

Whitestone & Bulkington Community Forum

Bulkington Community Library
School Road, Bulkington, CV12 9JB
Thursday 16 February 2017

Present:

Cllr John Beaumont (Chair)
Cllr Julian Gutteridge

Cllr Jeff Morgan
Mike Slemensek (WCC)

Cllr June Tandy
Sergeant Nathan Hewitt

Apologies:

Simone Hines (NBBC)
Cllr Sam Margrave

There were 55 members of the public present. The meeting commenced at 7.05pm.

1. Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1 Mike Slemensek began proceedings by welcoming everyone and covered health and safety procedures. He then handed over to the chair of the meeting Cllr John Beaumont.

2. Matters arising from the last Forum (summary of action sheet)

- (1) Crime figures on theft – An update would be given when the police arrived/would be circulated to members if the police did not attend.
- (2) Update on proposed Traders Association – Cllr Beaumont updated that there had not been enough interest from the larger traders to make this a viable venture and the vicar who was involved in this has moved away from area. Therefore this idea will not be progressed further.
- (3) Double mini-island – Lutterworth Road – Cllr Morgan updated and has liaised with Council officers about this – historically there is not enough available space to convert the double mini-island into a larger roundabout and further to that there is no issue of accidents/collisions taking place at this location that raises an issue of significant threat to public safety. Cllr Morgan noted concerns about the inconvenience to motorists of queuing at the mini-island during peak hours.
- (4) Bramcote Bridge - temporary weight restriction – Cllr Morgan updated that he has spoken to Council officers and established that the temporary signs will be replaced by a traffic order which will confirm the current weight restrictions.
- (5) Update on entrance to Whitestone shops – Cllr Morgan updated that he has met with Alan Gilbey. However the land in question is privately owned and consequently WCC has no direct control over this. Attempts have been made to contact the owners of the land concerned but this has not been possible so far as it is not locally owned.
- (6) Zebra crossing on Lutterworth Road – Cllr Morgan updated that the trees that were obscuring the signs have been cut back following his approach to the council. This will be monitored in future.

- (7) Coventry and Ashby Canal – Cllr Tandy updated that a Councillor grant cannot be used for the purposes of providing litter and dog-fouling bins on the bridges. A discussion followed about the issues affecting the public use of the canal network locally and the role and responsibilities of the Canal and River Trust.
- (8) Lack of meeting notes from the previous meeting – Mike Slemensek said that all meeting notes are stored electronically on the WCC database. Checks have been made to ensure all minutes are on the system these notes will be circulated in advance of every meeting to all local contacts on our database. It is important that attendees to the forum leave their email addresses so that they can receive the minutes.
- (9) Promotion of the community forum – Mike Slemensek said that the forums are promoted widely by the Localities and Partnerships Team – but further work needs to be done to get the information into local freebie circulations. Work on this will continue. A need for a correction to the last minutes which referred to N&B Neighbourhood Watch, instead of Bedworth and Bulkington Neighbourhood Watch – was noted at this point.
- (10) State of the road signs in Warwickshire - Mike Slemensek updated that he had raised this on behalf of the Forum with the County Council Highways Team. There is no set regime for cleaning all signs in the County; instead the ongoing process is for signs specifically identified to be in need of cleaning to be dealt with at the time. The Highways and other Council teams in the course of their work always report in any signs in need of cleaning and the Council will also respond directly when dirty signs are reported by members of the public. Mike emphasised the importance of members reporting matters to the relevant authorities at the time and drew attention to leaflets he had brought to the meeting with a list of contact details for reporting matters.
- (11) Speed sign at the top of Eastboro Way onto Hinckley Road – Mike Slemensek updated that he met with WCC Highways about this. The Highways Team have visited the location and carried out an assessment. They have found that the signage is correct and does not need re-design. In terms of installing a 30 mph repeater sign after the junction – this is not necessary and not allowed by law because the road is a 'restricted road' – insofar as it has streetlamps which are 200 yards or less apart from each other which denotes that the maximum speed limit on this road is 30mph. This is a national convention required by law and cannot be diverted from (by use of additional signs). They advised that if speeding is a problem on this road then this is an issue of enforcement which the police may be able to assist with, as appropriate and in accordance with the severity and risk caused.

3. Safer Neighbourhood Team Update

- 3.1 An update on policing issues was provided by Police Sergeant Nathan Hewitt. This included a review of crime figures and Sgt Hewitt included advice too about preventing theft from vehicles by simply ensuring your car is locked at all times. He reported that many thefts were taking place because owners had left their vehicles unlocked – making it easy for opportunist thieves.

- 3.2 Sgt Hewitt also reported about a small number of 'car key burglaries' – offenders breaking into homes with the purpose of taking car keys which are then used to steal the householder's vehicle. Sgt Hewitt warned that such offenders can often resort to violence and advised that car keys should not be taken upstairs at night and left in bedrooms.

Policing issues raised

- 3.3 Since Bramcote Bridge was closed to heavy lorries there are HGVs coming along Withybrook Road at 80-90mph. Sgt Hewitt said he has liaised with the Operational Policing Unit and asked for officers to pay attention to this location whilst out on patrol.

ACTION: Sgt Hewitt to update at next meeting.

