

# Mere Parish Council

*PARISH CLERK - MRS. L. C. WOOD*

**Minutes of a meeting of the Parish Council held on Monday, 7<sup>th</sup> March 2011 at 7.30 p.m. in The Andy Young Pavilion, Springfield Road, Mere.**

**Present:** Councillors: E. Mitchell (Chairman), R. Coward, C. Hazzard, R. Hill, R. Hughes, G. Jeans, B. Norris, R. Sims, S. Squires, Mrs. L. Traves & Mrs. M. White

**Also:** Mrs. Rachel Hyde, Mrs. Audrey Gould, Mr. John Stainer, Mrs. Davies, Mr. Andrew Holder, Mr. & Mrs. A. Gristwood, Mr. L. Stanton, Mr. Simon Ford, Mr. M. Whatley, Mr. R. Potter, Mr. John Hyde.

Meeting convened at 7.30 p.m. with **Public Session**

Mr. Andrew Holder said that, 'in view of the Council's Management Plans for Castle Hill & Long Hill, he had set up a website to gauge public opinion and it appears that there are many residents of Mere who feel strongly about the proposals for Long Hill & Castle Hill, especially now that the tree felling is very visible. The last time this was discussed was four years ago and many of these residents have moved here since then. Is the Parish Council prepared to re-open the discussion and consultation process in a public and open way? Following on from the first question, if it should appear that there is a large body of opinion in disagreement with the proposals, is the Parish Council prepared to consider those opinions and modify the management plan for Long Hill?'

Mr. John Stainer spoke in reference to the planning application to erect a house adjacent to Birchlea, Barnes Place and said he was aware that the Parish Council had supported applications for this site twice before but felt that members may be unaware of the opposition in relation to increased traffic and parking. 'New development of this scale would increase vehicle traffic and parking and the application had been refused twice with objections by the Highways Authority. The applicant has revised plans and increased the width of the junction but it does not allow 2 vehicles to pass and we currently see many large vehicles reversing into Boar Street.' Mr. Stainer said that Birchlea is a 17<sup>th</sup> century building with a garden which should remain as a garden and he urged the Parish Council to oppose the planning application.

Mrs. Rachel Hyde spoke in opposition to the planning application for Birchlea and said that the construction of a 3-bedroom house in this garden would change the character of this area. 'The proposed development appears to allow very little amenity space with a margin of only 1 – 1.5m around the house. There is a very fine ancient stone wall boundary and a proposal to lower the wall nearer the junction with Boar Street which would be a danger to pedestrians. Mere is a place where pedestrians predominate and generally feel safe. A 3-bedroom house will introduce at least 2 more cars to Barnes Place and this would create a precedent of infilling.'

Mr. John Hyde was also against the planning application for a dwelling adjacent to Birchlea and said that the amount of pedestrian traffic to the playgroup and going up to Barnes Place is quite significant and that illegal parking makes it difficult for people to see when crossing the roads. Mr. Hyde was sceptical about the revisions for the wider entrance and said that it would make traffic come out of the junction at a faster speed.

Helen Davies who lives in The Old Hunting Lodge, next to Birchlea, said that her property and Birchlea were two semi-detached 17<sup>th</sup> Century houses, both with long gardens and that the building of a new house in the garden of Birchlea would destroy the character of the town and the conservation area. It would add more traffic to Barnes Place and that from her garden, she would be able to reach out and touch the wall of the new house so it is far too close to the boundary of her property

Mr. George Jeans stressed that he was speaking as a member of the public and not as a councillor and said that the principle of building a house on the site was acceptable since it was within the housing development boundary and it may be inevitable that something would be built on the site eventually but he accepted that it was a controversial site.

Cllr. Rodney Coward wanted to go back to the questions raised by Mr. Holder and give some background information as to the Parish Council's Management Plans. He explained that the Parish Council started clearing Castle Hill & Long Hill some years ago due to the fact that it had become very overgrown. Long Hill had become neglected, it had not been grazed properly and many of the footpaths were overgrown and difficult to negotiate. The Parish Council had consulted with various organisations: BTCV, Wiltshire Wildlife, English Heritage, Wiltshire Archaeology, RSPB and asked Simon Ford if he would be kind enough to draw up a management plan. The intention is to reduce the amount of scrub and secondary woodland but there has never been any intention of clearing all the trees. The Youth Club have been carrying out some of this work as part of their Leisure Credits and training scheme and they

have done tremendous work. They cleared the back of the hill about 4 years ago which has made a significant improvement because you could walk along there before. We have submitted an application for a Higher Level Environmental Stewardship Scheme which would enable us to put some heavy cattle on to the hill to graze it and help manage the hill sustainably. Cllr. Coward explained that the RSPB had provided the Parish Council with a quotation to clear some scrub at a cost of £2,500 and that similar work was now being carried out by the Youth Club at no cost although the Parish Council makes a contribution towards their Leisure Credit Scheme.

