

WINSFORD PARISH COUNCIL

DRAFT Minutes of the Extra-Ordinary Meeting of Winsford Parish Council Held on Monday 17 October 2022, at 16.00pm in Winsford Village Hall

PRESENT: Councillors: Colin Wilkins (CW) – Chair, Kevin Connell (KC), Mel Mileham (MM), Ian Brooks (IB), Bryany Neal (BN) and Clerk Jennifer Yates (JY).

Also in attendance were 28 members of Winsford Parish, approximately half of whom live in the proposed conservation area.

This meeting was recorded for the benefit of the clerk. The recording will be destroyed on production of the minutes, along with the attendance register.

CW opened the meeting at 16.01pm.

56.1 Apologies for non-attendance – Councillors Sarah Little and Mike Hillier

56.2 Declaration of Interests - none

56.3 Public question time and discussion re the Exmoor National Park Consultation taking place regarding an area of Winsford becoming a Conservation Area.

Mr Wilkins opened the question and comment part of the meeting stating that he had been informed that the first meeting between the ENPA representatives and the parishioners had been difficult and that the planned one to one conversations had not been possible. He reminded the attendees that there is another session planned for the 20th and that the ENPA representatives do want the format of being able to have one to one conversations with people who attend. CW went on to explain that the Council holds a neutral position with regards to the conservation area consultation and therefore welcomed the fact a good number of parishioners had attended this meeting. He explained that when the Exmoor National Park was set up they obtained the power to impose conservation areas on the land within its boundary, and therefore whatever the outcome of this meeting and other feedback to the National Park the final decision will remain theirs and will be made by their panel. Queries raised in this meeting will be passed to the ENPA representatives before they attend the meeting later this week.

Clerk's note – during the meeting a small number of topics were mentioned on numerous occasions and therefore for clarity these minutes will not be in chronological order so that references to these topics can be combined together.

1. Responses to the consultation.

- Mr Wilkins mentioned that he had considered a ballot of members of the village to have a clear idea of how many people were in favour of the conservation area and how many were opposed to the idea. KC commented that this could be problematic in that an outside 'neutral' overseer would need to be brought in for this to take place. IB mentioned that he had an idea of how the council could gather views.

Action: It was agreed that the council would value such input but need to discuss the best way to do so.

- Discussion took place with regard to the above gathering of views and whether this should be limited to the 57 owners of the dwellings which would be inside the

conservation boundary, or whether it should be open to all members of the Winsford community. There were a number of attendees who felt strongly in favour of each proposal. KC pointed out that whilst in the short term it would be those 57 owners who were most affected over a period of time there would be exchanges of ownership so any decision made now would affect future owners and therefore the whole parish should be able to comment. One attendee mentioned that as certain areas which would fall within the area, such as the car park, are used by all in the village it would be ideal if all could have their say. Discussion was held re having two separate submissions of views – one for property owners within the proposed conservation boundary and one for the rest of the parishioners. Concern was raised about ‘excluding’ people who live outside the designated area from being able to share their views and by doing so potentially creating a negative view in that group. Finally, one attendee proposed leaving it up to the council to agree the best way to organise this.

Action: It was agreed that the council will make arrangements and publicise them.

- Two members of the community reminded all in attendance that the most direct route for people to pass their views to the ENPA was to communicate with them directly, therefore ensuring that their views will be considered. This could be through attending the further meeting with Mr Thurlow and other representatives on Thursday 20th October, or through emailing/writing to him at Exmoor House in Dulverton.

Action: Any member of the parish wishing to ensure their views are received at the ENPA can contact them directly by the end of the consultation period.

2. Comments regarding the proposed Conservation Area

- Numerous people in attendance at the meeting (both councillors and parishioners) expressed concern that their appeared to be a lack of clarity and confirmation of the proposed boundary. Some attendees who have spoken with the ENPA representatives were given the impression that the proposed boundary could yet be changed. This has created uncertainty for people who live just outside the boundary who are concerned that it could be adjusted to affect their properties. It was also raised by one attendee that although their property is outside the boundary, they are not sure if by their property abutting the boundary the additional restrictions may or may not apply should they wish to develop their property. It was agreed that clarity needs to be sought with regard to whether the proposed boundary is the final version, and that if it is to be altered it would be beneficial if it could be re-issued very shortly to allow people time to review the change and respond.

