now behind the SWAP Campaign on the prison proposal. The Government Petition is now at >8.5K signatures. At 10K the Government have to make a response.

PARISH INVOLVEMENT

No further updates from Stebbing, The Sampfords, Stambourne and Radwinter invitations currently. Birkbrook PC invitation sent 3rd April 2022.

Cllr A Hull gave an update on communication and strategy. BALC Meeting was very positive and support to run in parallel with WASC. BALC also focus on holding Councillors to account. Currently only WASC members not part of BALC are Toppesfield and Wethersfield. Another set of FOI's just received from BDC, approx. 300 pages. Very positive communication from ECC plus guidelines. Copies will be distributed to WASC members.

Cllr J Pearce gave an update on the Technical Work Program (see below). Digital model in progress. Landscape assessment in progress. Economic assessment draft completed, incorporating the Levelling Up white paper of BDC/ECC, and the deprivation of Rural Braintree. Tendering Council put forward 3-4 sites for the Prison to the MOJ, which include good accessibility and high unemployment. Three other sites proposed by the MOJ have been refused by their District Councils including Buckinghamshire and Chorley. Traffic modelling initial analysis from the data, best estimate is an additional 3K vehicles per day, over double the existing traffic and at certain points during the day, it will treble. Further in-depth analysis is underway. Heritage assessment in progress including impact on listed buildings and the conservation area. Scheduled Monument Status and/or listing of the original runway is under investigation. Architectural assessment – the template on design from the USA, ECC already communicated to BDC that it needs to conform to the local vernacular.

