

**Wheathampstead Parish Council  
Parish Council Meeting  
25 June 2015, 19.55h**

Present	Councillors	D Johnston A Brewster A Dante D Davies E Habib T Reason J Shardlow P Wilby P Woodhams	Chairman
		J Warren	Clerk to the Council
		Press	0
		Public	1

**4181 -15 Apologies and introductions**

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillors G Clark (SADC Deputy Mayoral function), L Halford and S Haynes (personal reasons).

**4182-15 Specific Declarations of Interest & Dispensations**

None.

**4183-15 Co-option to Parish Council**

Councillor Elias Habib, having signed the declaration of acceptance of office, was welcomed as duly elected co-opted parish councillor.

**4184-15 Public Speaking**

None.

**4185-15 Minutes of Council**

The Chairman proposed and it was agreed that the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 May 2015 be approved.

**Resolved: To confirm the Minutes of the meeting held on 28 May 2015 to be a true and fair account and for these to be signed by the Chairman.**

**4186-15 Minutes of Committee Meetings**

The Chairman proposed, and it was agreed, that the following draft working group notes were received and adopted:

Community Involvement Committee	1 June
Allotments Committee	8 June
Maintenance Committee	15 June
Village weekend WG	9 June
Bury Green WG	2 June
Planning Committee	24 June

<b>Resolved:</b>	<b>To receipt and adopt the draft Notes of Community Involvement Committee</b>	<b>1 June</b>
	<b>Allotments Committee</b>	<b>8 June</b>
	<b>Maintenance Committee</b>	<b>15 June</b>
	<b>Village weekend WG</b>	<b>9 June</b>
	<b>Bury Green WG</b>	<b>2 June</b>
	<b>Planning Committee</b>	<b>24 June</b>

#### **4187-15 Planning Matters – Jarvis**

Mr Margereson presented ideas for potential development of a small site on the Cory Wright Way. He sought ideas on housing types and designs. Councillors stressed that no commitments could be given prior to plan submission, but highlighted their concerns regarding traffic and access, and traditional opposition to any development in the Green Belt.

#### **4188-15 Referral of Planning application for Council consideration Pay and Play Golf Course**

The following planning application, referred by Planning Committee Minute 4177-15 was discussed.

5/2015/1551	Wheathampstead Pay And Play Golf Course Ltd Harpenden Road Wheathampstead Hertfordshire AL4 8EZ	Remodelling of existing 9 hole golf course, enlargement of water features, remodelling of practice range, creation of chip and putting green areas and associated landscape works
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Councillor Wilby proposed, seconded by Councillor Woodhams, and it was agreed, that this be recommended for refusal by St Albans District Council:

<b>Resolved</b>	<b>To recommend for refusal plans 5/2015/1551 on the following grounds:</b>
	<b>Wheathampstead Parish Council welcomes any development which will increase enterprise and economic</b>

**activity in the area and the provision of enhanced sporting and leisure facilities for its residents. However we are concerned that the development would come at too high a cost to the local community and feel that this site is a totally unacceptable location for any inert waste.**

**Our reasons for refusal are as detailed below.**

- 1. We are of the opinion that this application is in fact an industrial operation which conflicts with the Local Plan and National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) 2012 in relation to Green Belt policy and purpose. The applicants web homepage (<http://pepperacre.co.uk/>) states "In recent years Pepperacre has established itself as the market leader in remodelling courses via the importation of inert waste landfill." This suggests that this application is an industrial operation and should require a change of use for the site which is located in the Green Belt. Appeal APP/P0430/A/13/2196885 to the Planning Inspectorate for a similar development on a Green Belt in 2013 concluded that the appeal should be dismissed as "the operation should be viewed as a change in the use of land for waste disposal" and that the proposed development was not one of the forms of development listed in paragraph 90 of the Framework. The Inspectorate also noted that the depositing of 124,403 cubic meters of material would not preserve the openness of the Green Belt and that the proposed work was inappropriate development (please see Appendix 1 for a full copy of this appeal decision). In conclusion we feel that this application constitutes inappropriate development in the Green Belt under paragraph 90 of the Framework and Policy 1 (c).**

