

Oulton Parish Council

Minutes of Emergency Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 17th October 2024 at 9.30am in Oulton Community Centre

Parish Councillors (7) present	Jenny Hinton (Chairperson), John Sarbutt (Vice Chair), Peter Bryant, Peter Collecott, Robin Hinton, Tony Knights & Hilary Sarbutt
County Councillors	
District Councillors	Andree Gee
Also in attendance	Rebecca Morris (Clerk)
Members of the public	18

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

To receive and approve apologies for absence: Cllr J Illingsworth & Cllr E Back

To receive any declarations of interest from Members & consider requests for dispensations

Cllr T Knights declared a non-pecuniary interest as Trustees of Oulton Community Centre.

To approve minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on the 1st October 2024.

The minutes of the meeting held on 1st October 2024 were agreed after a proposal by Cllr R Hinton and second, Cllr J Sarbutt all in favour. The minutes were signed by the Chairperson.

Presentation from Debi Sherman, Head of Planning MRTPI and Matt House, Technical Director at Persimmon Homes, will be attending this meeting to give an update presentation on the last phases of the Woods Meadow Development. 30 minutes presentation and Q & A session.

A decade ago testing was done on the land. Environment Agency, Trading Standards, Environmental Health were all consulted regarding the best way to deal with the contamination. Removal was far too expensive and would take around 7-10 years. Remediation on site was the most cost effective and safest way to proceed. It wasn't an option to leave what was there, as leeching would continue into the ground. East Suffolk Council admitted that they were unable to deal with the matter themselves, as they were inexperienced in how specialised the site was, so they contracted in an external specialist. Bones and solid fat were removed from site and fatty soil left behind was solidified with bentonite. A clean cover system will then be put over the top, followed by soil and top soil, up to 600mm. As the play park will be put there, crushed stone will also be added on top, to ensure no digging is needed/required. Ground water testing must be done for 3 months after completion, along with block sample testing and tank testing (submerged for 64 days to see if it's behaved as it should have or changed at all) which will be presented in a validation report to the council.

Q. Why is crushed stone being put in place, could foxes dig to expose it?

A. Although the contaminated material will be solidified, it just reduces the risk of it being disturbed over future use. The clean cover system is hardwearing and would be rather difficult to penetrate.

Q. Is the ground still contaminated?

A. Yes the ground is still contaminated, although a lot has been removed. What has been left has been solidified and protected.

Q. Resident of 40 years concerned that anthrax has never been mentioned and they were always told that the land should never have been built on. This is historically known to local people.

A. Chairman interjected and explained that Persimmon were unlikely to know the full history of the site.

Q. 5 days notice was given regarding the remediation plan, an environmental report that was seen from 2022 stated that work should have been done in the cooler months, when they were in fact done in summer. Persimmon must have been aware of this. Correspondence has also been seen from Ben Woolnough stating that residence should have been informed regularly, this has not been the case. ESC have also been very unhelpful, taking a long time to communicate back.

A. Persimmon submit planning to the Council and it is available on the ESC website. It is not practice to inform residents. As soon as approval had been given, the contractors were contacted and the start date was sooner than anticipated, hence why letters were hand delivered to residents. According to the contractors, it was better to do the work when it was done, as opposed to "wetter months" when the ground would be a quagmire.

Q. You cannot compare building on normal land compared to contaminated land, more notification would have been more appropriate in the circumstances. Why is putting a play area on that land, rather than a house, why can it not be left as green space.

A. More digging happens when a house is being built, for footing, drains etc and it would be managed by a homeowner, whereas putting a play area on it, the area will be regulated and monitored, where this wouldn't happen if were a privately owned home. It is not unusual to put play areas on contaminated land.

Chairman stated that the land should have been fenced off and left, which has been documented over the years.

Q. What is the lifetime of the membrane.

A. It's not to secure the contaminated, it's a warning membrane, to alert people to not dig any further. Although should be good for around 120 years.

Q. A housing estate in Cambridge was built on similar land, the houses have subsequently been taken down.

A. Persimmon cannot comment on this.

Q. Are you happy to create the mess, then hand it to the council.

A. The council wanted control of the play area. The council are fully aware of the contamination and was agreed that it would be remediated.

