

BENTWORTH PARISH COUNCIL

Chair: Cllr Jane Costigan

Clerk: Ms Allison Spyer

5 Bronze Close, Beggarwood, Basingstoke RG22 4UF
Tel: 07786 063579 Email: clerk@bentworthparishcouncil.org

MINUTES OF PLANNING MEETING

Thursday 2 January 2020, Jubilee Hall, 7pm

1. **Councillors Present:** Jane Costigan, Veronica Parker, Callum Knight & Tony Costigan
2. **Apologies for absence:** Chris Hurley & Allison Spyer
3. **Declarations of Interest:** There were no declarations of interest.
4. **Minutes of the Previous Meeting:** Approved
5. **Meeting Open to the Public:** Approx 20 residents were in attendance.
6. **Planning Applications** – To consider the Parish Council’s response to the following planning applications:

CASE NO: 58352, Land north of Lower Park Farm, Abbey Road, Medstead, Alton.

Change of use of agricultural land to provide 8 pitches for gypsy families incorporating 1 mobile home, 1 touring caravan and 1 utility/day room per pitch and formation of hardstanding and associated car parking (additional information received on 16/12/2019).

Bentworth PC strongly objects to the planning application 58352 citing reasons given below.

As no information has been given for the 4months extra time allowed for the applicant to strengthen their case Bentworth PC feel as though we are having to respond in a vacuum. We have no metric to help determine whether there is a need for these pitches as there are other applications either in the process or already granted permission in the local area. When does over provision become over supply? Either way this site is totally unsuitable several reasons;

1. **The 2016 Landscape Character Assessment (2012)** describes this area as within the:

6 A. East Hampshire Wooded Downland Plateau.

2.0 Key Characteristics - An elevated plateau landscape, mainly fairly flat but with dry chalk valleys, creating gentle undulations, capped with a deep layer of clay... A landscape of contrasting views, from panoramic and far reaching to very enclosed, but always heavily wooded... Field boundaries are variable, from woodland edge and tall hedges to well trimmed low hedges and post and wire.... 5.3 The north of this landscape character area is covered by the Herriard Wooded Downland Plateau BOA. This BOA comprises an exceptional dense concentration of ancient semi-natural woodland SINC on the clay cap, supporting important rare plant populations...

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The Bentworth Parish Council comments on the EHDC DRAFT LOCAL PLAN (March 2019) states: *We welcome the proposed Policy S18 (page 216), which provides that “Development proposals must conserve and wherever possible enhance the special characteristics, value and visual amenity of the Area’s landscapes”. Our proposed Vision in our emerging Neighbourhood Plan notes that the parish is “surrounded by beautiful countryside of farms and woodlands, with fine tree and hedgerows. There are good views and a number of protected local green spaces”. Bentworth parishioners attach importance to the maintenance of the current views. We also support proposed Policy DM26 (page 222) on the protection of trees, hedgerows and woodland”*

The Beech Neighbourhood Development Plan (June 2019) Policy BPC03: ‘Preventing Coalescence with ... Medstead/Wivelrod.*[Identifies] the forces of change’ which are a ‘threat of coalescence with neighbouring settlements of Alton and Medstead” and... “Development will not be permitted ...if, individually or cumulatively, it would increase the risk of coalescence between ... Beech and Medstead/Wivelrod. In the defined non-coalescence areas any new development, or any increased intensification of development within existing curtilages, should not result in diminishing the separate identity of each of these settlements by reducing the openness and visual break between ... Beech and Medstead/Wivelrod.”*

The applicant has made the claim that :

“The landscape character of the road is both residential and fields / woodland so urban elements are already present.”

This is not true as beyond the Jennie Green Lane parish boundary, there is no residential development until Kings Hill Beech. Unlike the landscape in Medstead and Beech, with their small fields and scattered ribbon development, this neck of land is part of the open rural landscape characteristic of the Herriard BOA 43. With the heavily wooded Abbey grounds to the East and the ribbon development of Medstead to the West,

The open countryside section of the BOA is only 415m long, The proposed site occupies the middle 40%, so would constitute a significant intrusion to this landscape and a barrier to wildlife movement.

2. The applicant has had a private assessment of the traffic along the Wivelrod road, but no details of where and when that was taken.

No formal consideration has been given to the size of the traffic going in and out of the site (which is likely to be large vans towing a caravan). Turning left out of this site will bring traffic up against the parked cars of the local residents creating very narrow access along the road; posing a considerable problem as there is no official passing places.

Farm traffic (tractors and vehicles towing trailers) already struggle to negotiate the single track Wivelrod Road and as there are no passing places large vehicles with limited rear visibility are often required to reverse considerable distances when meeting oncoming traffic. This is already a risk to

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road users and the situation would only become even more dangerous with more large traffic entering and leaving the site. Furthermore, as the only entry to the proposed site is onto a road 4.3m wide and without pavements any pedestrians, horse riders and cyclists will be at much greater risk.

Turning right out of the site means negotiating the junction at Abbey road which has a speed limit of 40mph and poor site lines in both directions.

Bentworth PC notes that there has been no consideration from the highways report on the junction of Wivelrod road with Abbey road. There has also been no consideration for the amount of increased traffic along Wivelrod rd when there are road works on Abbey road and/or Kings Hill.

3. The local land owners have seen very recent evidence of 2 active badger sets in the area; one at 600m from the site and another at approximately 650/700 m. The ecology report says that there is no evidence inside 1000m. There is also local knowledge of other protected species such as bats and slow worms. Although the applicant has said that they would landscape the area to provide screening, that is not what the landscape currently displays. In the winter months the views through the deciduous hedgerows and trees are of open countryside. **This landscaping** would radically alter the current **landscape** which the people of Bentworth have expressed a desire (in the emerging neighbour plan) to maintain as part of the character of the local landscape.

4. There are only 14 homes in the hamlet of Wivelrod and creating another 8 will mean increasing that by some 57%. This would radically alter the nature of the Hamlet.

To summarise:

- The proposal is at odds with the emerging local plans of both Beech and Bentworth
- The land is an important part of BOA 43, and is supporting important wildlife.
- This development would encroach on the separation between the local villages and hamlet.
- The sight is totally unsuitable for the large vehicles and towing caravans that it will attract.
- No consideration has been given to the junction between Wivelrod road and Abbey road.
- If granted this proposal would radically change the nature of the hamlet of Wivelrod