- 2. We are aware that the owner will derive considerable short-term economic benefit from the accepting of 175,000 cubic meters of inert waste onto the land. We are concerned that this may be the driving force behind the proposed development rather than the long term viability of a golf course and asset to the village.**
- 3. We welcome the provision of free use of the course for children and young people. However there is no easy safe access either on foot or by bicycle to the site from Wheathampstead village. We are also aware that a number of other local golf courses, including Aldwickbury Park Golf Club, cater for a large section of young people and children. In conclusion we do not feel that young people and children will take up the offer of free use.**
- 4. Golfing in the area is declining with the closure of one of the three major golf clubs within a mile and a half radius in the last 5 years. It is not clear that this upgraded golf course has an economic future. The nearest golf course is less than two thirds of a mile away as the crow flies. It has both a 9 hole and 18 hole course with competitive fees for non-members. We are aware of recruitment drives for new members across the Parish by a number of golf courses and are concerned that Wheathampstead Play and Pay Golf Course will fail to recruit new members once developed. If the Wheathampstead Pay and Play Golf Course should fail after the landfill exercise the land could not easily be returned to agricultural use. We note the proposed marketing initiatives and wonder why these have not been attempted with the course as it is. Whilst we realise that an enhanced course would be more easily marketed, the design and access statement accepts that the existing course has some attractive and marketable features.**

- 5. We accept that it is self-evident that the golf course as proposed would be more attractive to new players than the "flat and un-interesting" one it currently is. Beyond the simple assertion that this is "something that the market prefers" there appears to be no market analysis of where the new players would come from and how this would increase the revenue and viability of the course. We also note that no provision has been made for any impact an increase in membership would have on the existing club house facilities.**
- 6. Whilst we appreciate that the commercial risk is a matter for the owner, the Council is concerned that after a highly disruptive development, the golf course may still not be a viable venture and worse that the land may be rendered unusable.**
- 7. We note that consideration has been given in the report to dust, mud and noise generated by the landscaping. Whilst consideration has been given to mitigating these factors they would not be eliminated altogether. We are concerned about the effects that this will have, particularly on the residents of Amwell, local traffic and the lives of those also using the route not least since the development will last 18 months. In conclusion we feel that this disruption outweighs the benefits from an improved facility.**
- 8. We have considered the Construction Traffic Management Plan and note with very deep concern the impact extra HGV traffic during the construction on the development will have on roads leading to the site. We note the observations in a recent review of the transport related information provided to SADC produced**

**by Gateway TSP, transport planners. This questions many aspects of the suitability of the roads leading to the site. This technical document has been submitted by a third party for consideration.**

**There are a number of route options available to lorries, including junction 4 off the A1/A414, junction 10 off the M1 onto the Lower Luton Road as well as the route from junction 9 off the M1 as mentioned in the plan. If the route in the plan is accepted it would require HGVs to travel through Southdown, through the residential Piggottshill Lane and then the partially residential Wheathampstead Road.**

**With 175,000 cubic metres of waste and each HGV carrying 16 tonnes or 10 cubic metres (presuming that each carries its optimum load) this has been calculated as a total of 175,000 separate loads each be carried out within an 18 month period. This works out as up to 41 loads per day between the hours of 7:30am and 18:00 Monday to Friday. This means one laden load arriving every 10 minutes which then returns un-laden by the same route. Each point along the route a HGV would pass on average every 5 minutes.**

**We are surprised by the assertion in the report that this level of increased traffic would not cause a significant increase in danger to road users, noise and disruption to the residents along the route, traffic congestion, or damage to the roads themselves. The report does not go into any detail how these conclusions are arrived at. We note that consideration might be given to the restriction of the times during which HGVs are operated (although the report does not think it necessary) but this would only increase the frequency of the vehicles, to one every three minutes if for example the times were restricted between 9:30am and 3:30pm. It is not clear from the**

**report if there would be any attempt to regulate the flow of HGVs and whether there would be clusters at certain times of the day which in itself would cause extra disruption, or implement enforcement to deal drivers that that deviate from any agreed routes.**

- 9. We note from the Environment Impact Statement that careful consideration has been given to the impact of the development if the land continues in use as a golf course.**

**In conclusion we feel that the significant increase on traffic should not be permitted under Local Plan Policy 34 "Highway considerations in development control" (in relation to road safety, environmental impact of traffic and local rural roads), and that the points raised in this section are at odds with paragraph 88 and 90 (c) of the Framework.**

- 10. We are concerned what may happen to the land if it turns out that despite the development, the golf course cannot be run as a going concern. No consideration appears to have been given to what alternative use the land could be put to after it has been landscaped with inert waste. If the only alternative would be to have the waste removed and disposed of elsewhere, the cost may be prohibitive rendering the land for all intents and purposes unusable.**

*Post meeting note: the above plan was withdrawn by SADC on 26 June 2015 as an invalid application.*

#### **4189-15 Approval of Business Plan**

Councillor Shardlow proposed, seconded by Councillor Brewster, and it was agreed that the Business Plan, circulated and reviewed per Minute 4124-15, be approved.

