

Parish Council of Coleford

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Minutes of the Parish Council Extraordinary Meeting held on Thursday 18th November 2021

Present

Cllr Ham (Chairman presiding) Cllrs Allen, Banks, Bell, Drescher, Evans, Paterson, Pearce, Townsend and Turner. 25 members of the public attended.

1. Apologies for Absence (acceptance of any reasons offered)

The Clerk sent apologies which were accepted by the Chair.

2. Update on the Gladman application

Cllr Ham opened the meeting and thanked everyone for coming. He explained that this all started 31 months ago with speed and traffic numbers being recorded on Anchor Road whilst the weather conditions were poor. He said that Cllr Townsend would run through the process including the Planning Inspectors report, the Parish Councils Planning Consultants appraisal and the appointed barrister Howard Leithead report which was received late 17th November. After the report the options open to the Parish will be presented and there would be an opportunity for public discussion and a decision on the way forward.

3. Consideration of the latest information

Cllr Townsend presented the following brief of the history of the application, the appeal status and the formal options open to us (please also see the Planning Inspectors Report, Context Planning Appraisal and Barristers report displayed on the Parish Council website www.colefordsomerset.info/notices)

He highlighted specific issues from the Barrister's report which were a concern to us:

- Equalities – comment ‘no obvious failure’.
- Case Law – Inspector was under no obligation to follow the recent rejections at appeal at Chilcompton.
- Landscape impact – Inspector's view of limited harm was subjective but not capable of challenge., also his view that the proposed planting will mitigate the harm was ‘not irrational’.
- Highways – a court was unlikely to consider irrational the Inspector's view that 63 extra houses would not make our narrow lanes materially more dangerous. Somerset Highways have not helped us here.
- Gap with Lipyeate – difficult to challenge as Gladman do propose a gap, though much smaller than we would wish and the precedent set in Wells.
- 5 Year Housing Land Supply – there is no argument with the statement that the Council did not anticipate being compliant in the near future, therefore the Local Plan is out of date.
- Habitats and Ecology – a court would consider he had adequately addressed these.

4. Decide whether to pursue Judicial Review

Cllr Ham ran through the options available:

1. Do nothing. It was agreed that this was not an option.
2. Continue to question all of the conditions and reports that have been asked for through the detailed planning stage. E.g., hedge management / habitat, foul water / sewers, highways, mining reports, 30mph signage etc.
It was agreed that this should be pursued.
3. Judicial review.
The cost would be a minimum of £10K
Risk of liability for the other side's costs - £10K plus.
This would have to be lodged through a solicitor by 1st December 2021 and would include further talks with the consultant Cost approx. £4K
It was recommended that this was not an option.
4. Write to our Member of Parliament. It was agreed that this was a must and that we should also write to Mr Gove, the new Secretary of State, who was familiar with the area as he had visited Frome. Cllrs Ham and Townsend had already written to him, copy to the MP, as Ward Councillors, a copy of that email with other potential issues will be published to give people pointers.
5. Signpost that the reports are available on Parish Council website:
<https://www.colefordsomerset.info/notices> at the earliest opportunity and make the final decision at the Parish Council meeting on Wednesday 24th November. It was agreed that this should be pursued.
6. Use Media. It was agreed that this should be pursued.

Open Debate:

Cllr Ham invited the public to participate in discussion or ask questions. The following points were discussed:

- Cllr Ham confirmed that to date approx. £13K had been spent.
- The issues relating to the potential sewerage problems. The website rivertrust.org.uk has been useful and informative. It showed that discharges of sewage into the Mells Brook at the bottom of the village in 2020 were over 10 times the permitted levels.
- The number of school places were questioned. These are calculated by Somerset County Council
- The capacity of Mendip Country Practice was questioned but they had confirmed the increased numbers would be acceptable
- There were lots of questions raised around detailed planning:
 - Eco green build
 - Electric charging
 - Photovoltaic cells
 - Well insulated
 - Heat source pumps
 - These are issues Gladman have to address in the Low emissions/renewable energy strategy required at the detailed planning stage. The precedent set at Nunney would be pursued.

- 30% of the houses would be affordable which would equate to 20 houses, they would be sold to housing provider and rented out at 80% of local rent market rate ie Aster, Knightstone, Yarlinton, or White horse.
- It was noted that the Parish Council could try to get a Section 106 agreement for a local connection to allow local people have preference of occupation.
- Local Plan Part II Questions. What is the value/worth of the plan? As this site was not in the Plan there were fears that other sites in the village were vulnerable.
- The affordability of pursuing the Judicial Review was a real concern as we are not a rich village
- If we do win can Gladman go again – probably yes with a few changes
- Cllrs Ham and Townsend were asked to canvass our MP David Warburton
- Village facilities were poor so people have to travel, not a green option.

- 5. If it is agreed that a Judicial Review is the way forward, agree how this is to be funded**
 It was agreed that a final decision and vote would be made at the next Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday the 24th November, 7pm @ The Hub, Church Street.

Meeting ended at 20.50hrs