Task	Description	Lead	Estimated Cost	Progress
Preparation of database	Set up a WASC research database which could be shared with SWAP	RS	£100.00	Estimate obtained but could be reduced through sharing within the team. 5-6 people can access. JP to send email addresses to RS for those sub-committee members to access.Database implemented
Digital model of proposal/flyaround	Preparation of a digital model of the prison proposals set in the context of the surrounding area and enabling a fly around (later phase) the site/area to demonstrate the landscape impact. Need for CAD support and drone photography	MN	£2,900.00	Three coordinated contracts needed. Modeling - Sedley Place £2100, Digital capture - Septra Studio's £800. Drone footage - FOC GT. £3K saving on previous quotes with VAT. vv £5175 originally + VAT. Draft model progressed
Landscape character assessment	Assess landscape character, determine visual envelope and take photographs of representative views. Appraise the baseline landscape and visual context. Identify sensitive landscape elements/features / risks to be taken into account. Identify sensitive visual receptors to be considered. Set out the planning context, local landscape character, visual amenity, constraints and opportunities (landscape and visual baseline). The purpose of the report is to establish well-founded design recommendations to evaluate the impact of the development.	JP	£4,900.00	Three quotes obtained..Preferred consultant interviewed and to be appointed. Work phased so that this phase will be baseline assessment. Discount applied in conjunction with heritage work set out below. Contract commenced with CBA
Economic assessment	The creation of jobs and economic benefits to the area is like to be a major argument to support a planning application for the prisons. However the evidence to support that assertion is thin on the ground. This economic assessment study seeks to review the evidence and draw conclusions about the likely benefits that the proposal would bring when weighed against the locational disadvantages	RS	In house	Draft document prepared for discussion. Ongoing research in progress
Critical Down assessment	When a public body acquires land compulsorily or by requisition and later declares that land surplus to requirements there is an obligation to offer the land back to the original owners or their successors provided there is no material change in the character of the land. This is an arguable point that needs to be resolved.	SS	In house	SS prepared an initial issues paper for consideration. Decided to take no further action at present. Local landowners may progress.
Previously Developed Land assessment	To consider the argument being advanced that as a brownfield site there is a presumption in favour of the development. If accepted this would be a material consideration and needs to be challenged with robust research and legal opinion if necessary	JP/SS	£1,000.00	Fixed quote received from planning consultant. Report completed. Consideration to be given at later stage to obtaining Counsel opinion
Prisons Strategy White Paper	To prepare a response on behalf of WASC/ SWAP which demonstrate that the proposal would be in conflict with the White Paper	SS/RS	In house	Response prepared and submitted to meet the consultation deadline
Traffic Modelling data	Traffic count proposed at four locations (either side of Sculpins Lane junction with Finchingfield Road, Heddingham Road and Braintree Road) to give base data to build up a model of traffic movement which can be used to assess the traffic impact of the proposals on the local area taking into account traffic generated at other new prisons.	MN/RS	£600.00	Traffic count completed. Initial analysis undertaken, expectation based on several assumptions, traffic increase best case scenario +114% overall. HGV's will be significantly higher, plus organic growth in traffic levels coming 10yrs. Expert traffic analysis needed (see below).
Strategic accessibility study	A study which is looking at the relative remoteness of the site from major roads when compared to the rest of the UK. This will demonstrate the effect this would have on costs of construction, costs on the supply chain once operational, the need to travel by private vehicles, and the conflict with prisons policy for prisoners to be closely accessible to jobs, family and health services.	MN	In house	Study been progressed. Demonstrates relative isolation of MoJ site contrary to prison strategy
Levelling Up assessment	ECC have published a so called White Paper relating to levelling up across Essex. Based on the Indices of Deprivation Rural Braintree is identified as one of five Priority Areas alongside Harlow, Basildon, parts of Colchester and Jaywick. The implications of this need to be considered.	RS/JP	In house	Comments made directly to Cllr Butland at WPC who responded to deprivation in Rural Braintree based on ageing population, access to services and public transport, but implications need to be evaluated. Cllr Butland asked in writing to clarify data. Reply chased up by WPC
Ecology assessment	To carry out an ecological survey of the site which will map the Phase 1 habitats and assess the potential of the site following implementation of proposals to support protected and priority species and habitats. Report should identify any likely significant impacts on key biodiversity receptors, including statutory designated and non-designated sites, make recommendations for further detailed Phase 2 surveys where appropriate, highlight how features of ecological value can be protected and suggest mitigation and enhancements to enable biodiversity net gain to be achieved. Carry out a desk-based study to identify records of rare and protected species, and protected areas/habitats, in or around the site.	RG	£3,000.00	Three quotes sought. Two obtained. Need to consider possibility of open mosaic habitat. Reports need update but access to site required. JP sent consultants quotes to review required work. Discussions with NE being progressed
Heritage assessment	To carry out an initial heritage assessment of impact on setting of listed buildings in area around base; consider heritage assets within base and impact of prison proposals consider impact on setting of Wethersfield Conservation Area; consider WASC application to designate base heritage assets, make case for Cons Area status	JP	£3,800.00	CBA appointed. Phase 1 work to include baseline assessment and assessment of non-designated heritage assets and potential for conservation area/monument designation at base. Additional £4500 budget needed if undertake designation application. Historic England and Place Services response to Scoping request a helpful indication of heritage issues
Architectural assessment	Obtain an authoritative view of architectural merits of prison proposals	JP	TBC	Consider possible consultants
Review local and national planning policies	Draw together all relevant policies in Local Plan Part 1 and 2 of BDC Local Plan and NPPF and guidance. Part 2 examination expected to be concluded soon followed by adoption at Council	JP	In House	Lot of this work covered in previous consultation responses. Update to include Part 1 and 2 of Local Plan 2022 when approved by BDC
Respond to EIA scoping request	Provide a WASC response to the Scoping request submitted by MoJ with a December deadline. This seeks a BDC opinion on what matters need to be covered in an Environmental Impact Assessment	JP	In house	Completed. Submitted on 24/12/21
Transport Assessment	To give a qualified and accurate traffic assessment impact statement. Detailed analysis needs to be fully qualified and broken down by type of vehicles generated by prisons plus organic local growth next 10 years.	JP/MN	£2,500.00	Approved by sub-committee. Awaiting fee proposal
			Estimated Total + VAT	£22,975 - £28,467
			Revised Estimated Total + VAT	£22,858 - £28,350