Mr. Simon Ford said that he had agreed to write the Management Plan in 2007 as a volunteer. He pointed out that without any management, Castle Hill & Long Hill would be almost 100% scrub woodland and the Parish Council would not be fulfilling its duty. Mr. Ford has led walks on the hill in 2007 and 2009 to try and dispel scare stories about the hill becoming completely devoid of trees and he would be quite happy to lead another walk if that would help.

Mr. Holder said that he was purely acting as a conduit to other people's views and that people were desperately worried about the situation.

Mr. Gristwood thanked the Parish Council for providing these explanations which, he said, had put his mind at rest.

**Apologies for absence** received from Cllrs. P. Coward, M. Hall and D. Sealy

### **501. To receive Declarations of Interest**

Cllr. Jeans declared a personal prejudicial interest in Planning Application No. S/2011/165 and a personal and prejudicial interest in Minute No. 506 c) & Minute No. 506 f)

Cllr. Mitchell declared a personal interest in Planning Application No. S/2011/193

**502. Minutes** – Cllr. Mrs. White proposed that the Minutes of Parish Council meeting held on Monday, 7<sup>th</sup> February 2011 be approved as a correct record of proceedings. Proposal seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Traves and carried with a majority vote of those present on 7.2.11

### **503. Planning**

#### **a) Applications:**

<b>Application Number:</b>	<b>S/2011/165</b>
<b>Location:</b>	Land adjacent to Birchlea Barnes Place Mere Warminster.
<b>Proposal:</b>	Erect house, make alterations to existing vehicular access, make alterations to junction of Barnes Place with Boar Street

As Cllr. Jeans had declared a personal and prejudicial interest in this planning application, he left the meeting whilst the matter was discussed. The Chairman reminded members that the Parish Council had approved a planning application for a dwelling on this site on two previous occasions but the planning authority had refused permission. The Chairman felt that something would be built on the site eventually but Cllr. Mrs. White said that the site was garden that belonged to Birchlea and should remain a garden for Birchlea and that to cram a house in there just because there was room did not mean that it was the right thing to do. Cllr. Mrs. White said that it was overdevelopment that was too close to the surrounding properties and she could quite understand the objections of the people speaking this evening. Cllr. Mrs. White also said that making the access wider would not solve any problems because Barnes Place is one of those instances where the danger of the turning makes people drive slowly and making it wider will increase speeds and make it more dangerous. Cllr. Mrs. Traves felt that garden grabbing was wrong and that this proposal represented overdevelopment. The proposed building was far too big for the site. Cllr. Hughes asked if the revisions to the application were grounds for the Parish Council to change its views completely. Cllr. Mrs. White proposed that the Parish Council should object to the above application for the following reasons:

- **Overdevelopment** – The proposal would represent a cramped form of overdevelopment and overdominance
- **Loss of amenity and loss of light** – The proposal would represent a loss of amenity and loss of light for surrounding properties.
- **Highway and Traffic issues:**
  - The proposed dwelling will cause an increase in traffic to Barnes Place and any short-term parking will cause obstructions on this narrow road
  - Alterations to the junction of Barnes Place with Boar Street by widening the junction will increase traffic speeds and create further danger.

Proposal seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Traves and carried with a vote of 6 for and 3 abstentions.

**Application Number:** S/2011/150  
**Location:** 2 Lower Park Farm Cottages Mere Park Mere Warminster.  
**Proposal:** The erection of a single storey rear extension and a loft conversion

The Clerk informed members about copies of email communication received from Mr. & Mrs. Brooker (neighbours) which raised no objection to the design of the extension but raised concerns about construction vehicles obstructing the highway leading to Lower Mere Park Farm. Members raised no objection to the application and felt that most construction vehicles were unlikely to want to obstruct any public highway because they would need to keep moving their vehicles. Cllr. Hughes proposed that the application be recommended for approval. Proposal seconded by Cllr. Sims and carried with a majority vote of 9 for. (In his capacity as Wiltshire Councillor, Cllr. Jeans abstained from voting).

