

Minutes

Meeting of : Western Area Committee
Meeting held in : Dinton Village Hall, Dinton
Date : Thursday 10 January 2008
Commencing at : 4.30 pm

Present:

District Councillors:

Councillor Mrs J A Green – Chairman
Councillor ER Draper – Vice-Chairman

Councillors J Holt, GE Jeans, DO Parker, PD Edge, MG Fowler, RA Beattie and Mrs CA Spencer

Apologies: Councillor J A Cole-Morgan

Officers:

Judy Howles (Development Services) Tom Bray and Paul Trenell (Democratic Services).

94. Public Questions/Statement Time:

There were none.

95. Councillor Questions/Statement Time:

Councillor Fowler raised the issue of the recent roll out of the Black Box scheme across the Western Area. He had experienced problems with the new system and sought further clarification on what can be recycled and how. He also raised concern over Tisbury's intention to stop the use of plastic bags, labelling their policy as unfair.

Councillor Parker expressed his concern that he had received a large manilla envelope containing only 2 pieces of paper. He was concerned that this was an unnecessary and wasteful use of resources as it is more expensive to send large envelopes in the post. He called for action to be taken to stop the use of large envelopes for posting a small number of sheets of paper.

Councillor Parker also addressed the Committee regarding the Westfields site. He asked when the Committee would be receiving a confidential report regarding the Westfields site, as resolved in minute 68 (point 7) of the meeting held on 11th October 2007.

96. Minutes:

Resolved – That the minutes, including minute 78, of the ordinary meeting held on 6 December 2007 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Awarded in:
Housing Services
Waste and Recycling Services



97. Declarations of Interest:

There were none.

98. Chairman's Announcements:

The Chairman welcomed the new Chief Executive, Manjeet Gill, to the Council. She also reminded members that the Chief Executive of Wiltshire County Council, Dr Keith Robinson and Niki Lewis Assistant Director of Community Services would be attending the next meeting at Bishopstone Village Hall on February 7th 2008.

The Chairman also announced that the Westfields operators' appeal was dismissed on highway grounds, therefore highlighting the need for a road traffic survey to be carried out. The Chairman suggested that County Councillor Tony Deane lobby Wiltshire County Council Highways, presenting the case for carrying out a road traffic survey in the area. Also relating Westfields site, regarding MOD signage remaining on the site, the Chairman notified the Committee that the MOD had responded confirming their continued interest in the site.

99. Community Update:

Councillor Holt requested that Wilton's Council Chambers be considered as a venue for future Western Area Committee meetings. He also expressed his concern over the rural bus service. He claimed that buses are sometimes late and on occasions do not arrive at all.

Councillor Spencer expressed her concern that the Area Committee structure will be discontinued under the Wiltshire unitary authority and raised concern over the proposed arrangements to determine planning applications in one planning committee for south Wiltshire.

Councillor Parker urged parish councils to raise items for inclusion on the agenda. Parish Councillors can do this by contacting the Area Coordinator in advance of the meeting. Please note that appropriate legal notice must be served and sufficient evidence must be produced to inform the debate.

County Councillor Deane addressed the Committee regarding Westfields stating that a road traffic survey in the area might not be the best way to deploy District or County resources. He urged members to consider finding another use for the site in consultation with the owner that would not cause harm to the AONB. The Chairman clarified that it is at the discretion of the operators of Westfield park to submit an application and not the of the Committee to suggest alternative use.

Resolved – that the above be noted.

100. Post Office Closures:

The Committee considered the previously circulated report of the Democratic Services Officer. Comments were received at the meeting from a large number of local residents of Broad Chalke and the Sub Postmistress of the Broad Chalke Post Office, furthermore there were representations from Alvediston, Bower Chalke and Bishopstone.

Resolved – That a letter is to be written (see attached letter), on behalf of the Committee, by the Democratic Services Officer to the Post Office setting out the Committee's concerns, and further evidence submitted by local residents and the Sub Postmistress regarding the proposals for Broad Chalke Post Office in consultation with the following Members of the Committee: Councillors Draper, Mrs Green and Mrs Spencer.

101. Planning Application S/2007/2065 – Alterations to Roof of the Apartment Block to Form Additional Unit of Accommodation Including Dormer Window at Land To The Rear Of 35 West Street, Wilton, Salisbury, Wilts, SP2 0DL:

Mr Seviour (Wilton Town Council) reported that the Town Council object to the application.

Following receipt of this statement, and further to a site visit held earlier that day, the Committee considered the previously circulated report of the Planning Officer along with a schedule of late correspondence circulated at the meeting.

Resolved – Following completion of a planning obligation under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) a monetary contribution in relation to policy R3 of the adopted local plan within two months, then this authority is minded to grant planning permission to the above application for the following reasons:

The proposal is considered an efficient use of an already approved roof space which will not detract from the character or appearance of the conservation area and will not have any substantive adverse effects on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers and it is considered that the proposal complies with policies G2, D3, H24 and CN8 of the adopted local plan.

Subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason – To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. Each unit of the development hereby permitted shall only be occupied by persons of the age of 55 years or older and no other persons.

Reason - The development has insufficient parking spaces to provide for an age unrestricted scheme where a greater number of vehicles and vehicle ownership is likely to exist.

3. No development shall take place until drawings at a scale no less than 1:10 of the following details of the dwellings hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority: eaves, gables, window sections to dormers. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason - The site is located in an historically sensitive area where it is important to ensure that the details of any dormers reflect this sensitive location in their quality and appearance.

4. The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the dormers hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building unless otherwise agreed in writing with the local planning authority.

Reason - In order to ensure a continuity of appearance in the new dormers.

5. No construction work including internal fitting out of the buildings shall take place on Sundays or public holidays or outside the hours of 7:30 to 20:00 on Wednesdays and 8:00 and 13:00 on Saturdays.

Reason - In the interests of the amenity of neighbours.

6. Prior to the first occupation of the unit hereby approved, each car parking space in the development shall be marked to identify which flat it is allocated to, and the visitor spaces shall be marked as being for visitors.

Reason: In the interests of amenity.

And in accordance with the following policy/policies of the adopted Salisbury District Local Plan:

G1 General policies
G2 General policies
G9 appropriate contributions,
D2 Infill development
D3 Extensions
H1 Housing
H16 Housing Policy Boundaries
H24 Housing for the elderly
CN3 development affecting a listed building
CN8 Development in a conservation area
CN11 Views into and out of conservation areas
TR11 Car parking guidelines
TR14 Secure cycle parking facilities
R3 recreation facilities for the elderly

Councillor Parker requested his dissent to be recorded.

**Mr Tim Nickolls
Network Development Manager
C/o National Consultation Team
FREEPOST CONSULTATION TEAM**

Date: 28th January 2007

Regarding: Area Plan Proposals – Broad Chalke

Dear Mr Nickolls,

I am writing on behalf of Salisbury District Council's Western Area Committee in response to the proposals outlined in the Post Office Ltd's Area Plan for West Berkshire and Wiltshire to replace Broad Chalke Post Office with an 'outreach' service. I have consulted local residents and councillors in compiling this consultation response and consider it to be an accurate reflection of views in the local area. The process has revealed a wealth of compelling reasons why Broad Chalke Post Office does not represent an appropriate case for a reduced service.

The 'Government Response to the Public Consultation on the Post Office Network' published by the Department of Trade and Industry in May 2007 states that when applying the minimum access criteria "*Post Office Ltd will be required to take into account obstacles such as rivers, mountains and valleys...to avoid undue hardship. Post Office Ltd will also consider the availability of public transport and alternative access to key services, local demographics and the impact on local economies when drawing up area plans*" (p.4). None of these factors appear to have been adequately considered in the case of Broad Chalke.

"Obstacles such as rivers, mountains and valleys"

Broad Chalke Post Office is situated at the heart of the Chalke Valley. This puts it in a distinct geographic location and has a great impact on access to possible alternative Post Office services. Viewed on a map Fovant appears to be a relatively close alternative - though at 4 miles away it is still outside the required distance for 95% of rural communities. However, this does not take into account the fact that Fovant lies on the other side of the northern ridge of the Chalke Valley to Broad Chalke. Ordnance Survey Map OS130 reveals that Broad Chalke lies at circa 85 metres above sea level, and Fovant circa 97 metres above sea level. The route between the two destinations reaches circa 200 metres above sea level. The only road traversing this ridge is Fovant Hollow, a steep and inaccessible road which presents a real challenge to all but the most confident drivers. This situation is exacerbated in the winter months when the north facing road is liable to frost overnight and not thaw out until late the following day, if at all, and there are fears that the route may be inaccessible in the winter months. Given that Dinton lies 2 miles further north of Fovant, and Tisbury 4 miles further north-west, all the same geographic issues

apply to Dinton and Tisbury Post Offices. There is no public transport link to Fovant, Dinton or Tisbury. The same geographical obstructions apply to Sixpenny Handley Post Office, which lies 8 miles away and beyond the southern ridge of the Chalke Valley, again only linked to Broad Chalke by a narrow country road which peaks at around 230 metres above sea level, and again not accessible by public transport. These factors mean that Fovant, Dinton, Tisbury and Sixpenny Handley do not represent realistic alternatives for the current users of Broad Chalke Post Office and appear to have been entirely overlooked by Post Office Ltd in selecting Broad Chalke for reduced services.

