

Wickhambrook Parish Council

Minutes

Of an ordinary meeting of the Parish Council held on **Thursday 21st January 2021**

Present: Cllrs J Barton, J Claydon, K Merritt, J Norton & S Thwaite, P Couzens

Attending: Parish Clerk Hilary Workman, Cllr Colin Painter of Hargrave PC,
Four members of the public,
This meeting was conducted remotely via zoom.

Page | 10584

EO21.01.01 **Noted:**
There were no apologies for absence.
Cllr Lavelle was absent.

EO21.01.02 **Noted:**

- 2.1 There were no Members' Declarations of Local Non-Pecuniary Interests and/or Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in subsequent Agenda items
Cllr Claydon advised he would not participate in item 5.1 despite there being no non-pecuniary or disclosable pecuniary interest.
- 2.2 There were no declarations of lobbying for planning matters on the agenda their nature, including gifts of hospitality exceeding £25 - none
- 2.3 There were no requests for dispensations
- 2.4 There were no additions and/or deletions to the Council's Register of Interests.

At the discretion of Cllr Barton as Chair of the meeting, under standing order 1(a) Item EO21.01.06 on the Agenda, Neighbourhood plan was considered at this point.

EO21.01.03 **Public Forum – (Open Session: 8:09pm)**

Mr Byers raised his concern about the impact of an NP and that the Local Plan would always take precedence. In his view it could be a distraction from other important work that the parish could undertake.

Cllr Merritt advised that a Parish Plan adopted 2012, which could be used as the basis for developing a Neighbourhood Plan. The meeting asked the clerk to send a link to the Parish Plan to the Councillors.

Ms Turner considered that by resurrecting parish plan and undertaking a housing needs survey that would provide a good basis for any future local plan. It was not going to be an easy job and that it was all about doing the right thing for the village and the future.

Mr Merry agreed that the NP may take too long and that the Parish Plan may have more impact.

Session closed: 8:25pm

EO21.01.04 Duplicate item – public forum dealt with at EO.21.01.03.

Signed: *John Barton*

Date: 05/03/2021

EO21.01.05 Noted:

Correspondence to this meeting not dealt with as an Agenda item or in the Clerk's report.

5.1 D R King

Cllr Barton invited Mr King to summarise his correspondence. Mr King outlined the proposal, which was a proposal for development which could include:

- Possible move for the local surgery
- An aged care facility which would bring in new jobs.
- Additional school parking and
- Affordable housing

All of which would be fairly central to the village.

Cllr Thwaite supported the prospect of additional school car parking which would be of assistance but was concerned that there was little scope for parish council to report its views to West Suffolk. The clerk reported that West Suffolk had advised that the route for commenting on any particular sites put forward under SHELAA would be through their autumn consultation. There was no other route at present for the parish council to show its support of any particular proposals.

Cllr Thwaite asked Mr King whether the school car park be brought forward for consideration before the rest of the site. Mr King believed the entire development would need to be considered as one proposal. In response to a question from Cllr Merritt, the clerk advised that the site had previously been deferred by West Suffolk as it was not immediately adjacent to the settlement boundary. Mr King advised that he had not submitted the site previously.

Councillors were supportive of the proposal in principal, as an opportunity to bring new employment and opportunities into the village.

5.2 R Merry

Cllr Barton invited Mr Merry to summarise his correspondence. Mr Merry explained that about six or seven years ago he had requested permission from the Estates Committee to use a small plot of unfenced land (which had originally been part of Moor Green) for storage of wood and a kids playhouse – land was originally part of the green – it was agreed as long as he did not build anything permanent on it and he maintained it as an informal arrangement. Mr Merry cuts back the trees and mows it just to keep it all tidy. He asked whether if the parish council was agreeable, could he purchase that piece of land? He advised that if it came to there being a covenant where-by he could not build on it, he would still be interested, as it was a very small plot. Cllr Claydon advised that whilst he did not have any objections to Mr Merry purchasing the land, it was part of Moor Green, and he believed that as such it could not be enclosed or sold. In response to a question from Cllr Thwaite, Mr Merry advised that the small plot had been fenced 10 years before he had moved adjacent to it. It is not used and is bounded by bullace trees which he tends and cuts back. He requested that if it were not to be possible to purchase it, he have a formal agreement to confirm that he could continue to use it in exchange for maintaining it. The clerk reported that the land

