

Parish Meeting – February 21st, 2024, Full Report

Chris Neil voted in as Chair and agenda approved with addition of “Drainage in Watery Lane “

Giles Baxter – Chair of the NDO Steering group declare Interest for transparency as Chair of NDO and NDP Steering Groups and Trustee of Community Land Trust CLT

Also, his property shares a short contiguous boundary with the Paddock site, but he has no financial or proprietary interest in the outcome of the NDO.

Charles Campion – Landowners representative and Chris Brotherton Developer for the NDO- who Giles stated is also an investor in our community- were also at the meeting.

Giles continued that this was not his meeting, and he would present the same report at the next Parish Meeting on 7th March. The organisers of the meeting had hoped the PC members would attend to answer questions, but they did not. A councilor was present but in a personal capacity and she should not be asked any questions. He continued that his report was not a campaign but an explanation and all information in his report was either already on the Village website or would be shortly.

A brief description of the difference between the NDP and the NDO was given.

NDP is an overall planning policy for our Parish.

As we are in “Green Belt” we are subject to different rules and the NDO is a vehicle whereby the Parish submits and owns the Planning application and ultimately gets to vote on its acceptance but to get to that stage the Steering group needed to come up with a plan that was viable, workable, balanced, and compliant with all planning policies.

The following are brief notes from Giles’s report. His full report is attached and is well worth the read to get the full picture.

2012 began with a workshop and from this and the 2014 Village Plan survey a rich data set was available.

The legal process did not begin until the Parish boundaries were designated and then followed 8 years of voluntary work. However, this was very new legislation and even the County Council were unsure how it all worked. Consultations continued through the years 8 in total – see dates in Giles’ report.

2020 The first scheme was published with a consultation period “This is what it may look like.”

Most liked it but some did not. On reflection, the SG felt that they had allowed themselves, through an interpretation of planning policy, to be steered to a development that was “close to the village boundary The consultation had worked, a new scheme was worked on. The Allotment site was completely redesigned and the houses on the Paddock reduced and moved away from the closest houses. The SG regretted not coming up with this in the first place.

The collected data showed that 86% of those who replied wanted more houses. 1& 2 Beds and 3&4 in roughly the same proportions but they did not say how many. A further

consultation was held and 50 people attended and almost unanimously said 25/30. In answer to other questions 90% put the Surgery as their number one priority, followed by support for the school, cemetery extension and car parking.

Giles then moved to cover site selection. This began with a meeting attended by SODC Planning officers. The meeting identified 9 potential sites. Because of our Green Belt status, the SODC planning officers rejected all but 2. Those rejected were given “no hope.” Very rough plans were drawn up showing the majority of development on the Paddock site including the surgery and 8 houses and the smaller development of 8 houses on the allotment site. The SODC planners indicated these sites might be possible, but they would require Very Special circumstances.

Site description of the new plan followed – **Allotments Site** = The surgery, village hall extension, car parking, re-sited allotments, 14 houses: 1,2 & 3 Beds. All the balance of the land on this site will be owned by the community. Although the community regularly walks through this area now, it is privately owned, and if the community does not own it access to walk may not be possible.

New allotments would be available with running water, and decisions on the field beyond can be made by the community in the future.

The Paddock site will house 1 x 5 Bed and 2 Barn Type units with 4 beds. The new cemetery with 18 parking spaces for general use, will be at the far end and the fence down the lane will be removed and the area will have foot paths and a community orchard planted, as all the spare land will be in community ownership.

Giles explained that the main driver for the Paddock houses is financial, but that there was also demand for a few larger houses. The NDO must generate financial benefit for the community.

An independent report commissioned on housing urged “bringing forward in balance “We had made a mistake with the first plans the houses were too close but the plan that has gone to the inspector is very different. This whole process has financially cost the Parish nothing. Over £100 K came from government grants, and £100 K has been spent by both the landowners and the developer. The other work required has been done on a voluntary basis. The whole project will cost 9 million to deliver and £1.3 million is the estimated value of the assets that will pass to the community (figures in the report attached)

The Surgery was then covered. The current building is at the end of its life as a medical establishment and cannot provide the space or facilities required to go forward and without a new building there is a real risk it will close. There is a need to find a new owner for the practice. Giles posed the question “Who is going to buy into a practice that is in a building not fit for purpose, and is not owned by the practice?”

