
Minutes

5th February 2024

This meeting was conducted strictly in accordance with Standing Orders as adopted by Council in May 2021. All Councillors are reminded to acquaint themselves with these Standing Orders.

Public Session

Prior to the commencement of the meeting, a time not exceeding 10 minutes is available to the public to address the Members of the Council on any matter relevant and within the Council's responsibility or which affects its area.

Representatives for Thames Valley Police attended the meeting to inform councillors of the planning application (23/02965/FULMAJ) for the development of a police logistics hub.

- Detective Superintendent Darren Barrett introduced himself as the individual in charge of the new development, and Jo Crowhurst as the lead consultant who works with Central Government to navigate the politics of the situation.
- The development is 7800 sqm (gross internal floor area) which is a police logistics hub (not a police station) where there will be lab space to develop communications to look to the future of policing. This will be dry space labs; not wet laboratories (eg. chemicals). TVP will work with other police forces to aid development.
- This is a three-storey development; the initial application for the land had permission for a much larger development but the area that TVP are planning to develop is to occupy a smaller area of land.
- Detective Superintendent Barrett informed councillors that TVP will not be using the A4 for access; they will use Gables Lane. The current application will be 290 parking spaces (this was questioned by councillors as the application suggests closer to 400 spaces – Jo Crowhurst to clarify).
- As it is not a police station there will not be blue lights/sirens going in and out of the site; it will largely be Mon – Fri, 9-5 work with some light work going 24/7; however there will be some activity at weekends and evenings so some low lighting will be present.
- The nature of the activity is that some areas of training and experimentation will be sensitive so activity will be kept low key.
- Hedgerows will be enriched with soft landscaping to shield the area. The roof slope will take into consideration the slope of the land to keep the building concealed from the road.
- Chairman Markham asked how many individuals will be based at the site; there will be approx. 400 people employed however approx. 150 will be there on a daily basis, and then flexi workers, and field workers present at different times.

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- A member of the public asked why a three storey building needed to be 60ft high; Jo Crowhurst explained that the size of the computer equipment means that floors need to be reinforced and that this is fairly standard for office space in the UK in comparison to residential buildings.
 - Cllr Fenn had concerns that the development is on a Green Fields site and is concerned about urbanization and that Thatcham is increasingly joining with Theale. Jo Crowhurst responded that the application is in line with West Berks planning regs and development land and that the building is in the middle of field rather than pushing to the perimeter of the site.
 - A member of the public asked why the building couldn't have a larger, lower building; Jo Crowhurst explained that as the building is a police building it has to have a certain perimeter around the building for security, so a taller building allows for a smaller footprint. Lower buildings are also very expensive.
 - Cllr Long enquired whether discussions had taken place with WBC prior to the application; Jo Crowhurst explained that the authorities wished to see the planning application prior to making a decision/giving feedback.
 - Cllr Long questioned whether there was anything to stop TVP from adding another storey to the building in the future. Jo Crowhurst explained that the building structure design has only been allowed for three storeys and that the design approval from the Home Office had to remain the same until 2045. Detective Superintendent added that there is no political desire to increase the height of the building.
 - Chairman Markham asked what lighting would be like to give security at night. Jo Crowhurst explained that the team had worked with WBC to discuss lighting strategy due to bat population and rural area; this is therefore a low lighting area. A member of the public raised concerns about the level of lighting from offices when individuals were working through the night; Jo Crowhurst confirmed that the offices would have concealed windows for security which would dull the lighting, and that lights were on sensors so would only light rooms that were occupied.
 - A member of the public asked what was meant by 'sensitive work' and whether this work would put the local residents at risk. Detective Superintendent Barrett responded that the labs will work more with cybercrime, so is not a physical sensitive threat, but rather sensitive data.
 - Cllr Fenn highlighted the issue of groundwater flooding at the site, and is concerned that there is no provision for potential of extra flooding. Jo Crowhurst reported that the carpark is permeable with a sustainable drainage scheme, rain collecting landscaping, attenuation tanks below the surface and a sustainable drainage system to stop the site from becoming overwhelming. TVP will also be increasing biodiversity by over 40% to help hold water. The flood rate isn't any more than it is at present.

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- A member of public asked if the carpark would be secure; it will be secure with someone on the gate (gatehouse visitors entrance), CCTV etc, not a solid gate.
 - A member of the public asked if this would provide jobs for local people – there will be jobs and also TVP staff transferred from other sites.

Councillors thanked the individuals from TVP for attending the meeting; they then left.