Q. There are no plans to build on the contaminated land.

A. The park and pump track are not classed as buildings.

Q. Footpath 8 on Woods Lane, are the 2 bridleways going to join.

A. The 2 bridleways are owned by different land owners, yes they are on the map.

Q. Birch Close resident, 80% of their gardens are being taken as a buffer zone.

A. Persimmon have no rights over their land and it is purely a buffer zone distance.

James Blake Associates have been contacting Oulton Broad PC landscaping team.

Solidification to last 75+ years. This is a short-term legacy for our child and childrens children. Her children attended The Limes school and were getting very poorly. They have since been removed from the school.

Q. Buffer zone of pump track, may only be 15-20 metres from homes and not the distance stated by Persimmon. No trees have been shown to help buffer more noise and why is no parking available?

A. A neighbourhood equipped area of play is designed for all children's age ranges. The council wanted a fast track put in situ too, although they didn't want it on the country park area. Persimmon would have been happy to put it on the country park.

Concerns that the local area have not been consulted about the location of play areas. Persimmon to look into who Oulton Broad Landscape Team are and why OPC have not been notified.

Q. What is public consultation, as unsure why we've heard nothing about planning applications.

A. It is up to the Planning Authority to consult with the residents, by way of site notices, individual letters and all statutory consultees.

A member of ESC planning department, should have been here to take questions. They will be invited, as it's been agreed that people have not been informed enough.

Q. Pump track is going to be put in place, which will encourage more people onto contaminated land. How is this going to be managed?

A. Chair stated that play area location has been ill thought out. Persimmon have taken all comments on board.

Q. If play area does go ahead, will lighting be put in place?

A. No there won't be.

Q. Plants and Trees will absorb water, surely this will pick up contamination and roots could also pierce the membrane.

A. All trees will be specified and will have shallow roots, also the contamination is solidified.

Q. Does Persimmon have a moral obligation to residents, can they choose to not put the play area there.

A. It has been a requirement from ESC to put the play area where it's intended to go. The council have approved for it to be there.

Q. Happy to have the fast track, but it's the wrong area. Also the play equipment is wonderful, but in the wrong area. There are no facilities or parking.

A. Persimmon to discuss with ESC.

Q. Birch Close, is too open and access can be got onto site. No wheel washing facilities and health and safety looks very poor.

A. There is a wheel wash on the compound. Birch Close in not being used as an in and out, its Lincoln Drive and that is where the compound is.

Environmental Health, Mark Seaman, told OPC that Birch Close will not be used for public access.

Q. What is the cabling on site.

A. It is ready for the substation, for when its needed. The power is being taken from Sands Lane.

Q. If the play area goes ahead, is Persimmon happy to say it's safe and no future risk.

A. It is common practice, the government wants brownland to be used. Clean cover systems can be used in a normal way. Persimmon are happy it will be safe and would be happy for their children to use the area and have no problems saying the contamination is sealed and safe.

Q. The oil situation has not been mentioned.

A. Original ground investigation showed some traces of higher levels of carbon. The area has been dug and removed from site.

Q. How did Persimmon obtain authority to disturb the land on the Fat & Bone Factory, when there was a proviso that it would be covered up, grassed over and not disturbed ever.

A. Permission received from Environment Agency, Environmental Health etc The planning permission gives the legal right. The area has been accessed, remediated and nothing will be built on the hotspots of the original Fat & Bone Factory. Persimmon could have left the site and done nothing, but chose to solidify it, to stop contamination leeching. It is being covered over. The play area is going on an area that only contained 1 hotspot, again this has been remediated, removed and covered.

Q. How many dwellings will appear on Woods Meadow and how long will it take to full completion.

A. 800 dwellings in total and approximately 2.5 to 3 years.

Q. An application was made for a Village Green.

A. This application was dismissed after going to an enquiry.

Debbie and Mark agreed to consult with Planners re the possible re-siting of the play areas. whoever suggested this area of contaminated land should re- site it. There are alternative areas of land within the park more suitable, away from properties and ample parking. It was agreed to inform the Parish Council, hopefully sit around a table with planning also to agree a way forward.

Thanks the public and Persimmon for attending.

To confirm date of the next Parish Council meeting as Tuesday 5th November 2024 @ 7.00 pm in Oulton Community Centre.

The meeting closed at 11.28

DRAFT