

We received a presentation which is available to view on the website. The Chairman and the Ward Councillor met with the Case Officer on the 27th October who advised that the sales price of the homes is not considered to be a material planning matter. She also clarified that scale does not refer to the absolute size of the homes, but refers to the height and length of each building in relation to its surroundings. This means that we cannot argue for smaller homes under the “scale” heading or on the basis of anticipated sales price.

The Parish Council, however, remain determined that the development should provide homes that meet local need and it was noted that house price inflation may have increased the potential profit margin on each property, possibly impacting the viability of affordable homes on the site. Accordingly, it was suggested that a new affordability report should be commissioned. It was also noted that the report was out of date at the time the outline planning permission was granted and this has been forwarded to the Case Officer for comment.

The Ward Councillor advised that the new Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill will be targeted to new developments and will not impact this application.

He also reported that he is in communication with MF Freemans and read a letter to the meeting which detailed where plans have been adjusted to address Parish Council objections. Revised draft plans are pending and Cllr Biggs confirmed he will share them once they have been received.

He went on to confirm that the development will be connected to the existing main sewerage system at the stipulation of Welsh Water, and that he is still pushing Welsh Water to clarify the capacity of the current system.

Footpath Surface:

Members then considered three options for surfacing the section of Green Lane that forms the accessible footpath from the development to the village:



- 1) tarmac (as preferred by Herefordshire Council)
- 2) a hard surface with a high friction grit finish, or
- 3) hoggin, as the picture, which HC have advised they will not maintain.

You may be aware that the Parish Council own Green Lane on behalf of the Parish and were not keen to change the surface of the path. However, Herefordshire Council have shared details of the law that, in this instance, does allow them to alter the surface of a footpath without the landowner’s consent.

The developer has suggested that they may be minded to incorporate the maintenance of a hoggin surface into the resident’s service charge and therefore it was agreed that this was the preferred option so long as it is maintained by MF Freemans or via the service charge, or unless any further options are proposed.

Streetlighting:

Members proceeded to consider the provision of streetlighting on the development and unanimously agreed not to request the installation of streetlighting in accordance with the policy on dark skies in the NDP. It was noted that the Dark Skies Covenant negotiated with the developers at Mill Field and Potato Barn would also apply to this development.

Herefordshire Council News:

Ward Councillor, Graham Biggs, reported that:

- Cabinet have approved the library move to the Shire Hall;
- The capital budget has been withdrawn but will be presented to full council in December;
- An additional £10million is being proposed to address resurfacing and potholes, though this may be focused on main routes;
- BBLP have met all key performance indicators in connection with extending their contract and that the contract has been extended for a further two years;
- Every council is facing revenue challenges, including Herefordshire who are facing a £10million overspend, and are currently looking to balance the budget.

Village Walk-Round:

Councillors carried out an assessment of the village in October and compiled a list of maintenance issues. Some of these will be assigned to the Lengthsman, a few are the responsibility of homeowners who will be asked to attend to them, and some have been reported to BBLP and I shall be continuing to progress actions during the month to attend to the issues identified. We met with our Locality Steward at the end of October and whilst he rejected some, he did agree to put forward a number of actions for attention and has marked them accordingly. It is worth noting he was keen to clarify that even though he has proposed the works, they may yet be rejected further along the line.

However, BBLP are scheduled to clear the brook along Common Hill Lane of weeds and clear the connecting culverts – hopefully very soon. As I write, they are in the process of hiring an HGV to take away the spoil from here and from other sites in nearby parishes.

Highways:



The annual survey of grit bins has been carried out and I shall be contacting BBLP to establish if there will be an annual top-up this year. We shall also be contacting MF Freemans to find out if they will be siting grit bins on the new developments.

The Lengthsman has carried out a number of drainage and general maintenance tasks during October, and will be asked to clear leaf debris at the end of the Autumn. The hedge along Biggs Lane has been trimmed but will also need reducing in height by approximately 3ft so I shall be seeking quotations for this during the next few weeks.

Weeds are an ongoing issue and one which presents the Parish Council with a dilemma. We cannot find a contractor who is prepared to hand weed, strimming raises concerns of potential damage from stones or debris, and spraying is not a popular choice amongst some residents. We would therefore like to ask, provided you feel safe and able to do so, that you keep on top

of any weeds on the pavements outside your home. The Parish Council may have no alternative but to engage a sprayer next spring if we cannot find an alternative solution.

Traffic Calming Scheme:

We have still not received an update from BBLP/HC but I shall be chasing this as a matter of urgency.

Roadside Parking outside West End Stores:

Concerns were raised about parking outside the West End Stores and the impact on cars exiting Scotch Firs. It was noted that the traffic calming scheme includes a beige block at the bottom of the junction which may detract drivers from parking on it, thereby keeping the junction clear, and it was agreed to reassess after the scheme has been completed. However, if we could please ask you to make use of the car park if you do happen to take your car to the shop, then that would be appreciated by the residents of Scotch Firs.

Parish Council Vacancy:

We still have one vacancy remaining which we are really keen to fill to enable the PC to run at full capacity. If you are interested at all, please do get in touch, we're building a great team!

Regular Newsletters:

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And finally, as there is no Flag produced during December, on behalf of the Parish Council, all that's left is for me to wish you all a very Happy Christmas and New Year.

Dates for your diary:

- Environment Group Meeting, 27th November, 7pm, Green Man
- Parish Council Meeting: 6th December, 7pm, Pavilion

Helen Tinson, Clerk
clerk@fownhopeparishcouncil.gov.uk
07989 066782