### **Cllr. Rodney Coward as Chairman**

**Parish or Ward:** GILLINGHAM, DORSET  
**Application Number:** S/2011/193  
**Location:** St Matthews Farm Forest Deer Gillingham.  
**Proposal:** Develop land by the erection of 1 No. dwelling and 1 No. parking space (outline application to determine access)

Cllr. E. Mitchell, having declared a personal interest, refrained from voting or discussion and Cllr. Rodney Coward acted as Chairman whilst this planning application was considered. The Clerk pointed out that this application had been submitted to North Dorset District Council who had informed Wiltshire Council. Wiltshire Council had not informed the Parish Council direct but the Clerk had picked it up from the weekly list of planning applications submitted and considered it close enough to the parish boundary to warrant raising as an agenda item. Members raised concerns as to the fact that the vehicular entrance would be created very close to the 'S' bends and Cllr. Hazzard proposed that the Parish Council should make observations to North Dorset District Council to say how dangerous the 'S' bends are. This proposal was seconded by Cllr. Mrs. Traves and carried with a vote of 9 in favour.

### **Cllr. E. Mitchell resumes as Chairman**

**Application Number:** S/2011/201  
**Location:** Chetcombe Farm Mere Warminster.  
**Proposal:** Construction of agricultural structure - replacement bunker silo (unroofed) for storage of animal fodder

Cllr. Mrs. Traves proposed that the above application be recommended for approval. Proposal seconded by Cllr. Hill and carried with a unanimous vote.

**Application Number:** S/2011/202/FULL  
**Location:** Burton Grange Burton Mere Warminster.  
**Proposal:** Change of use and alterations to redundant farm buildings to form 3 no holiday cottages and ancillary domestic uses, form, enlarge openings and block openings, remove lean-to, part replacement roof, infill open fronted building, replace existing modern agricultural building with new ancillary domestic outbuilding to include stables, form swimming pool

**Application Number:** S/2011/203/LBC  
**Location:** Burton Grange Burton Mere Warminster.  
**Proposal:** Listed Consent - Change of use and alterations to redundant farm buildings to form 3 no holiday cottages and ancillary domestic uses, form, enlarge openings and block openings, remove lean-to, part replacement roof, infill open fronted building, replace existing modern agricultural building with new ancillary domestic outbuilding to include stables, form swimming pool

The Chairman pointed out that within the access statement the applicant says that the two-storey barn will also be used by the applicant for entertaining for large social occasions. Members generally felt that the change of use and alterations to the redundant farm buildings would be an enhancement and it was noted that there would be no reason to stop large social private functions but if they were to invite paying guests then they would need to apply for commercial use. Members also raised concerns about the dangerous access from the A303 and the unsuitability of the access from Mere (narrow lanes) for large scale junctions.

Cllr. Hazzard proposed that the Parish Council should recommend approval of the above two applications but ask the planners to note the Parish Council's concerns relating to the sentence within the applicant's access statement that the two-storey barn will also be used by the applicant for entertaining for large social occasions. The Parish Council is concerned that highway access to and from the development, either from Mere (via narrow lanes) or from the A303 (which is considered to be a dangerous junction on an extremely busy road during peak times), would be

unsuitable for large scale functions. Proposal seconded by Cllr. R. Coward and carried with a majority vote. (In his capacity as Wiltshire Councillor, Cllr. Jeans refrained from voting).

**b) Notice of planning appeal - S/2010/1800 – Erection of Conservatory -58 White Road, Mere** – The Parish Council had been informed that the applicant had appealed to the Secretary of State against Wiltshire Council’s decision to refuse planning permission for the proposed development. The appeal will be determined on the basis of written representations and there is no opportunity for the Parish Council to submit further comments.

**c) South Wiltshire Core Strategy – Review of Housing and Employment Requirements** – Cllr. Jeans reported that he had attended the Core Strategy Hearing at Salisbury where the Inspector had said that since the General Election and the demise of the Regional Spatial Strategies, the Inspector would allow changes to the South Wiltshire Core Strategy on condition that they were ‘focused’. The housing allocation for Mere now remains at 200 but the restriction on housing development has been lifted so that, over the next 15 years 50 houses will be allocated for the 7 villages in the Mere area. However, 20 of those houses have already been built or granted planning permission so there is only an allocation of 30 left. Cllr. Jeans confirmed that the proposed forum meetings to discuss the Core Strategy had been cancelled.

#### **504. Matters Arising**

**a) Neighbourhood Policing Report** – None received.

**b) Report from Community Safety Representative** – Cllr. Sims reported that Trading Standards had issued a warning that carpet cleaning companies are contacting residents and offering the cleaning of one or two carpets, initially a low cost promotion is offered, however, depending on what services are carried out the final price can greatly increase. Many home owners may feel pressurised into agreeing to the higher prices. Trading Standards were urging people to ensure that the price agreed is in writing before works are carried out. Cllr. Sims also expressed concerns relating to Census collectors and this presenting an opportunity for scammers. Cllr. Sims said that all census staff would have identification cards on them and would not mind waiting whilst their ID’s were checked.

