

## **PROTECT FROME VALLEY @ STAPLETON**

### **Minutes of the public meeting held at Glenfrome Primary School, 23<sup>rd</sup> March, 2015.**

#### **Colwyn Jones chaired the meeting.**

Fifty people attended the second meeting. Councillors Threlfall and Khan were again in attendance along with some members of the public who had not been present at the inaugural meeting.

It was agreed that the Minutes of the Meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> March were a true record of the proceedings.

Christopher Faulkner Gibson gave a description of how the group had arrived at the present position, in order that newcomers would be up-to-date. The land is part of a conservation area and designated important open space. Much of his additional feedback will be included under separate headings. A year's membership of the Open Spaces Society has been purchased in the name of the Protect Frome Valley @ Stapleton Community Association.

#### **Feedback from Exhibition held at Colston's School.**

Although this was a 'public exhibition' only a small number of residents in Rowland Avenue and Welsford Avenue received paper invitations to attend. There was a general consensus, that this was an unsatisfactory meeting with representatives from Woodstock Homes, their PR Consultants and the Headteacher. No mention was made of an ecological survey having been carried out before the land was cleared. Speakers described lack of relevant information, 'it was an artist's impression', no mention was made of floor size of the houses or their elevation, and there were no digital images. It was felt likely that they were 'going through the motions' of a public consultation in order to prepare their Community Involvement Statement. It could be claimed that the consultation was flawed. The Site Plan shows a vehicular access route towards the pavilion. There is concern that this could, at a later stage, form an access to additional housing immediately behind the remaining houses on the southern of Welsford Avenue.

Some examples of the ideas/responses of the developers are listed below:-

1. Sewage will be pumped up to the drain in Welsford Avenue. N.B. This drain is already of poor quality.
2. Run-off water will be stored in tank(s) and only released into the Frome when water levels are appropriate. No indication of what 'appropriate' might mean in the event of prolonged rainfall.
3. Regarding the oak tree – "we can cut it down, because we will re-plant".
4. When concern was expressed about whether the foundations of the terraced houses in Welsford Avenue might be affected by the passage of heavily laden vehicles up and down the narrow lane from the avenue to the field, the response was that "it was possible".

Councillors Khan and Threlfall have received an invitation from the developer to meet them again but have not yet done so.

## Protect Frome Valley @ Stapleton Community Association

The meeting was informed that a community association has been legally constituted. A domain has been purchased and web-site created. There is a Management Committee and Officers have been appointed, each with a particular responsibility. They are as follows:-

Chairperson	Colwyn Jones,
Treasurer	Louise Blackwell,
Secretary	Hilary Jones/Sally Collins (joint role),
Christopher Faulkner Gibson	Campaign Manager,
John Rosewell	Hydrology,
David Sandilands,	IT Technical,
Mandy Faulkner Gibson	Social Media,
Lisa Merrett	Press Officer,
Maureen Lewis	Community Liaison,
Gareth Edwards	Environment.

### Treasurer

Louise reported that a bank account is in the process of being opened for the Association. More details will be given when they are available from the bank. As shown on notices for this meeting, there would be an opportunity for people to contribute to a 'fighting fund' at the end proceedings. There have been a number of costs already incurred in the mounting of this campaign and in all probability, there will come a time when there will be a request made to the wider public, for help with the costs.

Later in the meeting, a question was asked relating to how the Association was being funded. It was explained that a suggestion had been made that the households which, at present, seemed to be the ones that would be most seriously affected by this development, would each contribute £50 to start the fund. It was made clear that this was voluntary and it was acknowledged that not everyone was in a position to contribute. With the same thought in mind, there were no plans to charge a membership fee to join the association. **The Treasurer later reported that £290 had been collected at the end of the meeting. Thank you.**

### Reports

Badgers: The clearing of the land in question has been reported to the Police. Local residents have known this area to be the site of a long established badger sett. If proved to be correct, in working near it without a licence, the owners/developers have committed a criminal act and no further work should take place on the site. No further work has been carried out since the last meeting. At the exhibition, developers reported that they would have to carry out drilling to establish content and quality of the ground. Local residents will report, should any such activity begin. There have been more sightings of badgers in the Welsford Ave/Rowland Ave area.

It was reported that access to the field from the lane between houses in Rowland Avenue, has now been denied, using additional chain link fencing. This way into the field has been in use for many years. Although it seems clear that the lane behind the houses in Welsford Avenue is owned by The Merchant Venturers, one resident reported that, in the past, he has received a letter from the local

authority asking him to cut his hedge, seeming to suggest that there is a lack of clarity over who is responsible for upkeep.

**Flooding:** John Rosewell reported that since the last meeting, contact had been made with Wessex Water and the Environment Agency. It is clear that the section of the flood plain that includes part of the Colston's playing field is a very sensitive and important area. It is known as a 'a pinch point' because, immediately beyond the flood plain, the volume of water gets concentrated by the Northern storm water Interceptor at Eastville. If this became blocked or sluices malfunction for any reason, the risk of flooding would be greatly increased in Eastville, Easton and adjacent low lying areas. Residents know that the field regularly floods to a level of 50 cm and water has reached 1 m and over. There are two underground springs in the field and they start issuing water when the ground is saturated. According to the MD of Woodstock Homes, there will be no flood barrier to protect the houses as they are not at risk of flooding and would be built entirely on land within Floodzone 1. Instead, the boundary of the gardens is likely to be a 1.8m fence and perhaps some hedging. There was a refusal to accept that the floods could reach the level of the current trees and everything would be in line with the Environment Agency's requirements. However, the Environment Agency's own pronouncements seem to suggest that it would not look kindly on any building development in this area. John was informed that it would welcome a statement from the Community Association, with supporting photographs. This would be lodged with their team in readiness for the submission of a formal planning application.

**Ecology:** With regard to the apparent lack of an ecological survey being prepared for the Developers, before the land was cleared, Avon Wildlife Trust will be asked to do so now, on behalf of the Association. Trees in a conservation area do not have individual Protection Orders, as they are all deemed to be protected. As a general rule, there are a significant number of trees cut down, without permission and fines can be relatively small.

### **Town Green Application**

We are still waiting to hear whether it is a 'valid' application. Councillor Khan is to be given the reference number of the application.

### **Priorities for the near future**

1. Detailed plan of action for when a Planning Application is submitted.
2. Information to be made available containing details of the most effective way to object. In particular, the form that any written objections should take. It is vital that objections include material considerations and the Councillors will advise.
3. Councillor Khan suggested a meeting should take place with the Headteacher of Colston's School. This was agreed in principle.

### **Any Other Business**

There being no other business, Colwyn thanked everyone for attending, reminded people of the opportunity to make a financial contribution and declared the meeting closed.