1. To receive apologies

There were none

2. To receive any declarations of interest

Clr Long regarding item 8; appeal for planning application at Hallcourt Farm

3. To receive and approve the minutes of the meeting held on 11th December 2023

Signed and approved for filing

4. Correspondence received

- [Fwd: Planning Appeal in relation to at Hall Court FarmMidgham G.eml\(~91 KB\)](#)
- [Fwd: Planning Application 23/02965/FULMAJ.eml\(~417 KB\)](#)Options
- [Fwd: 23/02965/FULMAJ - Land East Of Goddards Road and 2 Gables W.eml\(~139 KB\)](#)Options
- [S McKellar Insurance Letter.pdf\(~380 KB\)](#)Options

5. To receive the District Councillors Report

DC Read delivered his report; this will be circulated to councillors and placed on the council website.

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6. To receive the Clerks Report

	Payments	Receipts	Balance
Balance as at 3rd December 2023			£ 14,628.98
Income			
Interest received		£ 30.11	
		<u> </u>	
Payments			
Salary Dec Jan	476.20		
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	
	£476.20	30.11	
Balance as at 26th January 2024			<u>£ 14,182.89</u>
Savings Account	£13,628.98		
Treasurers Account	£ 553.91		
	<u> </u>		
	£14,182.89		

7. Precept Application

There was previous discussion to increase precept in order to support the village hall. Councillors agreed that funds should be increased in order to support the village hall; Midgham Parish Council has a low level of precept as demands are low; therefore percentage wise could look quite great. Chair Markham is of the opinion that an extra £9500 should be requested in order to have a significant effect on the village hall repairs and upkeep. Chair Markham suggested that the Clerk sent a covering letter with the precept application to justify the increase - the village hall was built in 1938, is a wooden structure, and whilst it has been maintained the village hall funds suffered due to the Covid-19 pandemic. There is continuing legislation which the hall should follow in terms of LED lighting, disabled access and safety (roof requires substantial repair). Chair Markham enquired whether District Councillor Read would support this application District Councillor Read confirmed that he was happy to support. ACTION – Clerk to send application and covering letter.

8. Planning Appeal – Hall Court Farm

Chairman Markham and Cllr Fenn did not see any reason for why the application should be rejected. ACTION- Clerk to respond to the appeal confirming that Midgham Parish Council did not have any objections to the application.

9. To receive/review any Planning Applications

9.1 Decisions

- **23/01596/HOUSE** – Oaktree Barn, Midgham - Loft conversion at Oaktree barn. The only external change is to install Velux windows in the roof. Internally will require new stairs to second floor. Also add 8 solar panels to the south facing shed roof. – **Granted subject to conditions**

9.2 Awaiting Planning Decision

- **22/02912/FORMB** – Land at Church View Farm - Section 37 of the Electricity Act 1989 to install or keep installed an electric line above ground. It is proposed that 2 spans of existing HV overhead line are to be upgraded to 3 phase with the addition of a third wire. – **PC have no objections**
- **23/01981/FUL**- Former Ryders Yard, Colthrop Lane - Change of use of existing truck and trailer hire fleet, maintenance and storage depot to provide flexible uses within Class E(g)(i), (ii) and (iii), B2 and B8 of the Use Classes Order. **PC Objected due to lighting levels**
- **23/02096/LBC** - Part two-storey part, single-storey replacement extension to existing dwelling. Terrace doors in existing modified window opening -**NO OBJECTIONS**
- **23/02573/FULMAJ** - Land South Of School Hill and West Of, Midgham Green, Midgham, Reading - Change of use of land to dog walking facility. **PC Objected**
- **23/02634/HOUSE** – 10 Midgham Green – First floor extension. **PC have no objections**

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- **23/02965/FULMAJ** - Land East Of Goddards Road and 2, Gables Way, Thatcham - The proposed Development is a Logistics Hub comprising a three-storey block of approximately 7,800 square metres Gross Internal Area (GIA) accommodating offices, laboratories and associated ancillary uses; a yard; a garage and storage building; a single-storey gatehouse; and associated internal access roads, car and cycle parking, landscaping, lighting, drainage and boundary treatments. – **PC Objects** *Councillors discussed the application after the representatives for the application had left the meeting. Councillors remained unconvinced about flooding risk, the height of the building and had concerns about ribbon development along the A4.* **ACTION** – Clerk to respond to planning application with aforementioned objections.

10. Update from Village Hall Committee

Sharon McKellar thanked the parish council for intending to apply for more precept to support the village hall repairs; once funding is secured that Village Hall Committee will get quotes for roof repairs.

Questions were raised at the previous meeting about whether the chimney could be removed as it was not in use – members of the Village Hall Committee wish to remove the chimney and wished to gain consent from the parish council (as trustees); Chairman Markham informed the VH Committee that as the subject was already rejected at the previous meeting that the six month rule would be applied and therefore eligible for discussion again from June.

11. Other matters the Chairman feels necessary

Cllr Fenn informed councillors that almshouses will soon be available in the Thatcham area to provide accommodation for families in need – District Councillor Read to contact Cllr Fenn for more information.

12. To determine dates for the next meeting

22nd April

13. To record the meeting closed

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