**Resolved To approve the Parish Council Business Plan.**

**4190-15 Maintenance Contractor**

Further to Minute 4165-15 the Chairman proposed, and it was agreed that the Maintenance Contractor be asked to submit quarterly quotations from 1 July 2015.

**Resolved The Maintenance Contractor be asked to submit quarterly quotations from 1 July 2015.**

**4191-15 Annual Return 2014-15 & Governance Statement**

The draft annual return with governance statement and accounts for the year ending 31 March 2015 had been previously circulated. This was discussed and unanimously approved including line by line confirmation of the governance statement. Proposed by the Chairman and unanimously agreed.

**Resolved That the Chairman and Clerk sign the Annual Return sections 1 and 2 as presented on behalf of Council.**

**4192-15 Accounts for Payment and Finance Reports**

The circulated reports were reviewed and noted.

**Resolved To note the reports.**

*Cllr Shardlow left the meeting.*

**4193-15 Consultations, training and meetings**

The Chairman reported on a meeting at SADC with representatives from HCC, Cllr Brewster and the Clerk on 29 May. HCC had undertaken to chase Persimmon regarding the outstanding issues at Butterfield Road. If necessary this would be pursued through their legal department . The Chairman reported on the meeting with HCC Highways and County Councillor Crawley on 3 June. Concerns that no realistic safe route to school existed along the Lower Luton Road to Harpenden. Cllr Crawley had requested that the Parish Council look for lit cycle route options also usable by pedestrians. She had also encourage a vociferous letter to HCC from WDS regarding the Lower Luton Road, perhaps backed by a public petition.



WPC had offered to contact the land owner of the 'goat field' adjacent to the Lower Luton Road in relation to reducing the earth mound (which restricted the footway) upon which the fence was constructed.

County policy was to declutter signage, recommendation that the WDPS be involved in identifying redundant signage.

HCC were to consider any action possible regarding the poor access from MacIntyre onto Station Road, a number of accidents and many near misses had been recorded.

Councillor Brewster reported that Tesco delivery arrangements had changed and the van should no longer come via Welwyn, this should alleviate congestions issues.

**Resolved**                      **To note the report.**

**4194-15 Additional time**

The Chairman proposed and it was agreed that the meeting be extended beyond 22.30hours so that business may be concluded. Standing Order 1z to be suspended.

**Resolved**                      **To suspend Standing Order 1z and continue the meeting beyond 22.30h.**

**4195-15 Consultations, training and meetings**

The Chairman and Clerk had met the SADC arboricultural Officer on 9 June to look at overgrown trees on The Hill on the BOAT (byway open to all traffic). This project had the potential for joint working with HCC, WPC and volunteers could potentially undertake some work, some would require a road closure. Following discussion the recommendation was that WPC submit a two stage treework application to SADC.

Councillor Reason and the Clerk had met with Bartletts, tree experts, to discuss the damaged and dying goat willows on the North Meads on 19 June. The problem had been identified as Squirrel damage. Support was offered including a future planting plan.

In relation to HCC (who had cancelled their parish conference ) the Chairman reported that verge cutting, previously undertaken by SADC contractors was now the responsibility of HCC. A number of problems regarding timing had been encountered. HCC had also reported a saving of £1m from switching off street lights and instigating a 10 year plan for LED replacement bulbs. The savings from cancelling rural bus services had been queried.

Chairman, Clerk and Councillor Clark had attended the Nomansland Joint Committee and annual inspection on 11 June. Attempts to source a sustainable curved bench to demarcate the puddingstone were being made.

Councillors Halford and Johnston had met with representatives of the Hitchin band prior to Village Day.

The Chairman reported the success of a thoroughly useful SADC Parish Conference. He highlighted the presentation on the Neighbourhood Planning process and Community Infrastructure Levy. Councillor Woodhams was impressed with the useful workshop on surveys.

Other meetings reported by the Chairman included s106 availability (SADC), meeting with District Cllr Sandra Wood and landowner John Titmuss, and the Priority Setting Forum. At the latter the police confirmed a reduction of crime for the period, a number of targeted arrests, and that domestic abuse and violence against the person had increased, partly because of changes in reporting methods.

The clerk had attended the Public Sector Show. A number of learning points and information shared including the highest level of fraud risk was through procurement and contractors, the need to learn from experience and to consider the consequences of decision making and actions. A supplier contact regarding possible credit card payment use had been identified.

Councillor Woodhams had benefitted from a chairmanship course delivered by HAPTC.

Consequent to the meeting with Highways and identification that any petition to be effective should consider safety, congestion and quality of life. Councillor Reason proposed, seconded by Councillor Habib, and it was agreed that a petition be drafted and made available for signatures at Village Weekend

**The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 22.58h.**

**Dated this            day of            2015**

**Chairman**