

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2009

Welcome to Chief Inspector Tapper & Inspector Minty

PLANNING

THE BARN AT LONGHEDGE FARM

Late March/early April 2003 Building begins without planning consent.

8th April 2003 WWDC Enforcement Officer stops building citing a breach of planning control.

27th January 2004 Retrospective planning permission refused.

9th February 2005 Planning Appeal lodged.

14th July 2005 Appeal dismissed by Lynne Evans of Planning Inspectorate

2nd November 2005 2nd retrospective planning application refused

24th March 2006 3rd retrospective planning application refused.

23rd January 2007 Planning Enforcement Notice served.

14th March 2007 Appeal lodged against Enforcement.

2nd October 2007 Site visit by Inspector.

15th October 2007 Appeal dismissed by Brian Cook of Planning Inspectorate.

12th November 2007 Consent to a Notice of Application to Appeal to the High Court.

April 2008 Successful High Court Challenge on a point of law.

1st April 2009 Public Inquiry at WWDC offices in Trowbridge.

2nd April 2009 Site visit

20th April 2009 Pete Drew of Planning Inspectorate dismissed the Appeal and upheld the enforcement notice with corrections & variations.

Chris Brayne and myself attended the Public Inquiry on 1st April and made representation. Special thanks to Colin Beagley and Tom Thornton who were unavailable to attend but scrutinised the agricultural justification put forward in support of the Appeal and prepared a document that countered many of the claims. The WWDC barrister used their information to great effect in his cross-examination. The most recent Appeal document covers every point raised at the Inquiry, however minor and apparently insignificant, the summing up to the conclusion has 47 paragraphs and covers 11 pages. The demolition of the barn has begun.

THE VETERINARY SURGERY

Indications were that the officer was disinclined to support the planning application on a redundant agricultural site at New Road. The sustainability of the business was one of the issues raised. The Parish Council letter of support for the application took note of the possible planning objections and countered them, with the result that the only objection came not from the officer, but from Highways. The Highways objection was two fold- sustainability which was relatively easy to counter as this referred to an existing very successful business in the countryside and Highway safety. This was one objection that could ensure a refusal. However after arranging for the Highway officer to meet with Margaret Collins and myself on site we convinced him to measure sightlines and distances on site rather than on a map in the office. The result was that there was a considerable discrepancy in the measurements on the ground and in the light of this he withdrew his objection on Highway safety grounds. The building is now well on the way to completion and the village will have an attractive purpose built surgery instead of a derelict farm building.

WILTSHIRE RURAL HOUSING ASSOCIATION

Planning permission was granted for more local houses in Cherry Orchard under the Private Finance Initiative last year. We are delighted to report that WRHA will be building six homes on the old allotment site. They have amended the plans from original permission to provide three sets of semi detached properties, 4 x 2 bedroom & 2 x 3 bedrooms and hope to begin construction in the summer.

WILTSHIRE COUNCIL CHANGES TO PLANNING

In the past the various Wiltshire District Council's had differing ways of dealing and interpreting planning matters. With the amalgamation into the new Unitary Authority there were certain issues that the Parish Council felt needed to be addressed. WWDC was the one Wiltshire District where a Parish Council objection would automatically ensure that if the planning officer and the Council had opposite views Committee would decide the application.

The main points of concern were:

1. If for any reason our Councillor is unavailable who else can request to call the application in.
2. If our Councillor refuses to call the application to committee despite there being valid planning reasons do we have any right of appeal.
3. The Government is pushing for all planning correspondence to be electronic within a year. Can we be assured that we will still receive plans in hard copy in the future.
4. The decision to put all planning correspondence on the web will need safeguards to ensure that libellous accusations against individuals will not be posted on line.

Another retrograde step is that in future in the event of an Appeal only the original planning comments will be taken into account, the Parish Council will no longer be able to put in a submission for the Planning Inspectorate. This means in future every planning application will need to be meticulously responded to in detail to ensure every point is covered.

POLICING BOUNDARY CHANGES

The Parish Council expressed strong reservations to certain aspects of the reorganization of policing cover for the rural Wylve Valley area. We are told that one key change is that resources for rural teams are being more efficiently split between neighbourhood policing and patrol/response policing. This sounds fine as a policy aspiration which when examined further leads to the conclusion that there will not be an increase in numbers of officers but they are merely being deployed differently. It is clear that the reality is the Beat Managers will have many more villages and a larger territorial area to cover than presently. Furthermore it is understood that the Rural Response Team will be deployed according to demand priorities and will not be confined specifically to its designated rural area.

