

Wootton Rivers Parish Council

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 16th August 2021

Present:	Dean Cowley	Parish Council Chair
	Clare Bamforth	Vice Chair
	Cindy Creasy	Councillor
	Nick Jones	Councillor
	Steve Rawlings	Councillor
	Neil Worthington	Clerk

Apologies received from Anne Swift

1. Declarations of Interest and the granting of dispensations.

Councillors were reminded of the Code for Conduct and the need to declare any interest relating to the items on the Agenda. Cindy Creasy requested a dispensation to take part in the discussion relating to item 3 of the Agenda (Planning Application PL/2021/06385) due to her knowledge and experience on planning matters but would not take part in any vote on the motion. This request was agreed unanimously by the Council.

2. Planning Application PL/2021/06392 Lock Cottage – change of use application from Christmas tree plantation etc to dog exercise area.

The Applicant explained that they had been advised by Wiltshire Planners that they should seek planning approval for the change of use of part of their land to a dog exercise area. This had started last year as an informal arrangement for local dog owners but had grown over the last year to a more commercial arrangement. Councillors had carried out a site inspection and the following comments about the application were made.

1. There were no parking issues as there was adequate parking and turning space on the site.
2. Concerns about nuisance arising from the noise of dogs barking were unfounded as only 1 or 2 dogs were on site at any time.
3. The operation was well managed and kept to the advertised hours of operation restricted to daylight hours only.
4. There was high demand for the site from local villagers as well as the wider community and positive feedback from users and neighbours.
5. The fencing did not block views.
6. The site owners confirmed that the site was used only for dog walking and there were no plans to expand services to include kennelling, dog day care etc.
7. It was confirmed that the dog exercise facility would not be open for use during the Christmas Tree sale period which was planned to continue as normal.

Following discussion, a motion to SUPPORT the application was proposed by Clare Bamforth, seconded by Steve Rawlings and was agreed by all Councillors.

3. Planning Applications PL/2021/06929 Erection of 3 bed dwelling and associated works on land adjoining Kennet and Avon canal.

The Applicant and Agent had been notified that the application was being discussed at the meeting but were not in attendance. Councillors were invited to comment on the application and the following points were made.

1. A site inspection had taken place although it was noted that the request to the agent to unlock the gates had been ignored.
2. The site is described in the application as infill (which would allow building) was incorrect as the Neighbourhood Plan excluded this field from the built area. This had been deliberately left out of the built area to prevent housing backing onto the canal.
3. There was no requirement to go outside the built area as Wootton Rivers, defined as a small village had contributed 12 houses in the last 8 years – a 10% growth which far exceeds expectations for a small village – this shows that the NP works to direct housing to the right places.
4. The 3 bed house as designed doesn't meet local needs or contribute to sustainability
5. The house would be visible from the canal due to its scale and size.
6. The house would be very visible from the road and would be an imposing building from that viewpoint.
7. It would create new development along the canal which apart from the historic buildings of Manor Farmhouse and Lock Cottage does not exist in Wootton Rivers.
8. It will have a significant impact on listed buildings; it will loom over The Halt and will be seen from Manor Farmhouse.
9. The design and materials used are wrong for the village and it doesn't add to the delight and character of the village.
10. The house is 3 times the normal size of a 3 bedroom house and is a deliberate attempt to get around the NP requirements. The study on the first floor is clearly a 4th bedroom.
11. Windows are shown on the second floor which indicates that further accommodation is to be added in the roof space at a later stage.
12. The style of the house is grandiose and competes with the more significant houses in the village. The full height doors at first floor level onto a balcony are uncharacteristic of houses in the village. The design is generic and could have been taken from a housing estate brochure.
13. It was noted that the green notice had been located beyond the locked gate which prevented people seeing the application.
14. The access to the site is compromised. It is impossible to safely turn in and out of the site.
15. The NP drew the built area line to exclude this field and Wiltshire Core Strategy states that no development should elongate the village.
16. Documents submitted in support of the application include various statements which are incorrect ie it is surrounded on 3 sides by existing built development, it is at the centre of the village, the visibility at the access is deemed to be good, there is no loss of privacy, the views between the Grade II* listed site and the plot are not affected etc

17. The new Wiltshire Council planning website no longer shows who is being consulted. Confirmation is needed that the Canal and River Trust and the Conservation Officer have both been consulted.
18. As the site is outside the built area the application should be dismissed out of hand without further consideration.

