

# Great Milton Parish Council

Parish Clerk: Mr T Darch

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## Minutes of the Meeting of Great Milton Parish Council held at the Neighbours' Hall, Great Milton on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> October 2021

Present: Cllrs Steve Harrod (Chair), W Fox (Vice-Chair), P Allen, G Bennet, M Horsley and D Harms.

In Attendance: Tim Darch (Clerk), Cllr Freddie Van Mierlo (County Councillor, Chalgrove Division), Cllr Caroline Newton (SODC), Niall Kingston (Hotel Manager, Le Manoir Aux Quat'Saisons), Eveline Nioort (General Manager, Le Manoir Aux Quat'Saisons) and 23 members of the public.

### 123/21 Apologies for absence

Apologies were received in advance from Cllr C Deacon.

### 124/21 Variation of order of business

Discussion of Item 128/21 was brought forward for the convenience of those present.

### 125/21 Declarations of member's interest

Regarding Item 128/21A, the Chair advised that he and Cllr Fox 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 and 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.

### 126/21 Matters to report

Monthly reports were received from Cllr Freddie van Mierlo (County Councillor, Chalgrove division) and Cllr Caroline Newton (District Councillor, Haseley Brook ward). Both are available on the Parish Council website. Cllr Van Mierlo additionally reported the following:

- It is hoped that a new countywide 20mph policy will be approved on Tuesday 19th October. Parish Councils will receive an e-mail offering the opportunity to put themselves forward for 20mph status. The process deviates from DfT guidelines in some ways to make the process easier and more affordable for local councils. A range of criteria will be used to decide which communities get a 20mph zone: they will be selected in annual 'rounds'. The criteria may include the presence of footways and previous local requests.
- OCC's new Transport Strategy is in development, which includes a freight strategy.
- The Dodwells Solar Farm application will be objected to by OCC on archaeological grounds.

Cllr Newton additionally reported that:

- SODC's lack of five-year housing and land supply risks potentially undesirable speculative development, and two applications have already been allowed on appeal on this basis following rejection by SODC. Further updates will be provided by Cllr Newton at future meetings.
- The Local Plan 2041 is currently at an early stage of development. Councillor Allen asked if any assessment of the success of the many previous plans had ever been conducted: Cllr Newton felt that this had probably not taken place.
- Some Afghan refugees have been accommodated in South Oxfordshire, and some Afghan children are attending the village primary school.

### 127/21 Correspondence and public discussion

- Advance notice of an intended planning application for replacement/improved communications equipment (including a 5G mast) at Hanks Yard, Holloway Farm, Milton Common has been received from Clarke Telecom. The Parish Council has no comment to make at this stage: the full planning application will be consulted upon as usual when received.

- A resident has reported further incidents of inconsiderate school run parking, this time at Pitts Green blocking access to Ives Gate Lane. This has been reported to the Neighbourhood Policing team: a member of the team visited the village on Monday 11 October and it is hoped that this will now become a regular event.
- A letter has been received advising that responsibility for parking enforcement is switching to Oxfordshire County Council from SODC on 1 November. Cllr Van Mierlo stated that any funds raised from enforcement will be ploughed back into roads.

## **128/21 Planning applications**

A To consider the following planning applications received from SODC:

P21/S0343/FUL and P21/S0428/LB (Belmond Le Manoir Aux Quat'Saisons, Church Road, Great Milton OX44 7PD). Full planning permission for the erection of a new Wellness Spa, Bistro, Raymond Blanc Academy, Garden Villas, Garden Rooms, Pavilions and Storage Barns, minor extensions and alterations to the existing Grade II\* Manor House, former Stables building and Staff Facilities building, new highway access, internal road and car parking areas, limited demolition and associated works. (Amended Plans and information received 14 September 2021).

Cllr Harrod opened public discussion of the amended application by thanking those who attended and noting that the Parish Council is a consultee rather than a decision-maker.

### **Neighbours' Hall**

A concern was raised about the proximity of the deluxe garden rooms to the Neighbours' Hall, which is used for weddings and big parties, with a potential impact both on hotel guests and also on the Hall should its suitability as a venue be compromised by the need to consider hotel guests nearby where there are none at present. A representative of the Neighbours' Hall committee hoped that the hedge around the Hall would be replanted as part of the development, to benefit both the Neighbours' Hall and Le Manoir.

### **Car parking**

A resident felt that it was a shame to break new ground and use green space for car parking when the onus should be placed upon maintaining this, although it was understood that walking in the field will still be possible.

