

CASTLE CARROCK & GELTSDALE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
Wednesday 10th July 2013
MINUTES

1. Apologies. Cllr. Hassall, David Rawsthorn (Internal Auditor)

Present: Cllr. Devereux, Cllr. Brown, Cllr. Knight, Cllr. Widdowson, Cllr. Johnstone, Cllr. Wright

In attendance: Tricia Meynell (Clerk), Jackie Baker, Joan Baker, Ken Hogg, John Mason, Doreen Parsons (Carlisle City Council)

Prior to the commencement of the parish council meeting, Chris Hardman, Head of Planning, Carlisle City Council agreed to answer questions regarding current planning issues and an open discussion followed:

Jackie Baker (JB) notified the Parish Council that they are appealing their refused planning application (13/0257) and wondered if there might be any Parish Council input which might make the application more appealing and would lead to the Parish Council actively supporting it.

Cllr Devereux (GD) noted that the Parish Council didn't object to the original planning application and that it was the Planning Department that refused it. Because the Parish Council (PC) is currently in the process of formulating a 'Local Plan' and because the field in which the house was to be built was indicated as a site not desirable for development, the PC had been unable to actively support this application. JB stated that 16 people in the village supported them and that the people who objected in principal to development on green field sites (according to the recent Local Plan survey) were referring to the field behind the Glebe, not John Mason's field on which the house was to be built. She added that they would very much like to stay in the village, and that the health of their child is of paramount importance (they are currently not living in suitable house for the health condition from which one of their children suffers). JB also added that she did not feel that indications on the Local Plan were actually valid in this context. To purchase an existing 4 bedroomed house in Castle Carrock is beyond their reach, so a new build is the only way they can afford to continue living here. They would be happy for covenants and/or conditions to be written into the planning consent if that would help the case, and hopes very much that the PC can be supportive of their needs and circumstances.

Chris Hardman (CH) explained, in brief, the appeal process: The Planning Department is notified of the appeal and any individual or group who made observations on the original plans will also be notified. If the PC wants to add additional comments it can write to the Planning Inspectorate. Most appeals are decided via the consideration of written documentation, or they can be decided around a table, but neither practice is better than the other.

GD said that the PC will therefore discuss this matter when details of the appeal come through. He noted that the PC has to consider the application in terms of it being a house on a piece of land, and not as an emotional issue.

Cllr. Widdowson (GW) added that he thought it commendable that JB is acknowledging that conditions/covenants could be applied to the build, to which JB added that they are not here to spoil anyone's enjoyment of village and would like to work with any interested party in order to achieve a result that is acceptable for everyone.

Cllr. Brown (KB) made the point that another recent planning application (Miller) had been passed to the benefit of people who do not live in the village, whereas the Baker/Mason application which is for local people had been refused.

Cllr Johnstone (RJ) explained that various planning applications had gone awry of late and this is one of the reasons why the PC could not actively support this application in the village.

To that, GD added that PC has no real clout in planning applications as witnessed recently with the case of The Weary and the Miller application, both of which were objected to by the PC and locals alike but were passed by the Development Control Committee nonetheless.

JB reiterated that it would be useful if the PC had any ideas to put forward which might make their application more appealing as this would make the process of appeal a lot simpler.

Cllr. Wright (SW) stated that personally he fully supports application.

KB noted that objectors to this development had concerns about highway access, and that the Highways Authority had no objections on this front, and also that United Utilities also had no objections to the application.

JB said that there had been only 2 objections - one from The Croft and one from Hallsteads. She would like to discuss the application with them and any suggestions which made it easier to support the application would be taken on board. The grounds for refusal were because it was in 'open countryside' though it's directly opposite a property and within 30mph speed limit.

KB asked why was Millers granted permission since it too was in 'open countryside'. He added that the Miller application had been recommended by planning case officers for refusal, and the Weary application had been recommended for passing, and since both had been passed he wondered how these decisions had been reached. CH said that the officers decided it. GW noted that the Development Control Committee members who attended the site visit couldn't actually *see* the site since they merely looked at it from the roadside. CH countered that they *could* see the site. RJ said they could NOT see the site.