Following full discussion and after hearing further comments from the floor made by almost 40 members of the public present, a motion of OBJECTION to the application due to the reasons above was proposed by Steve Rawlings, seconded by Cindy Creasy and was agreed by all Councillors.

It was agreed that, due to the number of reasons for the objection, the draft of the response to Wiltshire Council Planners would be circulated for agreement to Councillors before submission.

4. Planning Applications PL/2021/06385 Erection of 3 bed dwelling with associated works on land at Forest Road (adjacent Manor Farm).

The Applicant and Agent had been notified that the application was being discussed at the meeting but were not in attendance. Councillors were invited to comment on the application and the following points were made.

1. It was agreed that the site was correctly identified as an infill site but that there were numerous reasons why the house as designed is physically too large for the site and the design is out of keeping for the village.
2. The position of the house on the plot is too close to the rear of the site and should be more in the centre of the plot.
3. The ridge height of the house is much too high.
4. The trees are self-seeded and not long lived and the trees near the road need to be felled or substantially reduced as previously requested by the PC but the Arbocultural Report does not address this.
5. It is a 5 bed house masquerading as a 3 bed house to comply with the NP.
6. The design does not fit in with Manor Farmhouse or the old farm buildings.
7. This is a unique site set in the curtilage of the Manor Farmhouse and surrounded by the 3 most significant buildings in the village and the design does not take this into account.
8. The site tells the history of the farm and there is still a sense of the historic farmyard. The design of the new house makes no reference to the agricultural setting in the design or materials to fit in with the former farmyard and detracts from the other properties and disrespects the heritage of the site.
9. The house dwarfs Church Barn and the proposed new building in the adjacent plot.
10. Due to its size the house competes with Manor Farmhouse.
11. The materials and design do not comply with the NP ie contrasting brickwork, stone window surrounds.
12. The view of the church from canal bridge and the road will be obliterated due to the height of the building.
13. The house would look into Manor Farmhouse, Wootton House, the churchyard and would be very visible from them.

14. It is impractical to keep all the trees as shown as the garden and little doubt that the occupier will try to remove additional trees. The leaning trees next to the road will have to be felled or drastically reduced all of which will reduce the tree screen.
15. Core Policy 2 states that the design should respect the character of the site and the form of the settlement – this design does not.
16. The NPPF states that proposals should be sympathetic to the local character and history – this design does not.
17. Core Policy 58 states that the proposals should protect, conserve and where possible enhance the environment – this design does not.
18. The site is surrounded by the three most historic buildings in the village and does not respect them.
19. Although described as a 3 bed house the footprint and high roof indicates that the accommodation will later be expanded and the application confirms this by stating that the design should be flexible so that it can grow.
20. The Case Officers Report for the approved new property on the adjoining site gave the reasoning for approval, including that it was a modest building, its simplistic design complimented the old converted agricultural buildings, was of a size commensurate to the plot and of modest height and does not impose or dominate the streetscene. The proposed design for this application does none of these things.
21. The green notice had been displayed on the access gate to the land which was on a private road and not visible to members of the public.
22. The house will be prominent from Manor Farm Cottages and will obstruct the view of the church from Lock Cottage.
23. When the trees are thinned or eventually removed the rear of the house will be visible from the street – this will be the only house which is orientated this way as all other houses in the village either face or have the gable ends towards the street which is described as a feature of the village in the Conservation Area Statement.
24. The access arrangements are confused as reference is made to 2 accesses. This needs clarification as well as confirmation that legal access for building work exists.

A full discussion followed and further comments from the floor in support of the above objections were made by many members of the public in attendance. It was therefore proposed that, although the principle of development on this site as infill is accepted, because of the numerous reasons detailed above regarding the design, size, scale, effect on the surrounding buildings etc of the proposed house, that the Parish Council should to make an OBJECTION to this application and a motion to this effect was proposed by Clare Bamforth, seconded by Nick Jones and was agreed by all Councillors entitled to vote. Due to the number of reasons for the objection, the draft of the response to Wiltshire Council Planners would be circulated for agreement to Councillors before submission.

5. Any Other Urgent Business – no items were raised.

6. Date of the next meeting is 6th September 2021 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.