The current plan for the new building has been made possible by the incredible generosity of our development partner. The building will be owned by the development partner and rented to the surgery. The build cost will be 1.2 million and because the ICB will only pay the rent equivalent to that currently paid over the life of the 18 years, the building will be valued at about £330K. This represents a loss for the developer of £900K .” An Extraordinary deal for our community”.

Giles cited a statement from the Practice. “The offer to be able to rent the new building for a rent at current levels, is the single most important factor to maintaining the future of the surgery “

Housing was then covered. An independent report was produced to determine the need for housing based on parish need, taking into account demographics and affordability. The scheme is for 17 houses on 2 sites including 4 Affordable Units, i.e. social housing.

Parking was the next topic – The final scheme creates 33 more spaces than currently. Current spaces have been counted as ‘actual’ spaces, not those if counted by official rules. Check out full details in the report. Plus 50 and Plus 70 were looked at but we would then have just been building car parks and a compromise had to be made.

Then details of the Community Land trust CLT – this is a community owned company that every person over 18 in the community can join as a shareholder. It will own and run the assets that are being given to the village. It is a registered company having all the powers of a company, but all profits will go to the community. The trustees have created a business plan to satisfy both themselves and the PC that the CLT is a financially viable option. Giles showed the figures in the report.

The Shop rent covers the costs for our lifetime. A new roof, windows, and EPC compliance to 2025 regs has all been paid for prior to any transfer. There is estimated to be a working surplus from the rent which will be used to maintain the other areas transferred, that will incur costs. There is to be a £10 K fund transferred which is estimated to grow to £30K if not distributed.

Giles then shared a summary of the NDO financial assessment. Our development partner (the developer) will invest £8.8 million and is estimated to receive £8.9 back, ie is offering the whole scheme ‘at cost’.

Thomas Homes has a history of community projects, and we are now to be the beneficiaries.

If we do nothing – what will happen?

The estate wants to wind up and dispose of its assets. If the assets do not pass into community ownership, we will have no control. The building for the shop will be sold and maybe its owner will not want it to continue as a shop. If the bypass comes through there is a risk, however small, that the parcel of land between the road and the village will be designated for housing by SODC, with targets placed and some or all of the village removed from the Green Belt. No cemetery, no seed money for school development and grants for work at the Rec, no footpath/cycle path to Long Wittenham

Next Step

The examiner still requires Archeology reports and answers to questions on Surgery ownership. He is waiting for the PC to respond to his request for details of the “objector’s responses.”

The PC have concerns with the Surgery, Parking, housing and CLT.

In time a public hearing will be called by the examiner – it will be limited to the areas he chooses; he may ask for new information.

If he approves, then it goes to referendum for the community to decide.

If “YES” it proceeds if “NO” that’s the end

Q & A

Question: How was the NDO originally communicated to the Parish?

Answer: PC Website, door to door leaflets – out of 500 – 230 responses, Also Village e mail

Question: I would like my Children to be able to buy in the Village – 4 & 5 Bedroom houses don't help

Answer: Of 14 on the Allotments there are 1/2/3 Bed units – Small units to keep costs down. 4 are Affordable which will be social let and part share. We have “done our best” to keep the cost of majority houses down.

Question: Will the work on the PO be done before transfer

Answer YES

Question: What are the next steps? We have heard nothing about infrastructure and drainage. What is the timescale – what is the date for a referendum? The existing drains cannot cope with the current level of rain and sewage – this problem has been going on for over 12 years.

Answer: Timescale is in the hands of the PC – Come to the meeting on 7th for their update.

On the matter of infrastructure, the NDO cannot solve all the problems – but it must manage its own Water, waste, and drainage. This has all been examined and approved by OCC drainage. Surface water is carried away to the west of the sites away from the village. It will not add to the existing problems.

The next stage of questions were addressed to and answered by Charles Campion, representing the Estate

Question: I have been one of the biggest supporters of the NDP and NDO but following the flooding, leaving houses ruined and families homeless, for which lack of drainage maintenance is a major contributory factor, how can we believe The Estate has the best interest of the village at heart? Why should we support further development and trust that the Estate is acting in the best interest of the Village?

