

Parish Council Meeting

Monday 14th May 2018

Chairman's Statement on the Colchester Road Housing Development Proposal

Before the next item, parishioners' questions, as I am aware of the concerns voiced about the Parish Council's response to the consultation on the proposed Colchester Road Housing Development planning application I would like to make the following statement:

Firstly, I confirm that the Chairman and three Parish Councillors met here with Gladman's on Tuesday 5th December at Gladman's request to have their proposals explained to us prior to the planning application submission.

It was agreed that the meeting would be informal, its purpose being for Councillors to hear the details and to ask questions as appropriate. Both sides agreed not to publish any comments made during the meeting and Gladman's agreed that they would not take any comments made by Councillors to imply the Parish Council's approved or otherwise of the scheme.

Notes were taken at the meeting and these are available.

Exploratory meetings with developers are not unusual, in the past the Parish Council met with Mr. Webber to discuss his initial plans for the Colchester Road land and we also met with the then owner of the Bells Garage site to discuss his proposals for a convenience store.

Secondly, I confirm that all seven Parish Council members met here on Wednesday 28th March to agree our response to the planning application lodged with Braintree District Council.

We had not called a special open meeting because a Bures Hamlet Parish Council Meeting and the Joint Annual Parish Meeting held immediately prior to this sub-committee meeting gave ample opportunity for parishioners to raise any concerns that they had.

All members were fully aware of the details of the application; the need shown in the Parish Survey for affordable housing; the extent of the village infrastructure and we knew the strength of the public opposition shown in the responses to the District Council. We are also aware that all such applications are considered under the principles of the NPPF and Braintree District Council's planning policies.

After a full and frank discussion at the meeting the Chairman subsequently contacted each member to confirm their considered opinion prior to drafting the Council's qualified response to Braintree District Council.

Notes were taken at the meeting and these are available.

In the meantime, one member had resigned because of personal reasons and therefore our response was based on the views of the remaining six members.

I am satisfied that each member came to their decision independently based on what they personally considered to be in the best interests of the village and this resulted in 50% of the Council being broadly in favour of the proposal and 50% against.

Since then one further member has resigned and has publicly stated their views on social media.

We have co-opted one member this evening to fill the first vacancy and, having in due course ascertained their view, I intend to state the Parish Council's latest position at the forthcoming Planning Committee Meeting should it differ from that already submitted.

It is worth reiterating that the Parish Council's views will not determine the outcome of the planning application, the decision rests with the District Council based on officers recommendations.

Should any member of the public consider that the Parish Council has acted inappropriately in this matter then they should make representations through the appropriate channels and if anyone has evidence of corruption than I would suggest that they take their evidence to the police.