



**MINUTES OF THE BOWERS GIFFORD AND NORTH BENFLEET
PARISH COUNCIL MEETING
HELD AT THE BENBOW CLUB, BOWERS GIFFORD
WEDNESDAY 31st July 2019 AT 7.30 PM.**

PRESENT:

Councillors:	R.Smillie: T.Potter: B.Foster: D.Martin
Ward Councillor:	Councillor L. McKenzie (Pitsea South East)
Parish Council Clerk/RFO:	Mrs Christine Barlow
Members of the Public:	50+

Councillor Smillie welcomed all present to the meeting and explained that the Public Forum would give residents the opportunity to raise issues and ask questions. He asked everyone who wanted to speak to raise their hand in order to give everyone equal opportunity to speak.

29/19 Apologies for absence:

Apologies were received from Councillor Craig Rimmer (Pitsea South East Ward Councillor) and Councillor Patricia Reid (Essex County Councillor for Pitsea)

30/19 Declarations of member's interest – To receive any declarations of disclosable pecuniary interests, other pecuniary interests or non-pecuniary interests by members relating to any agenda items.

No declarations were received.

31/19 Public Forum: To enable residents to raise issues of concern with Parish Councillors (The time allowed for this item is 15 minutes)

With the permission of the Chair the Public Forum time of 15 minutes was extended to enable residents the opportunity to raise any issues or concerns.

- (i) A resident expressed thanks to the Parish Clerk for her action in getting large amounts of fly-tipped material the previous night cleared during the day from Pound Lane and London Road by Basildon Council. The Clerk advised it was a joint effort between Basildon Council Officers and herself that had resulted in the debris being cleared so quickly and she had already passed the Parish Council's and resident's thanks on the respective department.

It appeared that many residents attending the meeting wanted to object to a

planning application included on the agenda in item 37/19 and the Chair allowed questions to be asked and answered out of the agenda sequence. The proposed planning application was to build 24 homes on land adjacent to Eric Road and Alpha Close.

(ii) A resident stated that the proposals in the plans did not meet any government or planning guidelines and that the existing infrastructure in the two roads currently cul-de-sacs and the surrounding roads, could not sustain such a large development.

Councillor Foster explained that the site had been brought forward as a brownfield site in Basildon Council's "Call for Sites" programme. The application was an outline application (with matters reserved) and as such if granted, by Basildon Council, would mean that any developer of the site would have to provide fuller details on any subsequent planning application.

The meeting was advised that Parish Council had challenged the wording of the application as it was factually inaccurate and untrue. The Parish Council had notified planning officers and requested the application be withdrawn.

Councillor Smillie proceeded to give the meeting a brief history of how the application had come to the Parish Council's attention. He explained that the Parish Council was merely a consultee in the same way as members of the public were and like the community were able to put forward their comments for consideration. The Parish Council had no power to approve any plans.

Basildon Council is preparing their Local Plan for Examination in the autumn and, as part of the Local Plan, development within the Parish would be unavoidable. As residents were aware the Parish Council were preparing a Neighbourhood Plan and, in consultation with the community, areas for development were being identified. Once the Neighbourhood Plan details have been finalised a referendum will be held to ensure the community support the Neighbourhood Plan.

There was some confusion over what areas had been in the Neighbourhood Plan at the start of the process and the circumstances why the Plan had been revised. Councillor Smillie attempted to explain the detail.

He advised that Basildon Council's Local Plan now proposed to build 1350 homes in the Parish and if the Neighbourhood Plan was voted through by residents in the referendum the Parish Council would have some control over where these 1350 homes would be built. Councillor Smillie further explained that because of the changes in the control of Basildon Council, over the past three years, the Neighbourhood Plan structure had also had to be revised. Many more sites had come forward as a result the Parish Council "Call for Sites" initiative earlier in the year but until a Site Assessment report had been carried out and site put forward by land owners analysed no definite decision had been made on where development would be. Conversely until Basildon Council's Local Plan had been examined Basildon Council would also be unable to say conclusively where homes would be built across the Borough and in the Parish.

The Parish Council anticipated that over the next few months there would be many more planning applications of the type which had raised concerns in Eric Road/Alpha Close which would come forward from developers before the Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plan were a reality.

Councillor Smillie advised that, as a matter of course, discussions had taken place with developers but that no firm decisions had been made regarding the land in their remit either. At the end of the process not everyone would be happy but it would be the community as a whole who would have the final say before the Neighbourhood Plan was accepted. There were lots of issues that were more important before development could take place e.g. (i) the increase of traffic in Pound Lane, (ii) the village Infrastructure (roads and pathways) (iii) air quality and much more and urged residents to come forward and fill the vacancies which existed on the Parish Council in order to widen the scope of the Parish Council.

The Parish Council understood resident's concerns regarding the capabilities of the two small roads of Eric Road and Alpha Close if any plans were granted.

