

Great Milton Parish Council

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Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Great Milton Parish Council

held at the Pavilion, Great Milton on Monday 16th May 2022

Present: Cllrs W Fox, P Allen, C Deacon, D Harms and M Horsley.

In Attendance: Tim Darch (Clerk), Cllr Caroline Newton (SODC), Niall Kingston (General Manager, LMQS) and 19 members of the public.

67/22 Election of Chair

After a unanimous vote Cllr Steve Harrod was elected unopposed in his absence as Chair of Great Milton Parish Council for the coming year, with the Declaration of Acceptance of Office to be signed as soon as is practical either at his home address or at the next meeting.

68/22 Election of Vice-Chair

After a unanimous vote Cllr Bill Fox was elected unopposed as Vice-Chair of Great Milton Parish Council for the coming year, and duly signed the Declaration of Acceptance of Office.

69/22 Review of existing Committees

The membership of the various committees affiliated to the Parish Council was reviewed, and their representatives confirmed as follows:

- The Sheppard Trust – Simon Cronk, Jane Willis
- The Hard Surface Play Area Committee – Mark Nethercleft (Chair), Dan Bennett (Treasurer)
- Great Milton Recreation Ground Management Committee – James Cunningham (Chair), Michele Block (Vice-Chair)
- Neighbourhood Watch – Jola Miziniak, Rod Snowdon
- The Kent & Couling Charity – Simon Cronk, Tricia Treanor, Sue Denham
- The Old Field Charity – Adrian Buckmaster (Chair), David Mackrory (Treasurer)
- Neighbours Hall – Mike Robinson (Chair), Christine Donnelly

70/22 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received in advance from Cllr Freddie Van Mierlo (OCC), Cllrs Stephen Harrod and G Bennet.

71/22 Variation of order of business

Business was conducted in the order prescribed by the agenda.

72/22 Declarations of members' interests

Regarding Item 72/21A, Cllr Fox advised that he and Cllr Harrod are Chair and Vice-Chair of the Great Milton Community Pub Limited respectively, as well as being shareholders in the pub along with the majority of councillors, Belmond Group and Raymond Blanc. Following advice received from the District Monitoring Officer when the Manoir planning application was first considered, a declaration of pecuniary interest is not required for councillors who hold shares in the pub, but this is mentioned here for full transparency.

73/22 Matters to report

Monthly reports were received from the County and District Councillor, along with Cllr Caroline Newton's delayed annual District Council report. These are available on the Parish Council website. In addition, Cllr Newton noted that a consultation on the Local Plan 2041 (for adoption in 2024) is under way: comments are welcomed. Additionally proposed changes to the planning process were shelved in the Queen's Speech: any revisions will be much less dramatic than those originally planned. Finally, Cllr Newton was pleased to report that South Oxfordshire has welcomed one of the largest volumes of Ukrainian refugees in the country, with 400 children arriving in the district, plus their families.

74/22 Correspondence and public discussion

No correspondence has been received which is not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda.

75/22 Planning applications

A The following planning applications received from SODC were considered:

P21/S0343/FUL and P21/S0428/LB (Belmond Le Manoir Aux Quat'Saisons Church Road Great Milton). Amended plans and additional information received 12 April 2022.

This application was discussed at length by attendees and councillors. The key points are summarised below:

Architects' model

Concerns were repeated regarding the ongoing absence of an architects' model of the development to ease understanding of the scale and nature of the proposal, and also possibly improving engagement. It was felt that artists' impressions were not a suitable substitute, gave an inaccurate impression of scale, and that the volume of plans on the SODC website was daunting and extremely difficult to navigate. Several attendees felt that the Parish Council should not have supported the development without the provision of a model: Cllr Allen responded by stating that the Parish Council had requested a model but that it was made clear by Lichfields and Belmond at an early stage that this would not be pursued.

Scale of development

Several attendees commented on the scale of development relative to the size of Great Milton, and Le Manoir's situation on a relatively small plot of land very close to the heart of the village. Similar spa offerings are more generally surrounded by large expanses of open land, with dedicated accesses and long drives which minimise traffic impacts and potential road safety issues on nearby communities (with Soho Farmhouse referenced). Clarification was sought on why the development needed to be as large as is planned, and why a spa, gym, wellness centre and cookery school were required as well as the increased number of restaurant covers and rooms to ensure future viability. Cllr Fox responded by saying that the development would 'futureproof' Le Manoir, which was a 'force for good' within the village and needed to move with the times, while Niall Kingston added that expansion was necessary to ensure future sustainability, and that the vision for the spa was Raymond Blanc's.