When the Neighbourhood Policing arrangements were rolled out some two years ago the Members were told by the Inspector in Charge at Warminster that the new method of policing would provide a dedicated Beat Manager and a Community Support Officer for 14 villages east of Warminster. The practical reality was somewhat different; with the officers being constantly deployed to other duties the service to the villages did not live up to expectations. The Parish Council has been informed that under the new policing plans the Warminster Rural East area will be amalgamated with the other two NPT areas, a total of 40 villages, covered by one Beat Manager and a Community Support Officer. Councillors have serious reservations

concerning these arrangements that they fear will result in a substantial reduction in detailed local knowledge and police cover for the rural areas. We requested clarification regarding the real impact the proposed changes will have on the policing cover for the villages and asked for assurances that they will improve the delivery of police service to the rural areas.

We are happy with the written and verbal assurances that every effort will be made to make the proposed changes work and in the event of problems there will be close liaison between the Council and Inspector Minty in Warminster. We are delighted to have Chief Inspector Tapper and Inspector Minty here tonight to answer any questions you may have on policing issues.

MERGER BETWEEN THE VILLAGE HALL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE & THE SPORTS & SOCIAL CLUB

The Parish Council were asked to call a meeting on 16th April on behalf of the two Committee's and the merger discussion group chaired by David Delius to answer any questions villagers might have. The Parish Council would like to thank David and the Merger Committee on behalf of the village for laying the foundations to build a more secure financial situation for both organisations. The successful resolution of the proposed terms of the merger owes a great deal to David's diplomatic skills, as well as his patient and skilful handling.

ANZAC DAY SERVICE

Once again we organised a very successful service in the ANZAC Cemetery at 6.30am on 25th April. This is a unique and very special experience for Codford that each year attracts more people. In the UK we have the biggest New Zealand War Grave Cemetery and are second in size only to Sutton Veny where ANZAC graves are concerned.

WYLYE VALLEY CHAIRMAN'S GROUP

I attended a meeting of Parish Chairmen in Wylfe to look at forming a loose alliance of 15 parishes's to be known as the Wylfe Valley Parish's. The plan is to communicate on matters of mutual concern- we have already co operated with a uniform approach regarding planning and policing. With the new format of the WC with Area Boards it means we will have more of an impact if we stand together.

KATE FORBES FAREWELL

It was a sad occasion for Codford but a privilege for the Parish Council to organise a lunch for Kate Forbes in the summer. Kate had been a part of almost every village organisation and played such a huge role in every part of village life that by necessity we could only invite representatives from various sections of the community. The Parish Council presented Kate with a framed watercolour of her house on behalf of the village, painted and generously donated by Kerry Edwards.

SELWOOD AND SEWERAGE

Once again we have the issue of Selwood [formally WWHS] and the proposed costs of upgrading their sewerage treatment plants. Codford has three- Cherry Orchard, The Grove and New Road. A recent meeting in the Grove attended by two Parish Councillors decided that a united group involving all the villages affected would be cost effective in fighting what are seen to be exorbitant charges. We are fortunate that Paul Collins of New Road has been leading the fight for a sensible solution to the upkeep of the New Rd sewerage treatment plant for several years and is well qualified to take the group forward.

DOG FOULING

Never strays far from the agenda of the Parish Council. Despite most dog owners being responsible and the fact that Codford is probably the dog bin capitol of Wiltshire there are still individuals who allow their dogs to foul pavements and lawns. The dog warden's number is in the book and at the Post Office so if villagers see who allows their dog to make a mess and does not clear it up they can report the offence. Unfortunately the best way to solve the problem is for fines to be levied but for that to happen people have to be prepared to make a report and if necessary go to court.

BIKE RACKS FOR CODFORD SURGERY

In response to a request from the surgery the Parish Council contacted the County Council on their behalf and the racks were provided and put up free of charge. Other village amenities such as the village hall, the school, the garage and the new vetinary

surgery are eligible for free racks but would have to install them at their own expense.

THANKS

To Brian Marshall for once again turning the Parish Council submissions to the Planning Inspectorate into a work of art.

To Frank West Jnr for keeping the streets and bus shelters clean.

To Christopher Newbury and Andrew Davis for being active, able and supportive Councillors through the years you have represented us. You have both always been there for us and we are very grateful.

We are very fortunate that among the members of the Parish Council there is a wide range of talent and experience as well as a tremendous amount of local knowledge and civic responsibility. Thanks to all the Councillors for their support and for the work they have put in during the past year on behalf of the community.

And last, but most importantly, thanks to Louis who plays a pivotal part in Parish affairs, making sure that things run smoothly and that the wheels don't fall off. Few outside the Council realise how integral the Clerks role is to the efficient running of the village. The Parish Council may be the lowest tier of local government but we are closest and most accountable to our electorate.