(iii) A resident stated he had purchased his home in Eric Road and land adjacent to his property as Green Belt and in speaking to Basildon Council Planning Officers and been advised it was now brownfield in the Local Plan and asked if the Parish Council had changed the status of his land? The Parish Council advised only Basildon Council could change the status of Green Belt; the Parish Council did not have the power to do this. Recently the Parish Council had been made aware that Basildon Council appeared to be making changes to the status of land without first consulting with them.

The meeting was highly charged and Councillor Smillie and Parish Councillors had to repeat themselves several times when informing the audience that the planning application had been withdrawn. The debate was allowed to continue, however, to give everyone the opportunity to put their views.

(iv) A resident was concerned if the application was given permission that the Country Park would not come forward. Councillor Smillie stated that nothing was set in stone and it was hoped that the County Park would still happen.

(v) A resident raised issues regarding over development of sites that were given planning permission.

(vi) One speaker confirmed that the Parish Council's comments regarding the grant of outline permission were correct and also the fact that the examination of the Local Plan had been deferred until December.

(vii) A resident asked why residents did not know about the application until they saw it a Facebook page. In reply Councillors stated that residents knew about the application at the same time as the Parish Council did. The resident asked why the Parish Council knew a lot of information but the residents do not. Councillor Smillie advised that most of the information the Parish Council had was available on the Basildon Borough Council website as a matter of public record and urged residents, if they felt so strongly about how information was

obtained to become a Parish Councillor as the Parish Council currently had Councillor vacancies.

The Parish Clerk explained the process for commenting on planning applications submitted to them by Basildon Council and explained the process of including these applications on the meeting agenda. The agenda was published at least 5 clear days prior to any Parish Council Meeting and could not be amended without publishing an amendment within a set timescale. Planning Officers confirmed by email on 30th July 2019 that the application had been withdrawn too late to remove the information from the agenda. Residents living near to the proposed site were informed by letter at the same time.

(viii) A resident asked if the Parish Council would they be able to influence any of the Plans for development to keep residents happy. Councillor Smillie replied that it was about protecting the environment where we all live and encouraged residents to get involved and if there were issues that residents felt would not work to raise these concerns so that the Parish Council and Steering Group could discuss them and put together a Neighbourhood Plan that made Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet one village, gives the minimum number of houses that the Parish must take and helps the Parish retain some control over decisions for development where residents think it should go and not joining the village to Pitsea. He added that the comment was not meant to be a slight on the residents of Pitsea but that the majority of residents in Bowers Gifford and North Benfleet had stated, in the consultations that had been carried out, that they did not want to be joined to Pitsea and did not want roads linking the Parish through to Pitsea. The Parish Council was fighting constantly to prevent Essex County Council and Planners from taking action which would not concur with resident's views.

(ix) A resident asked Councillors how the proposed development was now "tagged on" to Eric Road and Alpha Road as in the original Neighbourhood Plan the development did not exist. It was explained the development was not part of the original Neighbourhood Plan and the land in question was put forward for development as part of Basildon Council's own "Call for Sites" programme. However, it had been submitted for consideration for assessment as part of the Parish Council's own "Call for Sites" request and as with other sites which had come forward would be analysed as part of the independent site assessment process.

A resident insisted that the Parish Council had approved the application because this was what was written in the application. Councillor Smillie repeated, as he had done several times during the public forum discussion and at the commencement of the meeting, that the application had been withdrawn because the comments were untrue. The resident in question then berated Councillor Smillie for comments he had made on the Bowers Gifford Crime and Community Facebook page. Councillor Smillie explained he had endeavoured on the Page to explain the process of the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Plan in his comments but the resident refused to accept this.

(x) A resident asked about the Air Quality research on the A127 and stated that

the London Road was equally bad and asked if the two roads would be lumped together for testing. Councillor Foster advised he was currently trying to find a supplier who would provide the air quality meters free of charge in order to carry out some tests.

(xi) A resident asked why if as she thought the sites of the Neighbourhood Plan had been agreed as part of the consultation that had been held a referendum still had to take place. It was repeated that the Neighbourhood Plan had to be reviewed because of the changes made by Basildon Council in their Local Plan and the Parish Council had to start virtually from scratch. The Parish Council had not reached the referendum stage yet and residents would still be consulted on the sites in a referendum.

(xii) A resident asked what the possibility was of getting speed humps installed along Pound Lane. Councillors replied that there was very little chance of Essex Highways agreeing to install the humps. However, the Parish Council had tried to get a Speed Awareness Group together but were no able to get enough volunteer. If residents wanted to volunteer again they would be happy to resurrect this project. A number of residents put their name forward.

In conclusion, Councillor Smillie went on to explain that there was a Steering Group who were also working behind the scenes on the Neighbourhood Plan and if anyone present wanted to get involved they could speak to the Parish Clerk or a Councillor after the meeting who would be happy to explain.