“The availability of public transport and alternative access to key services”

As stated, there is no public transport link to Fovant, Dinton, Tisbury or Sixpenny Handley. Wilton, the next nearest alternative Post Office, is located 7 miles away and is also inaccessible via public transport. For those who are able to access Wilton through private vehicle the Post Office is located some distance from the nearest car park, and the pavements between the car park and Post Office are narrow and unsuitable for wheelchairs. The nearest alternative service that can be accessed through public transport is Coombe Bissett at around 4.5 miles away. However, as this Post Office is also implicated in the Network Change Programme it is unclear what level of service will be provided at Coombe Bissett. As such, the nearest Post Office at which a full range of services can be guaranteed lies in Salisbury city centre, 10 miles away and over thirty minutes on the bus. The final possible alternative is in Shaftesbury, which lies over 14 miles away in the next County, Dorset and involves a significant walk from the bus stop to the Post office. None of these options are acceptable alternatives, especially when one considers that a significant number of those using the Post Office at Broad Chalke are elderly or infirm and do not find it easy to simply hop on a bus to Salisbury and are unable to drive themselves. It is necessary to note that Coombe Bissett, Salisbury and Shaftesbury are served by the number 29 bus which does not always allow for full disabled access. Sometimes the service requires users to climb three steps to board the bus: this would not be possible for some current customers of Broad Chalke Post Office.

“The impact on local economies”

Broad Chalke Post office is currently situated on the premises of the butcher and general store J.E. Fry and Son which has traded in Broad Chalke since 1912. This is the *only* retail outlet in the Chalke Valley, covering a thirteen mile stretch between Coombe Bissett and Sixpenny Handley and providing local residents with access to food and critical supplies. There is great fear, borne out by past evidence in other locations, that reducing the Post Office services would impact on the business of the butcher and general store. The operation is analogous to a three-legged stool, whereby if one leg is removed or weakened, the entire structure is liable to collapse. Should this happen the impact on the local community would be devastating. Some residents have already made clear that should the shop be lost they would be forced to leave the area as they would have no access to vital supplies and services as they do not have their own transport.

“Local demographics”

Over the last two decades the Chalke Valley has lost Post Offices at Berwick St. John, Ebbesbourne Wake, Bowerchalke and Bishopstone. To consider reducing the service at Broad Chalke in isolation from these past closures seems unjust. The result is that Broad Chalke Post Office does not serve just a single village, but the entire Chalke Valley with regular users from Stoke Farthing, Bowerchalke, Berwick St John, Fifield Bavant,

Ebbesbourne Wake, Alvediston and Bishopstone among others. Its is testament to the Post Office's importance across the local area that objections to Post Office Ltd's proposals have echoed beyond the village itself right throughout the valley. Broad Chalke Post Office provides a critical service to the entire community of the Chalke Valley and local residents cannot comprehend why their valley is to see its service reduced when other valleys in the local area have a relative glut of Post Office services (as revealed by the map attached at appendix one). Broad Chalke serves as the hub of the Chalke Valley and attracts visits as a result of its school, doctor's surgery and sports facilities. As such it is an entirely logical location for a Post Office. It is also necessary to note that at a time when environmental concerns are foremost, these proposals will dramatically increase travel, carbon emissions and pollution, running counter to government policy.

Outreach

The Post Office Ltd Area Plan for West Berkshire and Wiltshire invites comments on preferred outreach options. In the case of Broad Chalke Post office none of the outreach proposals are appropriate. The current location of the shop is not appropriate for a partner service as it is a butcher's shop and it would not be acceptable for staff to deal with raw meat and Post Office transactions in the same area. The temperature of the shop is also too low for clerical work. As such it will be necessary to retain the Post Office kiosk on the other side of the shop, separate from the butcher's domain. A mobile service would see the Post Office removed from the existing butcher/general store and endanger the retail unit as a whole. A home service would be entirely insufficient for the demand. A reduced-hours hosted service would not be sufficient to transact all the business currently done over 26 hours and looking ahead there is a fear that the move to a hosted service represents simply the first step on the road to closure.

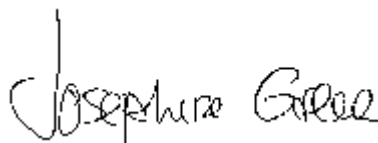
In sum, there are a multitude of good reasons for retaining the existing arrangements at Broad Chalke Post Office which Post Office Ltd has overlooked in preparing its proposals: the significant factor of local geography and the steep ridges either side of the Chalke Valley; the lack of reasonable alternative services accessible by public transport; the fact that a reduced service would be likely to impact heavily on the associated business of J.E. Fry and Son removing a critical local service; the fact that Broad Chalke offers other key services and as the hub of the Chalke Valley represents an ideal location for a Post Office; and that fact that there is no workable outreach alternative. Given these facts I hope that Post Office Ltd will see fit to reconsider their proposals for Broad Chalke. The Government have acknowledged the need to provide "continued subsidy for those parts of the network which can never be commercial but which provide key services in rural and deprived urban areas". Surely Broad Chalke represents a strong case for such support.

I look forward to your response,

Yours sincerely,



Paul Trenell
Democratic Services Officer



Cllr Josephine Green
Chair – Western Area Committee