### **Scale**

Several concerns were raised about the scale of development. It was suggested that considering the increase in staff numbers from 181 to 264, the lack of public transport in the village should be addressed for both the village and staff. Other world-class retreats are set in parkland: this proposal is too large for a relatively constrained location. The development involves the destruction of an ancient meadow, a dangerous access, and a site in Green Belt, while the renderings do not give a realistic impression of the development, possibly deliberately. Niall Kingston reported that the expansion would generate the capacity for an additional 60 covers.

### **Access from A329**

The redevelopment will attract several thousand additional overnight guests per year who cannot be guaranteed to come in via the A329 access and who may use the village roads. One attendee felt that the proximity of the new A329 access to the Great Milton and Great Haseley junctions was a safety risk, and that a roundabout may have been preferable. Cllr van Mierlo reported that this had been suggested but was not considered practical by OCC as the highway authority. At this stage, the County Council feels that the current proposal is acceptable and that what is proposed is considered safer than the existing arrangement. The junction design is not final and may be refined as the plan evolves. It was also suggested that the M40 junction could be remodelled to enable on/off access in all directions, which would help to reduce vehicle movements through the village to and from Le Manoir.

### **Use by local residents/'inclusivity'**

A resident commented that villagers should be encouraged and embraced by the new facilities, especially as they are possibly some of Le Manoir's best customers. The focus appears to be on bringing people in from outside the village, with any benefit to village residents being secondary. Although Raymond Blanc clearly has the best interests of the village at heart, Belmond has shareholders to satisfy who will not be familiar with or have an

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affinity with the village. It was asked how the deluxe villas and a retreat were 'inclusive'. In response Niall Kingston reported that the current restrictions on space and facilities make it hard to be inclusive: the new food offer will improve this and make it easier to book, and make dining more affordable, while the additional rooms will not diminish the opportunities for local residents to enjoy Le Manoir.

The team from Le Manoir were disappointed to hear that residents felt excluded, and that M. Blanc would feel the same. It was reiterated that the whole team will want to work with residents to make them feel welcomed and to continue to make LMQS a part of the village, and that all comments will be taken away and will be considered.

## **Drainage**

Concerns expressed over drainage in the previous meeting were reiterated, specifically the ability of the drainage network to cope with the new development. Councillor van Mierlo reported that OCC had no current basis for an objection on the grounds of drainage.

## **3D model**

Several in attendance felt that a 3D model would be much more helpful and easy to understand than drawn plans, given the size and scale of the development, with some feeling that not providing one was impossible to explain. It was also suggested that the landscape document was very 'partisan,' made lots of statements which accompanied by the artists' impressions undermined its credibility, and that it was hard to understand what the development will look like from the information and illustrations provided. The representatives present from Le Manoir were unable to say why a 3D model wasn't pursued in favour of artistic renderings, but said that they would take this back to the design team.

## **Car parking**

The planting of mature trees and hedges to immediately shield the car parking area (which was described as 'an eyesore') was suggested. Representatives from Le Manoir said that this would be fed back to the design team.

## **Design panel**

It was suggested that the plans could be presented for review to an independent panel.

## **Unpleasant odours**

Reports were received of smells from what was assumed to be deodorisers for rubbish: these were unpleasant now, let alone after more rubbish is generated post-expansion. Eveline Nioort reported that the smells were being investigated and that the source was still unclear.

## **Councillor discussion**

Councillor Horsley asked if the plans currently under consideration would be altered in any way prior to consideration and decision by SODC: Niall Kingston confirmed that no changes would be made.

Councillor Bennet asked if an independent review of the plans had been considered. Niall Kingston replied that this had not been considered so far.

Councillor Harrod summarised the objections raised in online responses so far, as follows:

- Scale and style of the proposed development
- Green Belt/Southern field development
- Traffic impact on the village
- Wastewater/water course impact
- Light pollution
- Destruction of Small Blue butterfly habitat

All will be reviewed by officers at either OCC or SODC.

In advance of a vote, Cllr Harrod outlined the options available to councillors which were to support the application, to submit a response or to object (the latter two requiring accompanying comments).

### **VOTE**

Five councillors voted to recommend **SUPPORT** of the application in Great Milton Parish Council's response to SODC, with no votes against. The Chairman abstained from the vote.