Answer: All the water from the fields and the highway drains through Watery Lane. Is it a question of maintenance or is the drain just too small for the volume? The top and bottom of the drain were surveyed in October and January but for some reason not the middle (although instructed).

Multiple Questions: The rain on the night of the last flood was not heavy – and flooding in Watery Lane occurred most recently in 2019 – blockage was reported in 2021 – should have been dealt with – Why should we support the NDO when we cannot live in the Village. -How can we trust that what you are putting in will be in the best interest of the Village – Need a guarantee on the Paddock site that water won't flood down onto the High Street. Drains have got worse. Watery Lane has not been maintained by the Estate – Willow tree was the cause of the problem before and probably now. Estate tried to sell the lane to the residents, but the sale fell through as residents believed the lane was being “off loaded” as they would be responsible for maintenance. - Lives have been devastated – something must be done. Cannot start any repairs until Watery Lane is sorted. - As soon as drains are opened and freed the Water Drains in 2 hours. Estate has done nothing.

Answers: Charles Campion had met Ryan Davidson, Debbie Croft and Suzanne Neave on 21st February and a plan of action has been agreed. Savills would report back via Ryan. A Section 19 (an application for all agencies involved to come together to look at the problem) was very important. To clarify, every property served by Watery Lane had a right of way in their original conveyance, together with a requirement to contribute towards its maintenance. The proposal put forward in 1988 was to put Watery Lane into a company (not to sell) with each property owing a share. Two owners declined to participate, and the project unraveled.

Question What happens with Watery Lane in the NDO

Answer: It is not part of the NDO – It remains in the Estate along with the garages at the end. Maybe there would be a community ownership option in the future – it would be better for residents to own their access and parking.

Question: Is the Estate being wound up or not?

Answer: The Trustees had made the decision to dispose of all remaining land and property within 5 years. If the NDO did not proceed the property was likely to be sold in its component parts.

There were some further properties excluded from the NDO. The lower car park and pumping station would probably be sold to the owners of properties who use it. There are also four cottages which are subject to lifetime tenancies. They would be retained in the short term.

Question: Will Watery Lane & right of way to Garages continue to be owned by the Estate?

Answer: Intention to sell everything

Questions then returned to the NDO, and were answered by Giles and Christopher Brotherton, the development partner.

Question: What happens? with Surgery after 18years?

Answer GP Practices are businesses – The funding body is the ICB who pay the rent to the practice who pay the owner of the building. Many Surgery buildings are owned by 3rd parties – why would they not wish to renew as the rental is so advantageous.

After 18 years the lease cannot be rescinded if they wish to continue – this is enshrined in The Landlord and tenant Act.

The planning permission is given only for “Community Use “– planning consent would have to be sought for change of use.

Only if the Surgery gives up can rent be reset to market rent.

Question: Does the Surgery Lease have to be in place before building commences

Answer: No house can be occupied before the doctors Surgery is built – would make no economic sense to build houses before the surgery as they could not be sold.

Question: Does the Gibbs Estate have a plan if the NDO does not go ahead?

Answer: There is a document published on the website that confirms all the land & buildings will be sold or otherwise disposed of. It has not been looked at in detail, but it will be a phased disposal.

Question: All bits of land?

Answer: There are 3 different trust and occupants who we would not want to disturb but if the NDO does not go ahead all property and Land will be sold in a phased sale

Question: What is the situation with the Barley Mow Carpark

Answer: The carpark is let to Greene King, and they would be the logical buyers. Currently, the lease provides for the car park to be available for residents of Clifton Hampden without charge, provided it does not interfere with the operations of the pub. A sale to Greene King would be on the same basis. Greene King would clearly need to have operational control of the car park.

With no more questions a vote of thanks to all who had arranged the meeting was given to applause.

A resident's statement was read out -It was in support of the NDO and confirmed that the new Surgery would "address the key priorities in the proposed BOB ICS Primary Care Strategy, in terms of improved access to services in local communities "

A resident called for everyone who had attended to come to the next **Parish Meeting on 7th March** to address questions to and hear answers from the Parish Council.

The meeting Closed.