32/19 Ward Councillor update: Time is set aside for Borough/County Councillor/s to address the meeting.

Councillor McKenzie (Pitsea South East Ward Councillor) updated the meeting with the following information and advised that:

(i) Pitsea Town Centre Regeneration would be presented to the Town Centre Regeneration Committee in September and advised a new foot bridge was proposed adjacent to Pitsea station. Funding was now in place and Plans were currently being worked on. A resident commented that the public felt unsafe walking through the underpass leading from the station to Pitsea and suggested that a shuttle bus could be laid on by the Bus Company to avoid using the underpass and alleviate the problems of parking at the station. Councillors agreed this was a good idea and Councillor McKenzie agreed to pass residents comments on to the Regeneration Committee. The Parish Council supported the suggestion to get the relevant Bus Company on board with the idea.

(ii) Four new Police Officers were proposed which were to be shared between Basildon and Pitsea.

(iii) Councillor McKenzie confirmed he had managed to get a request presented to Essex County Council Local Highways Panel to introduce bollards as a measure to reduce indiscriminate parking on the verge adjacent to Ilfracombe Avenue.

Councillor McKenzie then took questions from the floor.

A resident indicated she had spoken to Councillor McKenzie during the recent Borough Council elections and raised the issue regarding the untidy condition of the verge around Exchange House and asked him for an update. Councillor McKenzie advised he was unable to update at the present time. However, the Parish Clerk advised that she had been informed that Essex County Council Public Rights of Way Officer was discussing the matter with Essex County Council's legal team in order to take action.

Councillor McKenzie was asked if he had any update on what was happening about the old Bingo Hall in Pitsea, which was in a state of disrepair and the wire fencing around it that was falling down. It was suggested that the site would be an ideal place to build a new swimming pool. Councillor McKenzie stated that there were proposals to build the new pool at the Eversley Sports Centre and this would be combined with existing sports facilities. It was intended to consult on the proposals soon. Regarding the Bingo Hall a company had originally proposed to transform it into a wedding venue but the plans had fallen through because of the asbestos in the fabric of the building. Currently, although the site is privately owned, Basildon Council is possibly looking to purchase the site for other uses.

33/19 Minutes of Parish Council meetings: To approve the minutes of the Parish Council Meeting on 26th June 2019 and Chair to sign.

The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted by all present as an accurate record of the meeting and were signed as such by Councillor Robert Smillie, Chair.

34/19 Parish Clerks Report: To update on business since the last meeting on 26th June 2019.

Fly-tipping: The Clerk had contacted Basildon Council's Recycling Manager regarding unacceptable levels of fly-tipped material in the area and the time taken to clear from the various locations. The Officer was looking into the matter but requires more details in regard to reference numbers to identify the reports. The Clerk asked residents when reporting any incidents of fly-tipping to obtain a reference number in order that the removal details can be tracked. Basildon Council is trialling placing CCTV Cameras in priority areas to reduce fly-tipping.

Bus Shelters: Quotations have been obtained and Councillors to discuss further.

Bollards adjacent to Ilfracombe Avenue: Information received that following a request by the Parish Council and Essex County Council Councillors the Local Highways Panel will be reviewing the matter.

Underpass at Church Road: Essex County Council has advised by email the Essex County Council Structural Engineers are currently validating the process and will compile a report to put before the Local Highways Panel.

Councillor Vacancy: A request has been sent to the Echo asking for an advert to be placed to advertise for Parish Councillors.

35/19 Finance Report: To provide Councillors with a summary of the Parish Council’s financial position and any related matters.

A summary of account was placed before Councillors and the Responsible Finance Officer explained the content for the benefit of those present.

	£
Balance at bank as of 26 th June 2019	19,683.08
Balance at bank as of 31 st July 2019	18,270.56
Breakdown:	
Income:	Nil
Expenditure:	
(472) Clerks Tax & Empr NI (April/May/June)	470.22
(473) Cartridge Save - Ink Toner Black & Yellow	67.98
(474) Clerks Salary (June) Plus Tel & Office Use	<u>874.32</u>
	1,412.52

36/19 Sadlers Farm Bridge Works: To update on work being undertaken by Balfour Beatty to Sadlers Farm Bridge and adjacent roadways.

The Parish Clerk had asked Lloyd Holliday, Balfour Beatty Project Lead, to attend the meeting but unfortunately he had just returned from holiday and was unable to do so. Councillors were advised that some residents in Bowers Court Drive had received a letter from Balfour Beatty regarding bridge works and the Clerk had obtained a copy of the letter, together with Balfour Beatty’s latest newsletter. Bridge works were to be carried out from 3rd August to 25th August 2019. The pathway adjacent to the caravan site was to be closed but the pathway on the opposite side near to the bus lane was to remain accessible. Most of the work would be undertaken in daylight hours but there might be limited disruption overnight. The Clerk advised she would include the information on the website and in the noticeboards. It was anticipated Balfour Beatty would be offsite in October but was intending to return the following Summer for a short period.