GW noted that the original Miller application was rejected, but the second one was passed despite no changes having been made – therefore the decision to grant permission was based on 'nothing'.

SW asked 'what IS the definition of open countryside'. CH replied that it was open to interpretation.

John Mason (JM) questioned how many people filled in the recent Local Plan survey. GD explained that 45 responses were received though everyone in the village area received the survey and could have completed it if they'd chosen to.

GD noted that the original objectors will probably object again, and that everyone's views have to count. At the end of the day the PC is not the body that takes the final decision. The planners will take objections for what they are, and will not consider emotive issues. JM added that it would be nice to know that the PC supported the application.

KB noted that the personal views of Parish Councillors don't come into this – the PC represents the views of the village to which GD added that the PC could not support development on any green field site and that it has to listen to the views of all of the electorate.

The chairman concluded this open discussion and commenced the scheduled meeting of the Parish Council.

2. Declaration of interests.

To allow councillors an opportunity to declare any personal interests prejudicial to items on the agenda. Cllr. Devereux declared an interest in item 4B – Church strimmer

3. Minutes.

The minutes of the meeting held on 8th May 2013 were signed by the Chairman as a true record.

4. Agenda Items

a. Local Plan: Following the recent planning fiascos GD stated that the PC was thinking about abandoning the entire Local Plan process since the views expressed by the electorate via the Local Plan survey are clearly ignored by the planning department.

CH explained that if the PC were to go ahead with a full 'Neighbourhood Plan' (a more detailed document than a 'Local Plan') it would take approximately 2 years to put into practice and would then need re-validating after 5 years. It would need to have at least a 50% support from the electorate, and this too would have to be revalidated at the end of the initial 5 years. It is a lengthy and costly process although there might be some financial help available in form of a grant which would be channeled through the PC.

A Neighbourhood Plan requires the parish to identify an area which it wants the plan to apply to, and requires it to be a 'positive' plan i.e identifying areas which CAN be used for development, rather than just identifying areas which CAN'T be built on.

CH Since the old settlement boundaries don't exist any longer it is less clear as to where it is suitable/not suitable to build. A lot of information has come from the Local Plan exercise. He also noted that included in any Neighbourhood Plans are possible sites for development, but there would be no sites included which would be specifically NOT for any development, not even in an AONB. What we need to know now is 'is there too much flexibility in planning process?' The new Local Plan will show bigger settlements (Brampton/Longtown/Wetheral etc) and all of those will have potential development sites indicated on them. But as PCs, particularly in more rural areas, want to be able to guide the process a bit more, it might be better to have a more solid plan which included boundaries. The only info that the CCC has at moment is the local plan.

GW – we need to know which planning policies we should pay most attention to but there is no guidance at present.....some policies appear to be important, but we can't second guess which.

GD - we need a shortcut document which concisely states what we need to know and the CCC should provide this. All we can do is harvest local opinion and pass on views, but if we knew how to quantify it against national guidelines we would be more able to form a weightier opinion.

CH – noted that planning has been far more difficult lately as nothing is set in black and white

RJ – asked if there is any prospect of this situation improving in next couple of years and added that we currently have absolutely no confidence in the planning department after what has gone on over the past few months.

CH said that he was aware of the cases in Castle Carrock and has taken on board what has been happening, and why. He stated that the planning officers tried to be consistent but that it is often difficult if you don't have anything to make comparisons against.

GD suggested it would be likely that the field behind the Glebe would eventually be developed since it would not fall into the 'open countryside' category and due to the fact the the owners of the field (The Church Commission) had already indicated to Carlisle City Council that when the current lease expires they may well like to sell it for development. This field, however, is one of the places that the members of the electorate who completed the Local Plan survey specifically did not want used for development.