Building footprints

A resident observed that although there were reported reductions in building sizes, there was little evidence of change and that the footprints of buildings had not reduced significantly, if at all. With only three bedrooms, it was questioned whether it was necessary for a building such as the 'Presidential Villa' to be as large as is planned.

Engagement

Opinion was expressed that Belmond's engagement on the amended application was unsatisfactory compared to the initial iteration, when residents were invited to a consultation event where open discussion and explanation of the plans with staff from Lichfields and Belmond/LMQS was facilitated. The absence of this offer with regard to the amendments hindered the necessary understanding of the changes that had been made.

Road access

A comment was received that the junction with the A329 was unsafe, given its proximity to the Church Road junction and Haseley junctions on a 50mph stretch of road. However, Cllr Fox and Niall Kingston responded by saying that the junction design had been approved by OCC as the highway authority, and that as such it was also assumed to be safe and suitable by Belmond/LMQS and the Parish Council.

Traffic

Concerns were raised over the volume of additional traffic through the village, which from certain directions was likely to be routed via Great Milton by sat nav instructions. A parallel was drawn with traffic levels and movements at school times, which illustrate the significant impact of additional traffic on the village road network. Concerns were also raised about the road safety implications of people arriving and departing by car in the hours of darkness on unlit and unfamiliar village roads.

Heritage and tradition

One resident expressed the view that the planned redevelopment bore no relation to the intimate country hotel that Raymond Blanc had established in Great Milton, while another could not believe that he was prepared to allow building on the long-established vegetable garden. Niall Kingston responded by reiterating that this was very much Raymond Blanc's vision, and that he is and will always be intrinsic to the business. One attendee also commented that the Parish Council was perhaps placing too much emphasis upon the resolution of Historic England's objections when many residents' concerns (for example with regard to ecology) were not dealt with in the HE response.

Parish council position

A view was expressed that the Parish Council had up to now approved the plans in support of Belmond/LMQS, while not being sympathetic to or reflecting the views of the many residents who had submitted comments on the SODC website and attended the meetings at which the application had been discussed. Cllr Fox responded by stating that the Parish Council's role was not to reflect all views on every detail of the application (which would be impossible given its complexity), but to listen and ultimately make their own decision, adding that there were residents who were supportive of the plans, while others were ambivalent.

The 'Manoir Field'/wildflower meadow

Sadness was expressed by some residents at the loss of biodiversity in the wildflower meadow, not only from the recent mowing but from the change of use that the plans propose, particularly for car parking.

Future development

An attendee commented that the Parish Council approving and not challenging this application may be the signal for further even more significant development in the future.

Drainage

Concerns were reiterated regarding the impact on drainage from the proposed development, and in particular the impact of increases in the amount of water entering drainage channels which due to being silted up may not be able to cope with the resulting influx.

Parish Plan

A comment was received on the relationship between the proposed development and Great Milton's Parish Plan. Cllr Fox responded by stating that the Parish Plan was somewhat dated (published in 2012): in response it was suggested that perhaps the plan should be revisited given the time that had elapsed since it was drafted, thus allowing the community to have more of a say in the village's future, with particular regard to planning.

SUMMING UP

In summing up, Cllrs Allen, Horsley and Harms agreed that consultation and engagement by Belmond on the amendments had been unsatisfactory, while Cllr Horsley also agreed that the absence of a model had been unhelpful.

VOTE

Of 5 councillors present, 2 voted to support the amendments, 1 voted against, while 2 abstained. Given this outcome and the weight of opinion of attendees, Great Milton Parish Council RESOLVED to respond to SODC detailing the discussion and the outcome of the vote in the absence of a clear position. The Parish Council also RESOLVED to seek clarification from the case officer on whether the planning application would be considered by the Planning Committee, and if not to request this.

P22/S1316/HH (Swarebrook Lower End Great Milton). Construction of new blockwork garden wall faced in natural stone on one side and lime render on the other side.

This application was reviewed by Cllr Horsley. A 3-metre wall is proposed, primarily to obscure the view of the carport associated with the 'Glass Onion' from Swarebrook. No adverse comments were received regarding the wall from neighbours on local consultation, though some are noted on the SODC website relating to the height of the wall. After discussion it was AGREED to respond to SODC with a comment to the effect that adjustments

to the wall would be appropriate, to a height of 3 metres to obscure the view of the carport from Swarebrook, reducing to 2m where there is an impact on amenity.