37/19 Planning - Councillors to review and comment on Planning Application/s under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended):

37/19/1 TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 - APPLICATION NO: 19/00493/FULL Demolition of existing building and construction of 9 detached houses- School House, School Lane, North Benfleet, Basildon

Councillors discussed the planning application as presented and concluded

that in their opinion the application should be refused on the following grounds:

- (i) The application is inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
- (ii) School Lane is a narrow 'No Through Road' and the grant of an application would constitute major infrastructure, highway and drainage issues in this location.
- (iii) The build is considered to be a low density S106 avoidance scheme.
- (iv) The Parish Council is currently developing a Neighbourhood Plan and this site would not support the effective use of land as referred to in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- (v) The existing building was originally an old Victorian School and its fabric forms part of the historical heritage of the Parish which would be lost if the application was granted.

37/19/2 TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 - APPLICATION NO: 19/01062/FULL

Demolish garage and extend and convert bungalow into 4 bedroom chalet comprising front and rear gable projections with dormer windows in the roof alongside (Amended scheme) - 108 Pound Lane, Bowers Gifford, Basildon, Essex

Councillors discussed the planning application but saw no reason to object to the amended scheme.

37/19/3 TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990 - APPLICATION NO: 19/00687/OUT

Outline application for the development of 24 detached/semi-detached two storey chalet style houses, accessed from Alpha Close and Eric Road (all matters reserved) - Land Adjacent No. 10 Alpha Close Alpha Close Bowers Gifford Basildon

This Planning Application was withdrawn on 30th July 2019.

37/19/4 ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL FOOTPATH DIVERSION ORDER - HIGHWAYS ACT 1980 S119: To receive Councillor comments regarding the diversion of a public right of way under S119 Highways Act 1980 on land situated on the south west side of Canvey Way and south of Rookery Farm known as Footpath 185.

The proposals for Footpath 211 were discussed and Councillors raised no objections. The proposals for Footpath 185 were not discussed as they were not within the Parish boundary and reflected the area adjacent to Vange Creek.

38/19 Planning updates: To receive updates on planning applications discussed at previous meetings.

The Parish Clerk advised regarding the following planning decisions by Basildon Council:

- (i) Planning Application: 19/00712/LDC: To establish the lawfulness of the

proposed use of the land for the siting of a mobile home with the required hard standing, for purposes incidental to and within the curtilage of the main dwelling - Elm Lodge Elm Road Bowers Gifford Basildon Essex SS13 2LY - **Granted**

- (ii) Planning application: 19/00747/OUT: Outline application for the construction of one dwelling (all matters reserved) - Land Off Cornwall Road, At Cross Road, Bowers Gifford, Basildon, Essex - **Refused**
- (iii) Planning Application : 19/00775/FULL Single storey side extension with a crown roof and lantern over - Alton House, Harrow Road, North Benfleet, Basildon, Essex SS12 9JW – **Refused**
- (iv) Planning Application: 19/00825/FULL Conversion of bungalow to chalet, incorporating front and rear cat-slide dormers & a proposed single storey rear extension - 5 Alpha Close, Bowers Gifford, Basildon, Essex, SS13 2HZ - **Granted**

39/19 Neighbourhood Plan Update: To report on the current progress of Bowers Gifford & North Benfleet Neighbourhood Plan.

Currently an independent consultant was carrying out site assessments on the 63 sites, of various sizes, that had been submitted to the Parish Council as a result of the Parish Council's "Call for Sites" initiative. Progress in receiving the report was slow because of the size of the work to be undertaken. However the Parish Council is currently looking at infrastructure, roads and utilities and would, in due course, be holding meetings with the various organisations.

40/19 Picnic-in-the-Park: To provide Councillors with an update regarding arrangements for the Picnic-in-the Park Event on Sunday 1st September 2019

The arrangements for the Event were progressing well and much of the documentation required to put on the event was in the process of being confirmed. However, volunteers were needed on the day to support those residents who are already volunteered their services. Activities would include: (i) A Bouncy Castle (ii) Face Painter (iii) Children's entertainer, sponsored by a local resident (iv) Basildon Heritage (v) St Margaret's Church (vi) Bradfields Farm (vii) Ice Cream (viii) BBQ.(ix) Live music . Unfortunately the Jaz and Blues singer who was booked is now unable to take part.

41/19 Date of next meeting: Wednesday 25th September 2019

The Chair advised there would be no Parish Council Meeting in August. The next meeting would take place on 25th September 2019 at 7.30 p.m. in the Benbow Club, 77 Pound Lane, Bowers Gifford.