GW wondered why, when the PC is asked by the City Council to comment on issues, do we never hear anything back? There is no feedback to indicate how issues are being resolved. He also wondered why the views presented by the PC (such as the Local Plan) are sometimes totally ignored at the first possible opportunity, yet at other times are adhered to – there seems to be no rhyme or reason

CH – will look through recent planning applications and see if concise pointers can be made.

RJ stated that we need to be in a place where the villagers are happy with planning decisions unlike at the moment where everyone is unhappy.

CH – 'Localism' has produced a lot of problems – has given false impression of state of affairs.

SW asked whether we should go ahead with a Neighbourhood Plan to which CH replied that possibly not since it's likely to be negative, when actually a positive one would be required. It might be best to pull up sites that have been identified as suitable for building and make them known so as to possibly avoid building on sites which we consider unsuitable.

GD concluded the discussion on this item and CH left the meeting after being thanked for his attendance and valued contribution.

b. Request for contribution to St Peter's Church for purchase of a strimmer - £300. Historically the PC has made donations which help to maintain the grounds of the church. It was unanimously agreed that this was acceptable. A cheque will be made out to that amount when required.

c. Request for help with funding for the Castle Carrock website to the tune of £30 for this year. Initially, the Parish Council donated £20 to start this up. It was unanimously agreed that this would be acceptable. It was also agreed that Alex Widdowson should be thanked for this hard work in maintaining the website.

d. Cllr Widdowson reported on his attendance at the Carlisle Parish Council Association meeting regarding planning. Firstly – there is probably more in these meetings than is apparent; often there are some useful items on the agendas. They are a good way to find out what is going on with other parishes and how they are dealing with issues. The next meeting is on 3rd December at the Civic Centre and it would be good if more than one person could go along. Items of interest at this particular meeting were: Local Plan process, also Community Infrastructure and New Homes Bonus. A question was asked of Jane Meek (Director of Economic Development) – is there potential conflict of interest when the government gives the council money for new homes built? Ms Meek assured all that there was no conflict of interest. It was learnt that the new homes bonus can be distributed, but there was no clear guidance on how this is decided. We could find out more about this from Zoe Sutton. The Parish Council needs to find out how much money might be available from new builds in the village. Doreen Parsons suggested that Colin Glover needed to be contacted to find out how money is allocated and on what criteria.

e. Cllr. Johnstone reported on his attendance at the Cumbria Broadband conference held at Reghed. The aim is to provide 93% of subscribers with high speed broadband by 2017. Only one company is now in the running – BT. When are we going to get it? No idea.....Carlisle, Workington, Penrith etc...by end of year. In the next tranche come places like Brampton, though there is no date for this, and further still down the line, places such as Castle Carrock. There is absolutely no information whatsoever. Likewise the proposed speed has come down. All details are on Connecting Cumbria website. The only person who made any sense was the Chief Exec of Solway Communications. He was applauded.

5. Correspondence – letters and emails received were available to be viewed and were discussed where appropriate.

- a. Mike Foster (County Council engineer) – is now in charge of Eden district, but will still have site visit with Cllr. Devereux regarding drainage in Castle Carrock and will introduce the new engineer to the current problems.
- b. William Howard student's project to get picnic benches on village green and a better bus service for Castle Carrock will be added to the next agenda.
- c. Regarding the letter from Rory Stewart MP, saying that locals should have more say in what goes on in their village, Cllr Knight suggested that the Masons canvassed the village themselves specifically asking villagers what their opinions are regarding their planning application.

6. Financial Matters - Statement of account and bills to pay as follows:

- a. Reimbursement of office expenses to parish clerk £5.00 Cheque No: 334

7. Planning Matters

- a. **13/0257** – It was noted that that the proposed construction of a new dwelling on field opposite Hallsteads has been refused. Discussed at length above.

8. Councillor's Issues

- a. Trees at end of Rectory Road need trimming back.
- b. We should also look for sites for more tree planting and possibly offer some to residents. We need to look into this.

The meeting closed at 9:30pm

Date of next meeting. Wed 11th Sept 2013