

Brimpton Parish Council

When I hear someone say “we need to put out more chairs” I know it’s going to be a long meeting, and so it was on 3 March when the Parish Council discussed several sensitive issues, the most significant of which in the longer term was the Settlement Boundary and possible sites for additional houses.

West Berkshire Council (WBC) is reviewing its Local Plan to cover the period up to 2036. As part of this review WBC is seeking input on the Settlement Hierarchy, Settlement Boundary and the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA). The last of these includes all the sites submitted for potential development by landowners. Charles Brims attended a briefing session in February and had prepared the draft responses which we discussed.

We agreed there was insufficient time to propose any changes to the Settlement Boundary before the WBC deadline of 27 March. This was because we felt we should consult residents on any proposed changes. We therefore responded to WBC to say we are not proposing any revision of the Settlement Boundary at the present time. However, we decided to establish a working group to discuss the boundary and we will in due course to inform WBC of the outcome.

Three sites have been put forward for consideration in the HELAA. The site at Larkwhistle Farm has been categorised by West Berkshire Council as ‘not developable in the next 15 years’. The sites at Manor Farm, on either side of Brimpton Road, for an eventual development of over 160 houses are considered unsuitable as they are outside of the Settlement Boundary and unsustainable according to WBC’s Settlement Hierarchy, which rates Brimpton as suitable only for limited infill development.

Turning to more immediate planning issues, we considered an application regarding proposed front boundary fence and landscaping, gates and piers at Thornton House, Brimpton Lane. We decided to object to this application due to concerns about safety when the gates are closed as it could lead to large vehicles reversing on to this busy stretch of road. We also considered an application regarding alterations and an extension to create a two storey house at Blacknest Bungalow, Brimpton Common. We resolved to inform WBC we had no objections to this proposal.

We agreed to raise with WBC our concerns regarding the prior notification of a change of use of agricultural buildings to create five houses at Hyde End Farm, Hyde End Lane. Because there is no statutory requirement for consultation on this type of application, we were not invited to comment but none-the-less we feel the concerns expressed to us by local residents requires us to submit our views. We believe the buildings, most notably the cowsheds, would need substantial building works in order to facilitate the conversion. This would be outside the definition of permitted development. In addition, we are concerned this development will lead to an increase in traffic on a single-track lane which is a private road, bridleway and footpath.

Still on the subject of development, Andrew Perkins, Chief Executive of the Wasing Estate, joined us to provide an overview of the new plans for the development of Shalford Farm. WBC’s Planning Committee rejected the previous application last year. The new plans include a Dutch Barn which is 1.5m lower than the previous application and another building has been removed from the plan. Members of the public contributed to this discussion and the Parish Council will formally comment on the scheme when we receive the planning application.

Andrew Perkins also gave a brief overview of the Medicine Festival to be held at Wasing Park over the August Bank Holiday weekend. The Parish Council did not object to the licence application. There will be an open evening in April to allow residents to find out more about the festival and speak to the organisers. More details can be found on their website at www.medicinefestival.com.

Charles Brims, Chairman of the Recreation Ground trustees reported that the Recreation Ground would be placed on the open market by the end of March. If the trustees receive an offer they consider to be acceptable, a public meeting will be called and residents invited to give their opinions. Any sale can only take place with the support of parishioners and the land must be sold for a true market value, in accordance with the Charity Commission regulations. The proceeds of any sale would go towards finding another piece of land in a more central location or if this is not possible the money will be put on deposit to benefit local residents.

The recommended actions from the Parish Plan are continuing to be progressed and the latest updates will be put on the website. All immediate actions have been completed.

Over 165 residents receive my usually fortnightly Parish Update via email. It provides early warning of issues such as the Settlement Boundary, planning applications and road closures, but also includes local events and other issues of which we think you should be aware. If you live within the parish and wish to join the list, please contact me as shown below.

The Parish Council will meet again on Tuesday 7 April, starting at 7.30pm in the Village Hall. Everyone is welcome to attend.

John Hicks
Chairman, Brimpton Parish Council

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