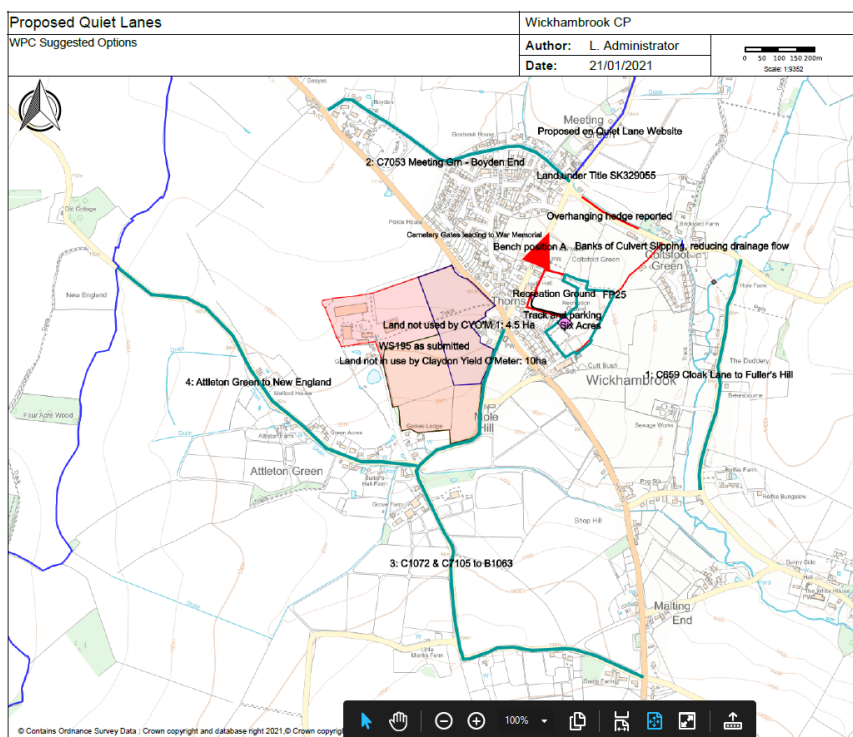
was registered to the parish council under a qualified title (it being common land) and that the advice from Suffolk Association of Local Councils was that there would likely be nothing to stop the parish council selling the plot as long as it remained common land (which would normally put purchasers off). SALC had advised that the parish council could get furthermore detailed advice from the National Association's legal department, which would be free of charge, but may take some time.

Cllr Claydon was concerned that the parish council may not be in a position to make a formal agreement with Mr Merry with respect to his use of the land.

5.3 Ousden Parish Council – Quiet Lanes

Ousden Parish Council had asked Wickhambrook whether it was supportive in principal of its proposal for Quiet Lanes which bounded with Wickhambrook. On checking the submission, Quiet Lanes confirmed that they had misinterpreted the submission from Ousden PC and extended their proposal into Wickhambrook.

Roger Medley had prepared a detailed summary of the process of nominating quiet lanes (previously circulated), and suggested a number of options, which together with further suggestions from Cllrs Claydon & Thwaite, were identified below:



The meeting agreed that it was supportive in principal but wanted to consider in more detail in February, particularly with respect to:

- How quiet lanes would impact on agricultural road users and others who used the lanes as part of their day to day business
- How would quiet lanes be enforced and messaged other than through the use of signage
- What would be the cost of implementing any quiet lanes

The Clerk advised that whilst no specific budgetary provision had been made, there was some initial grant funding available through Suffolk Quiet Lanes, and other grant funding might also be sought.

EO21.01.06 Noted: (this item was considered immediately after item 2 on the agenda)

6.1 The meeting considered preliminary information about Neighbourhood Planning (*previously circulated* as WPC.EO.21.01.01). Cllr Barton welcomed Councillor Colin Painter of Hargrave Parish Council to present his experience in leading a parish council to adopt a Neighbourhood Plan.

