

ALTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting at the Coronation Hall, 7.30 pm, July 25, 2019

Present: Steve Hepworth (Chair), Polly Carson, Robert Carpenter Turner, Alex Oliver, Mike Golden, Carol Whittle, Charles Reiss (Clerk). Apologies: Cllr Paul Oatway.

The minutes of the previous meeting on 11.7.19 were held over to the next scheduled Parish Council meeting.

057/19 Permanent Crop Circle Exhibition, Honeystreet: Alex Oliver, declaring a non-pecuniary interest, commented with the consent of the Chair. He voiced strong concern over the hundreds of visitors attracted by the exhibition, now advertised worldwide via the net. Issues included unauthorised car parking and accident-hazard at the junction with the road; access for emergency vehicles; and loss of privacy and security. Perhaps the biggest damage was to the character of the village, a small hamlet of 20-odd houses being "swamped." The site had grown from the original cafe to something much greater which should be properly considered and authorised. Mr Oliver then left the meeting.

In discussion members unanimously welcomed the success of the café but some were concerned that the complex had grown in an unauthorised way without being properly considered. Members were also unhappy about excessive signage, particularly AA signs far and wide. There was broad agreement that the main problem created by the Exhibition was parking. It was acknowledged Wiltshire Council was keen to promote tourism and, for better or worse, the fame of crop circles put Honeystreet "on the tourist trail."

Mr John Wyles, the owner of the cafe and the India Shop, said there was "an obvious need for a car park for everyone to use." In the short term he proposed a site immediately to the north, fenced off to avoid encroachment on neighbouring properties. Beyond that, he proposed to apply for planning consent for a car park for 25 cars, with an eight hour limit to avoid overnight parking. The option of less-obtrusive brown tourist signs would have to be considered in future.

Several local residents attended and voiced strong concern over the way the cafe had been allowed to grow into something much bigger without permission and without consideration of the impact on the village and beyond.

After further discussion it was proposed Steve Hepworth, seconded Polly Carson: that the Parish Council await submission of the planning application for a car park. Agreed unanimously.

058/19 Planning application 19/06465/FUL, Fernbank, Honeystreet: Every member of the parish council spoke strongly against this retrospective

application to retain a two metre high solid fence erected in place of the promised one metre high picket fence. There was anger at what was described as a thoroughly "inconsiderate" development in clear breach of the conditions set in the original consent. Members acknowledged the applicant's desire for privacy in the downstairs bedroom. However they pointed out that in many properties this objective is achieved by a set of curtains or a blind.

Members also voiced very strong objection to the proposed car park at the western end of the site. Together with the fence it would wipe out an open-aspect green space with views across the canal, fundamentally changing the character of the village. The property already possessed parking space for three cars plus a garage.

Mr Howard Waters, agent for the applicant, described the term car park as "emotive" given that it would only have space for one or two cars, albeit in an extremely prominent canalside position. He warned that, failing compliance from the Parish Council, his client would be free to plant a fast-growing hedge without planning permission. Several members suggested that a "soft" hedge coupled with soft landscaping could be an acceptable compromise.

A motion to object to the application, with comment to reflect the views expressed in the meeting, was proposed Steve Hepworth, seconded Carol Whittle: agreed unanimously.

There being no further business the ended at 8.29pm.