

# Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly, held on Wednesday, 10 April 2023, at All Saints' Church, Leek Wootton

**Present:** Councillors Coates (Chairman), Eldridge, Elsy, Kingston, Kirkwood and Morgan, District/Cllr Payne, 2x PCSOs from Warwickshire Police, Leek Wootton Focus Group, 16 members of the public [MoP] and the Clerk

**Apologies for Absence:** County/Cllr Redford and District/Cllr Redford

## 1. Introduction and welcome

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming everyone to the meeting, explaining its purpose and inviting other members of the community to Chair the Assembly in the future.

## 2. Minutes

The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Tuesday, 22 March 2023 were approved (Proposed: Cllr Eldridge / seconded: Cllr Kirkwood) and signed and are available to view at <http://leekwoottonandguyscliffeparish.gov.uk/2024/04/13/annual-parish-assembly-2024-reports/>

a. There were no matters arising from the minutes

## 3. Report on 2023/24

The Chairman read his report for 2023/24

## 4. Public Forum

a. Development at Woodcote

Cllr Kirkwood presented a summary of events relating to CALA's applications over the year 2023/24:

W/22/0465, the original full planning application for erection of 83 dwellings is still 'active'.

W/22/1877, the outline planning permission for up to 83 dwellings, is currently the subject of an appeal by CALA to the Planning Inspectorate on the grounds of Warwick District Council's [WDC] failure to decide in a timely manner. The appeal was heard by a Planning Inspector via Public Inquiry (Nov 2023 – Feb 2024). WDC gave evidence to the inquiry objecting on limited grounds relating to possible loss of heritage at the site. Leek Wootton Focus Group and the PC together formed a Rule 6 Party, which also gave evidence to the inquiry, objecting on the grounds of planning policy, heritage, ecology and loss of habitat and traffic. To date the Inspector has not published his report, which was expected within 4-6 weeks of the Public Inquiry.

Thank you to everyone in the parish who supported the Rule 6 Party's case and supported the Rule 6 Party at the public hearings.

The Chairman introduced Mr Harry Wilson of Leek Wootton Focus Group [LWFG], who gave the following report:

Thank you to the members of the PC for their help and financial support and all members of the community who have supported and aided the campaign.

LWFG attended Planning Committee hearing as part of the Rule 6 Party. Thank you to WDC Planning Committee for its resolve and attention to detail, giving external validation to the LWFG's arguments over 18 months by unanimously rejecting all 3 applications. At the Planning Inquiry representations were made by District/Cllr Lowell Williams representing WDC, District/Cllr Josh Payne and representing the Rule 6 Party was Morrion's planning experts Reiss Sadler and Simon Stanion and myself. Closing statement made are published on the LWFG website and I would encourage you to read Simon Stanion's closing statement.

We were informed that a decision would be made by late February, but this has possibly been pushed to June with no reason why.

At the inquiry Section 106 Agreements were opposed totalling £1.6 million – none of this is being spent in the parish. Education, just under £1 million, highway infrastructure £167,000 for a cycle lane at the St John's Gyratory in Kenilworth and £233,000 for biodiversity offsetting.

It has been a very trying year for funding. Since June 2023 in 6 months with residents help and donations from anonymous members of the community LWFG raised over £50,000 to fight our cause. Whilst this sounds a lot of money, Marron's fees £16,000 and Shakespeare Martineau fees £34,000. The GoFundMe fund raised £12,000 and the fund will be closed at the end of April. Personal donations raised £1,800 and anonymous donations of £30,000 and LWFG would like to thank the PC for its generous donation of £6,000. If you require a copy of LWFG accounts, this is readily available.

LWFG has numerous unanswered correspondence with WDC.

LWHG submitted a report to the Office of the Police & Crime Commissioner [OPCC] 'Who Polices the Police?' on 8 March, remains unanswered. 95% of questions remain unanswered.

What have we achieved in 2 years? A lot of grey hair and frustration. We have highlighted and recorded the dangers of The Anchor junction, Woodcote Lane and Woodcote Drive, over two dozen veteran trees to the Woodland Trust on their Ancient Tree Inventory with the help of the Parish Environment Group organised by Teresa Castelino (urge you to support them as much as you can). Built a comprehensive database of wildlife, barn owls, bats, woodpeckers, thanks to the dedication of David Morley and Jim Maynard. Shone a spotlight on the importance of the Woodcote estate, rubbish tips cleared and pollution issues addressed. The woodland around the lake has been cleared (good or bad?). Delayed CALA's planning application by at least 2 years. Last month heard that CALA is being offered for sale. Any news LWFG receives will be passed on to mailing list. Thank you again to the Planning Committee and wildlife groups for their support. Have exposed the lack of investment in the estate and the systematic abuse of trees buildings and wildlife. North Lodge has been saved, planning approved in May 2023 for external repair works and the bell tower on the main building, which was in danger of collapse has finally been replaced.

Above all we are insisting on accountability and transparency. We remain a grass roots focus group, committed to implementing community awareness and scrutiny of the proposed planning applications. To establish Woodcote Estate as an official, recognised nature reserve with a Grade II manor house, parklands and lakes. More importantly to enable this community to access and enjoy the estate while maintaining a natural environment that is healthy and beautiful to ensure the land is restored, preserved for future generations. Surely this is a fight worth making.