Page | 10587

Cllr Painter was the chair of parish council when they decided to develop a Neighbourhood Plan. It was a huge commitment, not just parish council, but a village initiative. They set up a small working committee which included members of the parish council and local residents. It was essential from start to ensure effective communication between pc and village residents, as engagement and buy in was needed at every stage. It was important to be transparent at every stage, and this was one of the reasons they were able to succeed. Hargrave was one of the first in West Suffolk to take forward a Neighbourhood Plan. Hargrave undertook a village review to try and understand the demographics of village and try and understand their view on a wide range of issues. It through up a whole load of issues which needed to be addressed. St Edmundsbury Borough Council (SEBC) was at that time developing its plan to 2031 and designated Hargrave as countryside, removing the settlement boundary. This meant that there would be no development at all, and this resulted in some unrest in the village. The NP was not just about development, but also about the total wellbeing of the village in all aspects. They had the benefit of a number of professional people to contribute, and came up with a vision: To protect, enhance and develop the village both for the young and the old. It took Hargrave 3 and a half years to develop the NP. Most of initial conversations were tied into the annual parish meeting. In his view, a parish could probably do an NP in 18 months to 2 years. Hargrave's adopted plan is on the website. Below the vision, Hargrave broke it down into four work streams:

- Prosperity and wealth (which included housing, technology & education)
- Highways and transport
- Green infrastructure – natural environment, open spaces, verges
- Heritage – character of village, design & development

Hargrave looked for a consultant. The whole process cost £7300. It is possible to get a grant for the majority of spending. They appointed Places 4 People which he considered was the best decision they ever made. The documentation presented information in the format needed by West Suffolk and facilitated engagement with the village. Once accepted by West Suffolk, it was referred to an external examiner and then proceeded to referendum which was funded by the district council. Due to good communications, they had a good turn-out (to get it passed it requires 51%). The starting point is that the parish needs to know

Signed: John Barton

Date: 05/03/2021

where it thinks it wants to get to. In his view, Wickhambrook could not do better than to involve Ian Poole as a consultant who has supported a lot of villages throughout Suffolk and got them to made NP's.

Hargrave village disappointed that their plan had subsequently been set aside due to changes in classification of village as part of West Suffolk's development of a new local plan through to 2040. Parishes need to keep their plans up to date.

Page | 10588

Cllr Claydon noted his concerns about the cost of an NP should it need to be continually updated or changes at a district level limit its impact and the need for parishes to have some autonomy to encourage appropriate development for the community and to enable to people to live in a countryside with services.

The Clerk reported that at their other parish, where the plan had been accepted by the external examiner and district council but not yet been put to referendum, planning responses which made use of and referenced the plan were more successful. Cllr Painter agreed with the clerk's comment about success of responses to planning responses.

Cllr Painter advised that despite the work and some of the difficulties experienced, would do it again.

Councillors thanked Cllr Painter for joining the meeting and sharing his experience. Councillors supported the proposal to invite a consultant to explain the process of developing a Neighbourhood and

6.2 Resolved.

The Parish Council authorise the cost for a specialist consultant to attend the next meeting of the parish council to provide further initial advice on the process and commitment the parish council would be undertaking at £80.00 plus VAT.

EO21.01.07 Noted:

The meeting considered the valuation of land to the rear to Wickhambrook Cemetery (previously circulated as **WPC.EO.21.01.02**), and whilst noting that the valuation submitted appeared to be accurate, Cllr Claydon was concerned to establish whether there was a right of access onto the road from Meeting Green to Coltsfoot Green.



Plot B

If there was no right of access over the land immediately between that under consideration by the parish council and the road, that parcel would effectively act as a ransom strip. Whilst this might not be such an issue were the parish

Signed: *John Barton*

Date: 05/03/2021

only considering the land for the purpose of a cemetery, it would have a significant impact if the pc were to consider affordable housing as one use.

It was accepted whilst that a proposal to purchase solely the land immediately behind the cemetery (Plan A below) was all that was required and would be more affordable, the landowner had indicated that the remaining plot would not be viable for him, and thus wished to sell the whole plot.