**c) Report from Transport Representative** – Cllr. Sims reported that Wiltshire Council was carrying out a survey to see if pensioners would be prepared to pay something towards the cost of bus travel.

**d) Lease for car parks & public toilets** – The Clerk reported on the meeting held on Thursday, 24<sup>th</sup> February between Wiltshire Cllr. R. Tonge + officer Chris Major and Parish Councillors E. Mitchell & G. Jeans (report attached).

**e) Library Review & feedback following South West Wiltshire Area Board Meeting** – The Chairman said that he had presented a report to the Area Board meeting which had subsequently been printed in Mere Matters. Cllr. Jeans said that there was a lot of local angry feeling that the library opening hours were to be cut but said that 20 people had come forward as volunteers. Cllr. Jeans said that, in his capacity as Wiltshire Councillor, he had made every effort to try and get Wiltshire Council officers to work some hours in the library in order to increase the opening hours because he was aware that a number of paid officers did not really want to work from home.

**f) Wiltshire Councillor’s Report** – Cllr. Jeans reported that he had attended the planning committee meeting and had successfully argued against the development adjacent to Brockhurst which had been recommended for refusal. He would also be supporting the Area Board Grant applications for Public Access Defibrillators for Mere and surrounding villages. Cllr. Jeans reported that the Non-Domestic rates were being reviewed and the review could have worrying consequences for cemetery authorities because cemetery rates would be increasing dramatically and some cemetery authorities were thinking about placing the cemeteries into a Trust.

**g) Wiltshire Council’s proposed Street Trading Scheme – update on developments** – The Clerk explained that, in view of the responses received by Parish & Town Councils, Wiltshire Council had now decided to revise the scheme which would go out for further consultation after 5<sup>th</sup> April.

#### **505. Parks, Open Spaces & Amenities**

**a) Information regarding and response to website encouraging public discussion about the future of Long Hill & Castle Hill ([www.savelonghill.org](http://www.savelonghill.org))** – Cllr. Sims said that he felt that Cllr. Coward had given a first rate explanation of

the Parish Council's intentions and he hoped that this would allay fears and stop rumours. Cllr. R. Coward explained that the Youth Club had just completed an area of scrub clearance near the footpath adjacent to the beech trees on the western end of Long Hill and they proposed to try and hire a chipper to chip the cut timber for spreading on the footpath over the next few days. Cllr. Hazzard suggested that Simon Ford and Cllr. Coward lead a large walk on the hill to show people what is planned because he felt that, as a result, some of those in opposition would feel less concerned. (*Mr. Simon Ford indicated that he would be happy to do this*). The Chairman asked members if the Parish Council should raise this as an agenda item for the Annual Parish Meeting. Cllr. Hazzard suggested that a separate meeting might be a better idea but members felt that the Annual Parish Meeting was more appropriate. Cllrs. Mrs. White said that she hoped that Mr. Holder would modify his website which, she said, at the present time was misleading. She felt that a report on this issue at the Annual Parish Meeting would be a sensible idea. Members agreed that the Annual Parish Meeting should be held on 4<sup>th</sup> May at the Grove Building (if possible).

**b) Jubilee Gardens – repair to walls (-£200)** – the Clerk pointed out that the groundsman had concerns about the state of the wall at the foot of jubilee gardens and that Mr. McCann had provided an estimate for repointing work at a cost of less than £200. As this was well below the Council's limit for obtaining 3 quotations, members agreed that Mr. McCann should be asked to carry out the work.

## **506. Finance, Policy & Resources**

**a) Email from Wiltshire Council solicitor regarding office lease** – the Clerk informed members that she had first reminded Wiltshire Council that the office lease was due for renewal in October 2009 and despite several reminders to the officers concerned, there were still no signs of a lease renewal. The Clerk had asked the officer for confirmation that there were no significant problems causing this delay and had received an email from Mr. Price stating that it is still Wiltshire Council's intention to grant another lease (10 year) on the basis of a nominal rent but with the Parish Council paying all outgoings. However, due to the extreme demands on the legal team at the present time, there is likely to be a delay before the new lease can be issued. Mr. Price confirmed that there is no problem with the Parish Council continuing to have the office.