Action: Clerk to raise this issue with ENPA representatives prior to the meeting on 20th October.

Action: Clerk to suggest to ENPA that as the timescale between the two meetings is short that, in order for the ENPA representatives to consider and respond to this enquiry and discuss any changes to the boundary, those at this meeting respectfully request one further meeting to be held in the village before the end of the consultation.

Action: Parishioners to take the opportunity to discuss this with the ENPA representatives or mention it in their responses to ENPA.

- There was some discussion with regards to the inclusion of certain properties such as the new houses, garage and stables as they are seen as modern and commercial rather than historic buildings. This decision was described as confusing and it was suggested that if there is a review of the boundary these could be re-considered for inclusion. It was further suggested that perhaps the boundary needed to be expanded to include more

properties including those on the entry roads into the villages as mentioned in the ENPA papers.

- Not all attending the meeting had been able to view the leaflet circulated to the 57 properties within the proposed conservation area. JY shared that there is a link to the ENPA conservation page on the parish council website and the leaflet is on there.
- On numerous occasions during the meeting the issue of what exactly would be the pros and the cons of becoming a conservation area, both for those living within and for those living outside the proposed boundary would be. There was much discussion, and it was acknowledged that there would be both benefits and restrictions. It was agreed that the main argument in favour was that it would put the whole village in line for future grant support from the National Park when available. Also, there would be advantages such as improving the car park which belongs to SCC Highways. Arguments against would appear to be the restrictions on peoples own ability to develop their own property with changes to permitted development rights. It was felt that the restrictions go against certain government policies, for example the development of the use of solar power on homes. Other 'cons' mentioned were raising buildings and tree works. One attendee mentioned that they were already subject to additional planning restrictions by living in a National Park and didn't wish to add a further layer of restrictions.

Action: Clerk to contact the ENPA representatives and request that more clarity could be given re 'pros and cons', perhaps in the format of a simple list.

- An ex-councillor who held his position when the previous conservation area consultation took place said that at the time the vote was very close, but no decision could be reached despite the boundary including a larger number of properties.
- Concern was raised that the conservation area was being proposed but with no follow up plan. A 5 or 10 year plan linked with the proposal would make it seem more well supported and planned for, and give a clearer idea to the parishioners of the kind of changes that supporting the conservation plan proposal could lead to.
- It was suggested that it would be beneficial to contact other parishes who have become conservation area and ask if they could briefly share whether they have found it beneficial to do so, and what pros/cons have they experienced. One councillor has spoken with a fellow councillor from Porlock who did not give positive feedback so it was felt that spreading the net more widely would be beneficial.

Action: Clerk to contact the clerks/chairs of the 14 local parishes who are conservation areas and request a brief response re pros, cons and experiences of the effect that it has had in their area. Any responses could be shared with Councillors and put on the website.

- A question was raised as to whether new homes could be put up within the boundary of a conservation area. Discussion followed re the need for social housing in the village. BN will be attending a meeting about the need for affordable housing for local families shortly. It was mentioned that another 'pro' for conservation areas is that house prices tended to go up – which could be a 'con' for young families wishing to get onto the housing ladder and also stay in the area.

Action: Chair to ask about this at the meeting on 20th October.

- A question was raised as to how the new layer of restrictions might be applied to buildings within the boundary. For example, the village hall has 'plastic' windows, when

they need replacing would the expectation be that they are replaced with wooden windows? Discussion followed and it is believed that would not be the case – that buildings would be able to replace like with like.

Action: Chair to clarify this at the meeting on the 20th October.

3. Next Steps One attendee is unable to be at the meeting on 20th October and requested that if further clarification on the points raised above are made available they could be posted on the website and CW agreed to this.

Mr Wilkins thanked everyone for attending the meeting.

56.4 Date of Next meeting – Monday 28th November 2022 at 7.30 in Winsford Village Hall

There being no further business the meeting closed at 17.11pm.