P22/S1395/HH (1 Colletts Cottages Thame Road Great Milton). Demolition of detached garage and part previous rear extension to facilitate erection of two storey extension to cottage, plus forming a new additional vehicular access off Thame Road, thereby extinguishing the current pedestrian access.

This application was reviewed by Cllr Fox. It is noted that the south-west corner of the new extension is just 1 metre from the boundary fence of the adjacent property ('Crannog'), although there are only small windows to the kitchen and cloakroom along that elevation, minimising any impact from overlooking. Despite proximity to 'Crannog', the neighbours on both sides are supportive of the development, and as result the Parish Council AGREED to respond to SODC with a comment to the effect that the planning authority should consider the impact of the proposed extension on the amenity of the adjoining bungalow to the west.

P22/S1189/HH (7 Thame Road Great Milton). As amended by plans received 22 April 2022 illustrating first floor window.

This application was reviewed by Cllr Fox. After brief discussion it was resolved to SUPPORT the amended plans illustrating the first-floor window as submitted.

P22/S1351/PDS (The Penn Thame Road Great Milton). Additional storey to increase the height of the building by 2.3 metres.

This application was reviewed by Cllr Bennet outside the meeting, and comments were submitted to SODC on 11 May having been denied an extension and in the context of this being permitted development. One resident was concerned at the prospect of construction here along with possible further building on another nearby site. However, the same respondent also felt that the property will be more aesthetically pleasing than the current bungalow when completed. and was happy that no windows overlooked their property.

Again, mindful of the fact that this is permitted development, Cllr Bennet could find no strong reasons to object to the proposal. It was noted that there are no online comments from neighbours on the consultation page, and with no additional comments of its own, as such the Parish Council therefore agreed to SUPPORT the application.

B No planning decisions have been received this month, and there are no outstanding planning matters.

76/22 Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the April meeting of the Parish Council, held on Tuesday 19th April 2022, were received, approved and signed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

77/22 Financial resolutions

A The following cheques for payment were authorised:
Tim Darch. Salary, Tax and Expenses. £557.72
McCracken and Sons. Mowing April. £804
Arthur J Gallagher (Parish Council insurance). £436.99
Jonathan Dudley. Bulletin production May. £335.20
Shield Solutions. Dog bin emptying April. £62.40
Three Villages car scheme insurance. £100
Website support February. £19.99 (paid by monthly Direct Debit)
BT Office/e-mail package. £10.80 (paid by monthly Direct Debit)

B The monthly bank reconciliation, accounts and bank statement were received, reviewed and signed. The bank balance as at 9th May was £47,609.30.

78/22 Parish clerk and councillors' update of matters in hand

- Oxfordshire County Council Highways has been contacted with a view to the supply and installation of highway infrastructure to deter speeding, including Speed Indicator Devices.

79/22 COVID-19: update on village response/impacts

There are no significant issues to report other than those which are receiving national coverage.

80/22 20mph zone

There are no further developments to report on progress towards a 20mph zone, other than that Great Milton is in the first batch of 20mph communities in Oxfordshire.

81/22 Security in the village

The Neighbourhood Watch team will be present at the Church Fete on 11 June. Discussions continue with a view to investigation of 'Smartwater' as a potential security solution in the village.

82/22 Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee will be marked with various activities at The Bull spanning the long weekend from Thursday 2nd to Sunday 5th June, along with a village 'Jubilee Picnic' at the Recreation Ground on Sunday 5th from 12 to 2pm (weather permitting). Please contact Hazel Hand or Tim Darch if you are able to offer assistance with any aspect of setting up this event.

83/22 New Bus Service

As the result of a partnership between Belmond (UK) Ltd (owners of Le Manoir aux Quat'Saisons), the Oxford Bus Company and Oxfordshire County Council, service 46 from Oxford to Wheatley will be significantly extended to operate **hourly from early till late, seven days a week**, between Great Milton, Wheatley, Horspath, Cowley, Florence Park and Oxford from Monday 20th June 2022. Residents are urged to support the service to help to secure its long-term future: the timetable will appear in the next Bulletin, and also appears on the village and Oxford Bus Company websites. The Parish Council wishes to thank Belmond for ensuring the restoration of regular public transport provision to Great Milton.

The next meeting of Great Milton Parish Council will be held on Monday 20th June 2022 at 7.30pm at the Pavilion.

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