**\*b) Interim Internal Audit Report + internal auditor appointment** – With reference to the internal audit report (as copied in the Clerks Report) members agreed that they would make every effort to address the issue of formalising the management and relationship with the Mere Recreation Ground Charity within this financial year. The Clerk did point out, however, that the Annual Return for the Charity had been submitted to the Charity Commission before the end of January. The Clerk also pointed out that with regards to the Sport England Grant, she was now liaising with Sport England direct (rather than Groundwork) and seemed to be making some headway and was now more confident that the remaining funds would be received. The Clerk also informed members that Mr. Wilson had indicated that he would be willing to continue as Internal Auditor as long as the Council felt that he was competent to do so. Members were extremely grateful that Mr. Wilson was willing to remain as Internal Auditor and wanted to reassure him that the Council was reassured by his proficiency and aptitude in carrying out this important role. The Clerk also informed members that she had consulted Mr. Wilson on the Parish Council's business plan for the car parks and that Mr. Wilson had suggested that the Parish Council should obtain independent legal advice when considering the lease documents – he also suggested that this cost might be shared with Tisbury Parish Council. The Clerk had also consulted with Mr. Wilson on the annual review of the Financial Risk Assessment and Mr. Wilson had nothing to add other than the fact that the Internal Audit Plan should be reviewed concurrently in order to ensure that the two documents correspond.

**c) Xmas Lighting proposals for 2011 onwards** - deferred

**d) Asset Transfers** – Cllr. Jeans informed members that the issue of asset transfers was still open and asked the Council if they still wanted to pursue the possibility of transferring ownership (from Wiltshire Council to Mere Parish Council) of the old scout hut in Castle Street car park and the old bowling green (now Mere Croquet Club) in North Road. Members were in unanimous agreement to pursuing these possibilities.

**e) Review of Financial Risk Assessment** - deferred

**f) Payments** – Cllr. Jeans, having declared a personal and prejudicial interest, left the room whilst this matter was discussed. The Clerk explained that there was a possibility of Jeans raising a credit against the Xmas lighting fees for

the return of bulbs if the Parish Council were to change their Xmas lighting proposals. However, since this matter (c – above) was deferred, it was agreed that the Jeans payment [first item on schedule] should also be deferred. Members unanimously approved all other payments in the schedule.

Jeans	Xmas Lighting	758.65
Cash	Groundsman's mobile phone top-up	20.00
Fencewise	Fencing around swimming pool (materials only)	5832.00
Sydenhams	Protective clothing	46.01
Hill Brush Company Ltd	2 X litter pickers (50% discount)	18.77
Forge Garages	Fuel & Oil	109.67
Scats	Sundries	30.98
United Mechanical Ltd	Service and repairs to boilers in changing rooms and AYP	428.40
Duchy of Cornwall	Allotment lands – rentals 29.9.10 – 24.3.11	322.06
Imprest Account Cheque Nos. 2703 - 2707	Wages, petty cash, PAYE, pension	3764.67
Jeans	Disconnect supply to concrete garage at Duchy Manor site	48.00

#### 507. Highways, Rivers, Traffic & Transport

**\*a) Job List for Parish Steward and summary of recent work carried out** – Cllr. Hughes asked if the Highways Authority could be asked to re-cover the drain that was uncovered at Limpers Hill. He explained that the drain was condemned about 5 years ago because it has collapsed in the middle of the road but Wiltshire Council had decided to uncover it and left a large hole in the gateway.

**b) Making and implementation of Traffic Regulation Orders in South West of Wiltshire** – the Clerk informed members that Wiltshire Council had approved the Traffic Regulation Orders in south west of Wiltshire with amendments (i.e. exclude B3089 One way Weight Restriction Order and A350 Furze Hedge Prohibition of Right-hand Turn for HGVs Order) but that implementation be deferred until the Highways Agency's preferred road safety scheme at the A303/A350 junction at Furze Hedge has been implemented. Implementation of the TRO's would also be subject to the availability of funding. Cllr. Jeans confirmed that it was likely to be a very long time before the TRO's would be implemented.

#### 508. General Items

**a) Royal Wedding celebrations?** – the Clerk said that this had been raised as an agenda item because the police required prior knowledge of any events that were being planned and may require their presence or road closures etc. Cllr. Jeans confirmed that The Old Ship was planning a function and the vicar had indicated plans for a party in the Churchyard and Leaping Frogs Kindergarten were planning a royal wheelbarrow race.

**b) Invitation to enter 2011 Best Kept Village Competition** – members agreed that the Council could not devote the time to enter the competition this year.

**c) To set date for Annual Parish Meeting** – it was previously agreed that this would be held on Wednesday, 4<sup>th</sup> May at The Grove Building (if possible).

**509. Clerks Report** – Cllr. Mrs. White confirmed that the Clerks Report be confirmed and adopted. Proposal carried with a unanimous vote of approval.

\*Further information on these items in Clerks Report.