- 3.4 An image was posted on social media of people checking car doors. Did the police see this? Sgt Hewitt was aware and said that one person was arrested in connection with this and has been recalled to prison.
- 3.5 The issue of drug dealing in the village was raised – with a white van seen in suspicious circumstances. Sgt Hewitt asked everyone to report matters like this to the police and if possible, to make a note any vehicle registration numbers.
- 3.6 A member of the public gave praise to PCSO Sue Laing for providing advice in relation to a problem of intimidating behaviour by young people and how this should be reported.

4. Wider discussion on issues in the local area – Borough Plan

- 4.1 The draft Borough Plan which is out for consultation was the key topic of the evening – with most if not all members of the public present wishing to express their views and concerns about proposed development of green belt land to the West and East of Bulkington village.
- 4.2 Cllr Beaumont began the discussion by setting out his views on the considerations within the proposals and the options for the residents of Bulkington in responding to these. Cllr Beaumont referred to a 12 page summary of the Borough Plan – which he had made available in hard copy to all attendees of the meeting. The summary was a useful document because it informed people amongst other things of the legal requirements; the history of housing in the Borough; the stages the Borough Plan has been through; how representations can be made; the strategic housing and employment sites and a list of the infrastructure considerations to support each identified site.
- 4.3 Cllr Beaumont said that there was a requirement in law for the Borough Council to respond to the pressure and need for more housing, resulting in the proposals in the draft Plan. If the Borough does not respond adequately to this legal duty then a Government Planning Inspector will be appointed to ensure a Borough Plan is implemented which fulfils the duty required of the Council. Cllr Beaumont said that the process, whilst it must conform to Town and Country Planning legislation, is not designed to protect the green belt but places housing need for the next 15 years as the over-riding objective.
- 4.4 Cllr Beaumont referred to the history of housing development in the village; since 1889 when Bulkington was a hamlet there have only been two significant housing development phases since then, bringing it to its current size and population. The plan shows the infrastructure proposals to be considered to ensure the new housing development is properly supported – for example – necessary road improvements/network.

- 4.5 Cllr Beaumont acknowledged the feelings and concerns of residents and said he would be happy to present and support any petitions and also suggested that residents should also talk to their MP. However Cllr Beaumont felt that the village should protect itself from any adverse impact of development by engaging with the process and ensuring infrastructure needs are met – as outlined in the Plan – to make sure these things do happen. He said that £1-2 million pounds from developers could be available for this.
- 4.6 Cllr Beaumont went on to suggest that the creation of Local Neighbourhood Planning Forum would help residents to make their voices heard in the forthcoming process. He said that the Borough is obliged to co-operate and work with such a forum and this would help to ensure residents got the full benefit of infrastructure development and funding.
- 4.7 Cllr Beaumont answered questions and there was wide-ranging discussion. Many members of the public present were firmly against the proposals in Plan and some rejected the idea that there was a need for housing development at all. The views expressed by different people and shared by many included:
- There should not be development on the green belt.
 - No requirement for additional housing on the scale proposed in Bulkington.
 - £1-2 million for infrastructure was insufficient and would not go far.
 - The proposals were being driven by the housing development industry.
 - The Plan should be rejected outright and opposed from the outset.
 - Best use is not being made of existing accommodation – examples were given of student accommodation being unused.
 - Nuneaton and Bedworth is the most densely populated Borough in the Shire – why are we taking more?
 - 8 acres of land was sold at Parrots Grove for £200,000. Why was that land not used for development?
 - We are taking more than our fair share.
 - There will be a profound effect on communities caused by this and the roads will be gridlocked.
- 4.8 Cllr Morgan stated that there is a group of residents who do not accept this plan and there will be a public meeting next week to help people make representations. A Mr Cvetkovic from Bulkington said that there would be a public meeting tomorrow in the village with a view to creating a community-led steering group to put together representations against the plans. Arguments against will be prepared and presented to the Borough Council and the Government Inspector and a petition can be organised.
- 4.9 Anyone wishing to contact the Steering group or who wishes an update from them can do so by emailing the following:
- grant.littlejohns@gmail.com**
- 4.10 One member of the public spoke of ‘reserve’ sites for development that have not been mentioned and gave Hawkesbury village as an example. Lynn Price spoke of her experience in terms of land development issues saying that over the last 15 years Hawkesbury had grown from 120 – 700 homes. Lynn spoke of her experience of housing developers arriving to building houses - and then leaving. She made the point that from her

experience it is better to make points and representations now at the earliest possible stage and engage in dialogue for the benefit of local people.

- 4.11 Cllr Tandy in response to several questions about consultation reiterated that the Borough has a duty to submit a plan and ensure the number of homes that are adequate. If the Borough refuses, a Government Inspector will decide matters. It was made clear that there was a consultation process – residents can go on line to make comments or can complete a hard copy representations form and send or take it to the Town Hall. Cllr Tandy had brought representation forms with her which were made available at the meeting.

5. Other matters

- 5.1 Gipsy Lane – Several residents reported that despite previous action by councillors there were still continuing problems with mud on the road as a result of vehicles coming off the quarry site.
- 5.2 Mike Slemensek reminded all attendees that the following paperwork had been put out for them to take:
- Councillor grant application forms and information sheets
 - Maps showing exiting and new Electoral Division boundaries that come into force on 4th May 2017
 - Leaflets providing contact numbers and email addresses for reporting issues to the appropriate agency
 - Representation forms
 - Borough Plan summaries
- 5.3 All attendees were advised to feed their views into the Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council's consultation process.
- 5.4 The meeting closed at 9.05pm.

6. Next meeting date

- 6.1 This will be in June and the date will be notified to everyone well in advance.