

Minutes of the Extra Planning Meeting of Othery Parish Council

Monday 18th March 2024 at 7:30 pm

- 1 **Apologies:** Cllr Selway attended but left the meeting at 20:09hrs.
- 2 **Present:** Cllrs Tizzard: Jennings: Jones: Selway: Atherton: Betty: Wright: Somerset Cllr Martin: and highways lead Cllr Wilkins: Claire Deacon from Kier and Meri Fernandez Garcia from the EA with 85 members of the public along with representatives from Middlezoy and Aller Parish Council present for the second planning matter.
- 3 **Declarations of Interest:** These will always be declared at the agenda item when appropriate.
- 4 **Planning notice:** **Planning application number:** 38/24/00005/SKN:
Proposal: Approval of the details of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale, for (38/22/00011) Outline planning permission, with some matters reserved, for 2 self-build dwellings: **Location:** Land to the West of, Townsend, Othery, Bridgwater: **This complies with D14 and 19 of the local plan therefore the Parish Council have no objections was carried by a unanimous vote.**

Planning application number: 34/24/00003/AGE: Environment Agency soil stockpile on Oliver's Road. As the variation is to alter the route that the soil will take to be hauled from the stockpile to the Southlake Reservoir. In summary the change seems to be to NOT use Stathe Road (as they have realised that this is the wrong side of the river to access the Southlake Reservoir). In its place they are recommending that the soil is hauled down Pathe Road from Othery but acknowledge that Pathe Road is listed as 'not suitable for HGVs'. There seems no reference to its use as a quiet route for cyclists heading up from Aller and pedestrians as this is a well-used walking route with no passing space even for a cyclist pedestrians or other vehicles if confronted head on by an HGV.

Claire Deacon from Kier supported by Meri Fernandez Garcia with standing orders suspended from the EA gave a short presentation on the project outlining the problems and challenges and took questions from the floor. Several members of the public commented on the lack of enough good passing bays along Pathe Road and that the existing bays are in poor condition and that they would be essential not only for traffic but bikers, walkers and residents riding their horses. Claire said that there would be marshals at each end of Pathe Road restricting the movement of construction traffic and that the passing bays were going to be assessed. Another issue was around the risk assessment of using Pathe Road as the signs say that it is unsuitable for heavy vehicles and one every 6 minutes will cause chaos asking why all vehicles cannot access the site through Burrow Mump car park. Claire said that the risk assessment had been undertaken and that is why it is no longer lorries but tractors and trailers with a maximum gross weight of 20 tons. She also stated that Burrow Mump access to the sites off Pathe Road was not suitable. On the point of 20 tons gross weight a resident commented that with the weight of tractor and trailer you would be lucky to carry 10 tons of soil thus necessitating even more deliveries per day. Claire said that Kier was confident that the delivery figures quoted would be sufficient.

Several members of the public were worried about the vibration damage to their properties and boundary walls some of which are listed. Claire said that if the owners contacted Kier,

they would undertake an assessment which could be checked again once the project was finished, and any damage rectified but it was up to the owners of properties along the route to make contact with Kier before the project starts. Cllr Tizzard noted that National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provided protection for heritage assets which were non-listed and if these were included. Claire stated she was not aware of this fact and advised a similar record by owners as listed properties. When asked if Kier had any contact with Historic England SW Case Team at Bristol Claire stated due to other heritage sites in the scheme area, they were in contact with them. Claire stated that she did not know the answer regarding the broader heritage issues but encouraged anyone with concerns to have Kier survey their buildings.

Another member asked if Summerhedge might be used as a return route stating that it was totally unsuitable. Claire said that Summerhedge would not be used. She also said that the idea of the return route being to Aller would be looked at by Kier. Are the narrow bridges that are going to be used substantial enough to take this amount of traffic was asked. Claire said that the bridges are being surveyed and any alterations will be undertaken. Another resident said that last year his hedge was substantially damaged by traffic not suitable for the road so will Kier reinstate his hedge if it is damaged again? Claire said that any damage done by Kier contractors would be reinstated.

In the presentation Claire pointed out that National Grid have to move overhead pylons and they are not moving very quickly to undertake that work so the question was asked will this delay the project or extend it. Claire and Meri replied jointly that Kier will have to work around that problem if National Grid do not undertake the work quickly and Meri added that there is a legal obligation to complete by July 2025. The issue about the main road and Pathe Road already needing substantial work, and this will make Pathe Road worse. Pathe Road would be reinstated after the works had finished and Cllr Wilkins on behalf of Somerset Council said that the complete resurfacing of the main road through Othery scheduled for 2024-25 after consultation work between Othery Parish Council and the Somerset Council would be delayed until this project had been completed. Another asked why this change of route is coming so late in the process and why wasn't this part of the original application to which Meri responded by saying unfortunately it was always part of the project plans but left off the original application. One member of the public asked if there was a helpline if there were problems and Claire said that she could always be contacted. Cllr Wright asked when the work on Currymoor was to be undertaken. Claire replied that this is not part of her remit. One member of the public wanted to know the operation period of this project and was told from 07:30 to 18:00 with pauses during the time children went to school and left school from 1st March to 1st November. The last question from the public was what mitigation would Kier and the EA be offering to Othery regarding mitigation and the answer was that they would be open to ideas.

Standing orders were reinstated and the Councillors asked if they had any comments.

Cllr Atherton was concerned about the traffic management as he noted in a short survey that traffic along that road during the normal day is one vehicle about every 7 minutes-which will be a challenge for the traffic marshals and thought that a road closure for all but construction traffic and residents should have been put in place. Cllr Wright said that there would be considerable mud on the road which is an offence what is being done about this problem. Also

when is the soil tested to avoid contamination? The other Cllrs felt that the public had voiced all their concerns. **Standing orders were lifted for Clair and Meri to respond:** There was not now time to get a road closure in place, but she was confident that with the passing places enhanced and possibly even another created the movement would be carried out on time. The mud is a problem and there would be a road sweeper on site all the time to clear the road as with many such projects. The soil is tested before being brought into the area and again before it is moved onto the site.

Standing orders reinstated: It is not a case of support as the project has to go ahead but all the observations should be forwarded to the planning officer because as a major project it has to go to the planning committee. Proposed by Cllr Betty seconded by Cllr Wright and supported by all.

Cllr Tizzard closed the meeting by thanking Claire, Meri Cllrs Wilkins and Martin for attending and being part of the discussions also saying that we all have to monitor what happens during the project. Meri and Claire would be staying to have a conversation with members of the community after the meeting.

5 Urgent Matters at the discretion of the Chairman:

6 Date and time of the next meeting: Monday 15th April 2024 7:30 Parish Council Meeting.