In conclusion, Cllr Harrod once again thanked those present and stated that by supporting the application the Parish Council was supporting a globally recognised business in a sector severely damaged by the Covid pandemic, the further development of which will stimulate the local economy. Although the impact on the Green Belt was noted, some relaxation of measures that have been in place since the Second World War should perhaps be considered. Finally Cllr Harrod reminded attendees that the deadline for consultation responses to SODC was Friday October 22<sup>nd</sup>.

B To review the following planning decisions received and any outstanding planning matters. Planning Application P21/S3915/FUL: 'Dodwells Solar Farm' (Land north of the A40 near Milton Common).

The Parish Council has been advised of the submission of a full application for the above development. Full details and documentation are available on the South Oxfordshire District Council planning application web page:

<https://data.southoxon.gov.uk/ccm/support/Main.jsp?MODULE=ApplicationDetails&REF=P21/S3915/FUL#exactline>

Residents are encouraged to respond individually via the SODC website. An extension to the deadline has been granted to enable the Parish Council to consider the application at its November meeting, which takes place at **the Pavilion, Recreation Ground, Great Milton on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2021 at 7.30pm**. All are welcome.

P21/S3530/HH (Maranta Thame Road Great Milton). Hip to gable extension. Rear dormer & single storey rear extension. Planning permission is GRANTED for the development described above.

P21/S3680/HH and P21/S3681/LB (Milton Lodge Lower End Great Milton).

To raise the boundary walls and piers on the east and southern side of the property, to the same height as the existing piers and wall on the eastern boundary and install wooden gates. Planning permission is GRANTED for the development described above.

### **129/21 Minutes of the previous meeting**

The minutes of the September meeting of the Parish Council, held on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> September 2021, were received, approved and signed as a true and accurate record of proceedings.

### **130/21 Financial resolutions**

A To authorise and sign the following cheques for payment:

Tim Darch. Salary, Tax and Expenses. £508.85

Jonathan Dudley. Bulletin production October. £229.80

Website hosting October (reimbursement to Clerk). £19.99

McCracken and Son. September mowing. £402

Pet Waste Solutions. Dog bin emptying July and mid-September. £43.20/£43.20

Gillett and Johnstone. October church clock service. £206.40

Shield Solutions. Dog bin emptying end September. £14.40.

B The latest monthly bank reconciliation, accounts and bank statement were received, signed and approved. The reconciled bank balance as of 6<sup>th</sup> October was £50,908.71.

### **131/21 Parish Clerk and councillors' update of matters in hand**

- The Parish Clerk met with Jon Beale, Great Milton's OCC Highways representative at the end of September to discuss safety improvements at the junction of Thame Road and the A329 with particular reference to dangerous overtaking. OCC's proposals have been received: they include re-marking the circular '50' markings on the road surface, selected re-lining and adding a third 'turn in' arrow towards Milton Common (two is the norm).

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However despite repeated representations from the Clerk they do not propose any changes to the road markings at the junction (solid lines or otherwise). The demolished sign at the junction is scheduled to be reinstated in the week of Nov 29<sup>th</sup>: again, the Clerk has expressed dissatisfaction over the delay.

- The Grove Footpath (Bull to A329) has been flailed by the owner of the adjacent field.
- Exposed barbed wire in the ground at the entrances to the 'Manoir Field' opposite Ariens and at the Neighbours Hall (which may prove hazardous to dogs) has been reported to Le Manoir.
- A PCSO has visited the village and school to assess the parking situation at drop-off/pick-up times.

## **132/21 Priorities for the financial year 2022-23**

The Parish Council's financial priorities for the coming financial year were considered. This is the initial step in the 2022-23 budget preparation process. The potential purchase of speed monitoring equipment was suggested, along with maintaining suitable sums for key items of expenditure (including grass cutting and The Bulletin), and accounting for potential cost increases (including maintenance of the church clock). A first draft budget will be considered at the November meeting.

## **133/21 COVID-19: update on village response/impacts**

No significant local developments were raised with regard to the current pandemic.

## **134/21 Milton Common speed mitigation scheme update**

The installation team are reportedly awaiting delivery of materials: gateways should be received relatively soon, but the steel poles for the signage may have a longer lead time.

## **135/21 New dog hygiene arrangements**

Following a successful introductory meeting last month, Shield Solutions of Worminghall will be emptying the village dog bins on a weekly basis, starting with a three-month trial period from the end of September.

The meeting concluded at 9pm.

***The next meeting of Great Milton Parish Council will be held on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> November 2021 at the Pavilion, starting at 7.30pm.***

**SIGNED**

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