WA8/22-23 BDC PLANNING OFFICERS MEETING UPDATE

Cllr John Pearce gave a debrief on the meeting held today between the WASC Technical Sub-Committee and BDC Planning Officers Emma Goodings and Christopher Paggi. WASC gave an introduction to the set-up and objective of WASC. Currently position for BDC is that they are engaged with the pre-application discussions with the MOJ. BDC Planning Officers are positive to collaborate with WASC and the local community in advance of a planning application from the MOJ. BDC Planning Officers recently visited the Wethersfield Airbase site. Brownfield definition was discussed and they neither agreed or disagreed. A Master Plan requirement with the MOJ/DIO chicken and egg situation was agreed and BDC confirmed this needs addressing. Neighbourhood Plan was also discussed including the potential of a joint plan with Sible Hedingham, Toppesfield, Finchingfield and Wethersfield to cover the Airbase. WASC requested a 3 month planning application response timeline. 16 weeks (statutory 10 weeks) have been requested by BDC. They confirmed they will negotiate with WASC if an application is received, as officers will with recommend or not to the full planning committee. BDC confirmed we are on the right track with regards to the National Policy Framework. BDC requested collaboration on our viewpoints, remoteness and economic report, plus our digital modelling. They further explained they would share these together with the MOJ. WASC will give further consideration to this request. The Deputy Clerk was also asked to check with the Prison Office Association, if their position still stands on opposition of what was known as Titan Prisons, by the Prison Reform Trust, and that prisons should hold no more than 500 prisoners.

WA9/22-23 BDC FOI's

RESOLVED: It was agreed to request again, to Cllr Peter Tattersley, to retract and correct the statement on the misrepresentation of the Parish Councils to all parties identified in the FOI's. Proposer Cllr G Southgate, seconder David Coverdale.

WA10/22-23 SWAP MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

DEFERRED: It was agreed that each Parish Council would check and then confirm if distribution is approved on a monthly basis, in their PC magazine or newsletter distribution.

WA11/22-23 MOJ

RESOLVED: It was agreed to request a meeting with the MOJ. Proposer Cllr R Aggiss (Salings PC), seconded Cllr J Pearce.

WA12/22-23 FUNDING UPDATE

WASC Finance
Updated 20/04/2022

Invoices Received

<u>Date</u>	<u>Supplier</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount ex VAT</u>
27/02/2022	Captial Road Safety	Traffic Monitoring	£600.00
10/03/2022	Sedley Place	Prison Model	£2,137.50
01/03/2022	CBA	Mobilisation Payments	£2,000.00
28/02/2022	Andrew Martin Planning	Briefing note and research	£1,000.00
Total			£5,737.50

Income Received

<u>Date</u>	<u>Payee</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Amount</u>
21/02/2022	Shalford Parish Council	10% Contribution 21/22	£2,150.00
14/03/2022	Toppesfield Parish Council	Contribution	£500.00
	Little Bardfield Parish Council	Contribution	£300.00
11/04/2022			
08/04/2022	The Fields/SWAP	Grant	£5,000.00
Total			£7,950.00
Current Position			£2,212.50

Finchingfield PC 10% precept payment in the pipeline, and Shalford PC 2nd precept payment underway.

WA13/22-23 ITEMS FROM COUNCILLORS TO BE ADDED TO THE NEXT AGENDA

Joint neighbourhood airfield plan Finchingfield, Sible Hedingham, Toppesfield and Wethersfield PC's.
Lobbying planning committee BDC.
WASC Newsletter.

WA14/22-23 NEXT MEETING OF THE WETHERSFIELD AIRBASE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE:

The next meeting of Wethersfield Airbase Scrutiny Committee will be held on Monday May 30th 2022.

The Chairman thanked everybody for attending and declared the meeting closed at 9.38pm.

Signed:
Chairman

Date: