



## Kemble & Ewen Parish Council

**Minutes of the Public Meeting** held on  
Thursday 3 November 2011 at 7.30pm in Kemble Village Hall.

Present	Councillor R Pettit District Councillor J Birch Councillor D Ball Councillor M Binks Councillor L Napper Councillor G Somerville	Chair
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Around 100 – 105 residents attended  
(numbers approximate due to late arrivals  
and early departures)

Not Present due to declared potential conflict of interest Apologies In Attendance	Councillors Collins and Sorabjee  Councillor Dyke N Spindler	Clerk
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### **Purpose of the meeting**

To hear residents' views on the outline application for a residential development comprising 43 new dwellings and 34 extra care units at Top Farm, West Lane, Kemble.

The Chairman welcomed District Councillor John Birch, and newly appointed Parish Clerk, Nick Spindler. He thanked the previous clerk, Fiona Garnet-Lawson for her excellent service over several years, and the residents applauded her.

### **1. The planning environment**

District Councillor Birch described the current planning scene:-

Cotswold District Council (CDC) is the local planning authority. The CDC requires a 5-year supply of development land and they are currently 69 houses short of their target. The number of planning applications currently in the pipeline is around 600. Applications approved are not necessarily built.

The published deadline for comments on the application under discussion today is 7 November. However, he has obtained agreement to extend this to 30 November 2011. The website cannot be changed to reflect this, but residents can be assured the extension applies. There has been extensive internal consultation already with the CDC, and there will be external consultation required by law with many interested agencies, such as utility companies, Environment Agency, County Education and the NHS. As a consequence a decision is unlikely before the second week of January 2012.

Residents' comments on the application will be noted and considered by the Case Officer. In a recent application from Cirencester Golf Club there were 700 letters split for and against. DC Birch said he is happy to help residents respond whether they are for or against the proposal, and it is important to keep letters factual, not emotional.

## 2. Essential elements of the latest scheme

The Chairman thanked DCllr Birch for his summary, reiterated the extended deadline, and confirmed it applies both to the Parish Council and individuals. He then read aloud the agenda that had been posted on the public notices. He reminded everyone that there had been an earlier public meeting in March, and that the proposal has been through several changes since then. In the intermediate stage the live/work units had been replaced with a nursing home, and there seemed to have been some attempt to account for earlier comments. The current application was lodged in September. There is a range of dwelling sizes together with 34 extra care homes of 1 or 2 bedrooms, totalling 77 new properties. This is the biggest of all the proposals, and it has lost some of the more positive features - for example Old Vicarage Lane is now shown as a crossroads, which might be of concern.

The Chairman proceeded to show selected pages from the application on the screen. These were:-

- a. map labelled 'Figure 02 - Illustrative Masterplan' from the document called LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL ASSESSMENT
- b. pages numbered 21, 24 and 29 from DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT PART 1
- c. The map at Appendix A contained in the REPORT ON NOISE AND VIBRATION

He explained that this last item appeared to show that a much wider area than the current application had been surveyed and this might be indicative of future development sites.

Opening up to the floor for comments and questions, these included the following (with answers in parenthesis):-

- How many extra residents will this result in? (around 120)
- What parking is provided for the [ECH] extra care homes (ten for the staff and 1.6 spaces per property - subsequent check shows 19 spaces: one for the warden, one per 3 members of staff, one per two units, making 19 in all)
- Are there traffic-calming measures on the right turn to Ewen? (No)
- What is the definition of an ECH? (An intermediate facility for those who can look after themselves with warden facilities, qualifying by age/disability)
- Who will be managing the ECH? (We don't know – it isn't a planning matter)
- Will the ECH have a communal lounge? (Not sure, but believe Hunter Page said there would be)
- Do people buy the ECH? (Possibly, and they seem to be included in the 50% that are designated 'affordable'.)
- Is it a seven-acre site or getting on for 10 acres? (3.2 hectares, unchanged.) [*For information, 3.2 hectares is approx. 8 acres*]
- How does the area compare with West Hay Grove? (There was considerable debate, and no consensus view, but some believed it is around the same)
- Is this to become the London Borough of Kemble or will it contribute to the local economy?
- If we stray into economic arguments is that outside of planning? (Yes, unless it is associated with Sustainability, e.g. positive for local jobs)
- Some believed the scaling of the houses has been shrunk to look better when inserted onto the aerial map.
- One benefit is that locals can stay on in the village in a retirement home when they might have had to move away. And young families might be able to return, having previously moved elsewhere.
- The Hunter Page responses are misleading, being based on 55 replies from the original consultation presentations, and is not representative? Can we consult more extensively? (This meeting is part of that, and we can consider a questionnaire or referendum)
- Historically, local authorities have negotiated with developers to improve amenities – is that another stage? (We have heard some suggestions about new classrooms, a youth club room added to the village hall, and spin-offs like traffic-calming and a new crossing on the A429, as Section 106 benefits)
- Will the Parish Council be seeking traffic-calming measures for Church Road and Old Vicarage Lane? (We will state we are unhappy to see these roads used as access and

- gress to the proposed development)
- Has the Parish Council specified anything? (No, because that can be seen as implying acceptance of the scheme, and nothing has been formally tabled. We will take views on what the residents want. Hunter Page isn't going to co-ordinate the Section 106 benefits on behalf of the village. The council will respond to this when it needs to. DCllr Birch will provide the date for this.

Turning to planning rules, the Chairman said that the government is attacking the planning regs, reducing the number of pages significantly. The aim is to bring planning to a local level, under the Localism Bill. However, the existing district area plans for development can only be increased, not reduced. The CDC recognises the challenges of the availability of Cotswold development land, and with a shortage of 69 this encourages developers. We know of one local decision that has been overturned on appeal.

The CDC has produced planning guidelines for use by Planning Officers – it is one page – and the Chairman said he believes this proposal falls short on every key aspect.

- It is outside the development boundary
- Only infill and minor works are permitted
- Kemble is not one of the priority locations for additional development – these are mostly in major conurbations
- It is wholly a greenfield site, the agricultural buildings don't make it 'brown'
- It doesn't satisfy local economic needs, e.g. by reducing commuting – and we've seen a 40% increase in population in the last 20 years. It isn't sustainable.
- It is in a Special Landscape Area, adjacent to a Conservation Area
- Does it have significant community support, because despite the above it might still proceed if there is enough support?

This guidance is called the 'Interim Housing Guidance Note' and can be 'Googled' to find them on the CDC website. They will be added to the Kemble.co.uk website if possible.

One resident highlighted a submission by Paul Waldron which he had spent some time reading, and wondered if a précis would be a suitable response to CDC. He was concerned that The Oaks had been planned as 7 properties but became 17. The proximity of the elderly and children, and being under a flight path, were also of concern. He recalled a campaign about a development in Station Road about 10 years ago where letters were prepared for residents by the Parish Council, along with stamped envelopes with which to reply. He recognised that some residents were too busy to write letters themselves, and 'nimby-ist' letters don't influence planners. He added that he admired the Chairman's 'exaggerated neutrality'.

Another resident asked about how the appeal stage works if the CDC turns down the application. DCllr Birch replied that if the planning officer declines the application, she would do so on the basis she can defend the position if it goes to the Planning Inspectorate in Bristol, where they will consider written representations and a site visit. Their judgement has no further right of appeal (unless the decision is unlawful). The Applicant can choose an informal or public hearing – with a planning barrister – and all can attend. It is more open, easily understood, but very expensive. The resident said we have to assume the applicant has deep pockets.

DCllr Birch was asked if he could vote or lobby. He replied no to both, but he has a lot of involvement and can put his views to the Planning Committee – though they don't like being told what to do.

District Councillor Birch apologised that he had to leave early. He left the meeting at 8.40pm.

### **3. Suitability of the location for Extra Care homes**

The Chairman clarified that 50% of the care homes seemed to be designated as 'affordable', and this criterion is not exclusively for the young, though younger people typically occupied

regular affordable properties.

Concerns were expressed from a resident about access for minibuses and collection & delivery services, utilities and the like. Another comment was that the balance of housing was what should be considered carefully, given that all the detail is never available in an outline application.

The Chairman said that a survey last year about affordable housing concluded that there was a case for up to 9 properties, though these were aspirational; hence the Parish Council's view is there is no such need.

#### **4. Impact on the village and the community - both in the proposed development and the consequent relocation of farming activities**

The relocation of farming activities is not in the submitted papers, said the Chairman, but it is believed to be outside the village at the dairy site at Smerril Farm. In his personal view this is a negative factor, as Kemble is historically a farming village. This lends a certain character to it, and stops it becoming dormitory.

Further points raised from the residents included:-

- Does the footpath through Top Farm remain? (A waiver may be provided to give access) Surely they can't move the footpath?
- I believe the village school numbers are below 100, and if this development would push numbers above this 'danger level' it would be beneficial. (Evidence suggests newer residents have sent children to school outside the village, and school population is more determined by better performance than increasing numbers of local residents.)
- The larger houses in the proposal will tend to attract wealthier residents who will invariably use private education, but this is less crucial than the huge change this would bring about with mostly negative consequences on the whole nature of the village.
- When the West Hay Grove development was originally discussed, similar matters were raised about the school - but children did school locally and the residents now play a major part in the village. (The housing market has changed since West Hay Grove was built)
- Has anyone spoken to the Headmaster? (Hunter Page have)

#### **5. Impact on local facilities and businesses - school, shop, public house, village hall**

##### **6. Traffic survey**

The Chairman said all these facilities would be impacted along with the GP's surgery. The traffic survey suggests 27 (subsequent check shows 30) extra cars in the morning peak and 28 in the evening.

One resident stressed how to him the visual beauty of Old Vicarage Lane was paramount. It is a beautiful place to walk with family, children and dogs. The Chairman said, he understood this viewpoint, as it is a rural idyll.

Another said that a traffic engineer would see Old Vicarage Lane as having capacity. Church Road is already blocked at times near the GP's surgery, church parking overflows, as does the school. Church Road and Old Vicarage Lane are single-track roads to all practical purposes. The Chairman stated that Old Vicarage Lane was being kept open after the planners had consulted with the CDC who wanted this to assist in the integration of the new estate with the rest of the village.

Another resident said the developers assume lots of people will use bus and train, which simply isn't the case.

##### **7. Conclusion and vote**

The Chairman asked the residents to open up with any further comments. These reactions included the following:-

- Someone is going to be killed or injured near the school if traffic increases. It is already a 'rat run' to and from the A419, and to Cirencester.
- Traffic driving through Ewen has hit the wall at the bottom of the hill out of Kemble on

several occasions.

- I would really miss the farm track; many children have learnt to ride their bikes there - it would be a huge loss.
- If our village gets larger by 20% will Tesco Metro invade our shop? (This would be like a transition to a small town.)
- The loss of the greenfield site is the main point – it would be a total permanent loss.
- The proposed changes to West Lane will not change it as a short cut.
- As a motorcyclist, I have concerns about the raised platforms for the A429. HGVs will also slow suddenly, accelerate, slow again, creating more noise and pollution than cruising through at 40mph. Traffic calming is urbanisation, which is not what we want. The white gates are great, however.
- Last winter, lorries couldn't get up the slope on the main road. Traffic calming might make this worse.
- We are in danger of putting Kemble & Ewen in aspic. It needs to change or it will become atrophied. I think we should embrace change.
- If you take away the farm, you may as well close Kemble.
- There is three times the traffic through Ewen than 25 years ago. And Kemble station car park is full every day. (First Great Western has promised 65 new station parking spaces).
- As a pedestrian, I find the road through Ewen quite dangerous as traffic uses it to cut through to Cirencester or Tetbury if the main road or roundabouts are busy.
- Is there any guarantee about future proposals or changes to this application? (The application is for this site. Additional consent is required for a different housing scheme, but the fundamental greenfield site status would have been lost by then. All the unfavourable points are persuasive now but generally cease to apply once outline consent is granted. An 'objector' to a future modified scheme would be in a much weaker position if outline consent were granted now.)
- Can the village absorb such a change in one go without impacting quality of life and losing essential character? There are no new jobs here so people will have to commute for work.
- This would swamp the village. Development should be at a slower rate.
- Would it not be better if Kemble Farms took a holistic approach, over 10, 20, 30 years, rather than one off applications?
- It is the scale of the change that is the issue. I'm pro change but this is a Yes or No choice. We value the Village Shop and the Pub – nobody wants them to close. However, we don't want planning rules shortcut.
- The consultation shown by Hunter Page was on a false premise with leading questions.

The Chairman drew the discussion to a close. I am getting a slightly diluted message, he said. This isn't about the width of one lane or a few more cars, but a change to the character of a village – a particularly magnificent part of the village too. This is a special landscape, adjacent to a Conservation Area.

I propose a vote, the Chairman said, by a show of hands.

All those in favour of the proposal:-	2
All those against:-	85
Abstentions:-	9

*N.B. A detailed individual count was not taken.*

The Chairman thanked everyone for coming and their contributions. Lastly, he reminded residents to copy any responses to the Parish Council and District Councillor John Birch.

The meeting closed at approx. 9.35pm