Plot A

The meeting agreed that the cemetery extension was the only need for choosing to purchase the land, however, if it was necessary to purchase the larger plot, the parish council could consider other uses for the remaining land, for example as affordable housing, allotments or community woodland. Although the initial outlay for the parish council would be substantial, securing the land would provide an opportunity for the parish council to future proof, or to sell back part of the plot for development at some point in the future.

In response to questions, the clerk outlined a number of options for the future use of the additional land:

- that parish councils have a duty to provide allotment gardens if demand for them is unsatisfied and if reasonable to do so, and that this could therefore be an income generating option for consideration
- by developing the land to the rear of the cemetery as a woodland burial site, this might bring it into use earlier, and thus generate income towards the capital outlay and maintenance
- development of a community orchard on some of the land might have the potential to attract some grant funding
- a pet cemetery might also meet a demand, which had the potential to generate an income stream

Cllr Norton advised that he had received two or three enquiries from residents wanting allotment land. Cllr Claydon advised to check whether there were any covenants on the land.

The clerk briefly summarised the process for any purchase of land (as set out in **WPC.EO.21.01.02**), and in response to a question confirmed that if the parish council were to consider part of the land for development of affordable housing (or sale to a community land trust for the same), planning permission would need to be sought and approved in advance of the application to DCLG, which may itself have an impact on the value of the land. The parish council would also need to advise the DCLG of any future change of use on the land.

The meeting agreed the following:

1. **that it wished to pursue the purchase of the land to the rear of the cemetery (plot),**
2. **that its preferred use for the land purchase was for the extension of the cemetery, possible allotment lands and/or community orchard and possible pet cemetery, but not for housing development.**
3. **that a likely timescale on which it wishes to proceed to preparing an application for borrowing approval and the necessary consultation with residents of the parish would be aiming for approval by DCLG in early autumn, and the first principal and interest payment to fall in the 2022/23 financial year.**
4. **Additional resource and cost implications for completing this work which could be funded from existing general reserves would be reflected in the budget proposal under agenda item EO.21.01.09.**

Page | 10590

EO21.01.08 Noted:

- 8.1 To authorise the payments to be made as listed below:

8.1.1	JRB Enterprise Ltd #22027	£91.14
-------	---------------------------	--------

8.2 Resolved

That the payments to be made, listed above at 8.1 be authorised.

EO21.01.9 Noted:

- 9.1 Councillors considered the draft Budget for 2020/21 (previously circulated **WPCEO.20.01.03**) noting that, as they had already agreed at item EO21.01.07 that they wished to pursue the purchase of additional land for the cemetery, options C & D were no longer relevant. Cllr Claydon expressed his concern at funding a Neighbourhood Plan which might need to continually be updated and considered the development of a parish plan a more cost-effective proposal, the purchase of additional land for extension of the cemetery being of greater priority.

Cllr Couzens noted that were the parish council to decide not to proceed with a Neighbourhood Plan at it's February meeting, the funds set aside for that could be used to develop a parish plan or an alternative purpose if it so agreed.

The meeting agreed to adopt budget option A.

9.2 Resolved

That Wickhambrook Parish Council approve the proposed budget (Option A, WPC EO.20.01.03), and

9.3 Resolved

That Wickhambrook Parish Council directs West Suffolk District Council to pay the sum of £35,610.00, being the Parish Council's total precept requirement for the financial year commencing 1st April 2021

Signed: *John Barton*

Date: 05/03/2021

EO21.01.10 Noted:

That when any other matters for information, to be noted or for inclusion on a future agenda, the following:

The webmaster had been approached and asked the parish council whether it wished to purchase the domain Wickhambrook.com, which would be likely to be in the region of £1000. The meeting agreed that it was not interested in this domain name and asked the clerk to advise accordingly.

Page | 10591

EO21.01.11 Noted:

That the scheduled date for the next meeting is Thursday 25th February beginning at 7:30pm – Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85152628482?pwd=djlGeVlWY1VIWEJQWmUzZFRucFluQT09>

Meeting ID: 851 5262 8482

Passcode: 171045

Dial In

+44 203 481 5240; +44 131 460 1196

+44 203 051 2874; +44 203 481 5237

EO21.01.12 Close of meeting. 21:59

Signed: *John Barton*

Date: 05/03/2021