

## PROTECT FROME VALLEY @ STAPLETON

Minutes of the public meeting held at Glenfrome Primary School, 9th March, 2015.

At the inaugural meeting of this group, there were 58 people in attendance, including the local councillors, Mhairi Threlfall and Mahmudur Khan. There were eight apologies for absence. Those in attendance knew about the meeting through word of mouth, the Facebook page or by the leaflets distributed locally. There were no representatives present from Colston's School or Woodstock Homes. Their community consultation adviser had been invited to the meeting but declined to attend.

Colwyn Jones chaired the meeting. He outlined the present position and gave background information around how and why the group was formed, i.e. to oppose the building of 12 houses and a road on part of Colston's School Playing Field. Access is proposed through an existing lane in Welsford Avenue. It is possible that widening this lane into a road would be facilitated by demolishing part of a house (owned by Colston's) that is next to the lane. The area in question is immediately behind houses in Welsford Avenue and Rowland Avenue and lies across the River Frome, where it runs alongside Eastville Park lake.

Colwyn then invited Christopher Faulkner Gibson to speak. The content of his report can largely be accessed from his various postings on the Protect Frome Valley @ Stapleton Facebook site. He gave a brief resume of recent activities and investigations.

Many of the residents whose homes directly overlook the site, held an informal meeting when first hearing of these plans and whilst there was great concern over the impact this development would have on them, it was agreed that the main concern was for the Frome Valley itself and the fear of piecemeal development in the valley if this building is allowed to take place.

In depth investigations ascertained that this area is officially designated as being:-

In a conservation area, an important open space, part of a historic park and garden and is a wildlife corridor. These are valid and important reasons why objections can be made against any development and at the appropriate time after official plans have been submitted, these will form the backbone of objections to the plan, together with the issue of flooding.

In addition, because no planning application has yet been submitted, it was decided that Town Green status should be sought. In a very short timescale, signed statements were made by local people, describing how they had undertaken various leisure activities on this site for very many years. As a result, a formal application for Town Green status has been submitted. If this is approved, Colston's would still be able to use the land for games but no building could take place.

Other local groups have been invited to join this group and this has already prompted much interest.

Residents most affected by the plans have received a leafleted invitation to Colston's School on Wednesday, 11th March to see the plans. However this is a public meeting and does not seem to be the consultation process originally promised.

John Rosewell was then invited to report on his investigations into the flood risk to the land in question. A number of explanatory photographs were circulated. He explained that climate change is likely to cause a 20% increase in flow of water in the River Frome. Even with the existence of the Northern Interceptor by the M32 at Eastville, the river reached its highest level ever in 2012.

Wessex Water and the Environment Agency will take note of this. Consideration is now given to the possibility of 1 in 100 years flooding in addition to 1 in 20 years. The extensive work recently undertaken at the bottom of Everest Road field in Eastville Park will increase flow into the river. Clearly, the level to which the playing field already floods is likely to increase.

1. Are these new houses really going to be safe?
2. Such houses will increase flood risk due to the reduction in area of absorption and increase in run off and more water entering the river.
3. Isn't the best use of that land, for it to continue in its present form as an open space?

Questions and comments were then invited from the floor. A summary follows.

Badgers: The land in question is known to be the site of a badger sett for many years. It has recently been cleared of vegetation. It is highly unlikely that a licence was obtained from Natural England to do this work. Someone from the Badger Trust has visited the site and an investigation into the matter is taking place. Anyone seeing badger(s), living or dead near the site should report it. Dated CCTV evidence of badgers walking in Rowland Avenue, since the clearing, is already available.

Constitution of the group: It was thought necessary to have a more formal composition with Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary. It was agreed that more thought will be given to this and some suggestions made on the FB site prior to the next meeting.

Finances: It was acknowledged that there may come a time when there will be a significant financial outlay. It was agreed that those who attend the next meeting will be asked to make a contribution. This will not be a fixed sum but according to their ability to contribute and will be made clear when the next meeting is called. When the group has a more formal basis, it is hoped that contributions will come from a much larger number.

Councillors: Both councillors are very supportive of the group and its aims and will follow its progress at Council level. They will remain ready to advise. Councillor Khan emphasised the importance of maintaining the momentum and strength in numbers, the Say No to MacDonalds campaign being evidence of this.

Meetings: Those present felt that Monday evenings would be convenient for future meetings and one will be called after viewing of the proposed plans. However, no decision was taken on whether to do this will be before or after formal plans have been submitted by the developer.

Colston's Public viewing: Many of those present expressed a determination to see the plans on Wednesday, 9th March.

Vote of Thanks: Lisa Merrett proposed a vote of thanks to Christopher and Mandy Faulkner Gibson for all that they have done, in a very short time, to set the wheels in motion for a formal objection to Colston's plan. This was wholeheartedly endorsed by all present.

The meeting was declared closed.

Protect Frome Valley @ Stapleton would like to thank the Headteacher of Glenfrome Primary School for allowing free use of the school for this meeting. This gesture was in accordance with the schools wish to foster links with the local community.