Finally, one unsung hero on this campaign is Julie Midgely. Her guidance, eloquence of words and moral support has kept me and this campaign afloat. I would like to publicly thank Julie and thank you all for attending yet another meeting.

## b. Open Forum

The Chairman invited those present to speak or raise questions:

Hope PI goes in our favour, but if it goes in CALA's favour does it still have to go to WDC Planning for details? Assuming CALA wins the outline planning application they would have to come forward with a detailed application for a specific number of houses and would have to address specific issues such as the characteristic, building materials and final layout. That would be subject to a planning application process and Officers' recommendations and would be subject to going through the planning process. It would also be an opportunity for everybody to comment on the detail of those plans. If they get outline from its appeal, CALA might 'dust off' the original detailed application that was originally submitted (W/22/0465), but if they are putting a different detailed layout together it will be subject to the full planning process for consultation with the PC and individuals, LWFG.

Is there an expiry date when the PI has to respond? No, there is Government pressure on Inspectors to make quick decisions, because there is pressure from central Government. If the Inspector decided there are aspects in this case that are difficult, e.g. S22 in this case, he may be given time to take further advice, which would delay his decision.

District Cllr Payne clarified that if the outline permission is granted, yes it's got to come back to planning with a specific proposal, but it will be much more difficult to stop it again once outline permission is granted, because that constrains the grounds of objections to new objections. Yes, the appeal deals with matters like traffic, heritage damage, ecology and offset, so they would deem to have been accepted. However, all things that were not considered by the appeal will have to demonstrate compliance with national policy and local district policy, e.g. final layout, spacing of houses, building heights, there is a draft S106 agreement that limits building heights to 2½ storeys so that would be a

limit that would be imposed, but the nature of the materials, the characteristics, the layout, the look of the place and offset provisions for the woodland behind Waller Close will all be subject to detail and would not be deemed acceptable by the appeal, but traffic, heritage and ecology would be deemed to be acceptable.

**Would ecology offset have to be within Leek Wootton?** We understand CALA's proposal is to provide biodiversity offset elsewhere in the Stratford-on-Avon area and nothing specific is proposed in this parish. The Chairman added that there is a large country house near Clifford Chambers where they do all their planting. Unfortunately National Policy at the moment allows them to collect together all their biodiversity losses and recreate it somewhere else.

**So create something new rather than preserve what is already established?** It's the perverseness of the 106; you have a woodland that has taken 200-300 years to mature, you have got wildlife, decay in the woodland, entrapment of carbon. All of that is pushed to one side because you can plant sapling trees 50/60 miles away and it's offset.

**Reflecting on what was said earlier, is it possible then that the PI could support the outline application but with conditions?** He could do, for example agree with CALA's appeal, but limit some of the actions, so if he felt for example that CALA had not fully addressed the traffic position, he has the powers to impose a restriction. What would happen is almost certainly that CALA would appeal that to a higher authority and suspect the Inspector might lose that argument. The Inspector has the ability to do what he thinks is right for the application or appeal that is before him.

**Can he specify how many units/houses there could be?** It is unlikely that he would at this stage. The applications is for "UP TO 83". He could theoretically, but I suspect he wouldn't go that far. What he might do is say the site composes three parts, I don't like you to developing on one of those parts of the site, so he could restrict it by area but not necessarily numbers. If he did it is likely that CALA would go straight back to appeal and try to take that judgement to a higher authority.

**Are we likely to see more speed humps?** The PC investigated this some years ago and we were told that it would be too noisy through Leek Wootton. The PC put a request into County Highways and the response was that they do not have enough money, there are not enough accidents and there is not enough speeding traffic to put in speed bumps. If the PC wanted to pay for them, County Highways may install them, but they may still choose not to install them. The PC has just been notified of a series of cushions being installed on the road into Kenilworth and are seeking information from the County Councillor how much more speeding/incidents there have been at that end of Warwick Road to warrant them.

**It would help to use that tarmac to fill in the potholes!** The PC understands from Warwickshire County Council [WCC] that it has more money to fill in pot holes from central Government, but not specific about how much or how many more potholes will be filled in.

We are due to have a 20mph speed limit going past the school, but of course every primary school in Warwickshire is also in the queue.

The Slip roads of the A46 have been cleared of litter and the PC has requested cleaning from the WDC Contract Services. However, National Highways signage continues to litter the A46, but the PC will keep pushing.

**Would it help if we could have more 30 mph signs up, because from one end of the village to the other there is only the Vehicle Activated Sign [VAS] that displays/reminds drivers they are in a 30mph zone?** Yes, but immediately Highways are likely to say this would be at the PC's expense, but we can look into it. It shouldn't be necessary as there is a double white line and signs at both ends. One problem is that the WCC seems to change its policy, e.g. we have the VAS on Warwick Road. That stopped working a couple of years ago and the PC struggled to get WCC Highways to repair it because WCC policy is to reduce the number of VAS, because they don't believe they are effective from a safety point of view. They are also concerned about having too many road signs, which seems to be a change from a previous policy.

Were there to be housing at Woodcote, there will be a substantial amount for the community, which could go on things like speed bumps. That is not to say that the PC wants the housing at Woodcote.

As a resident that lives right by the main road, I would far rather see 20mph signs than speed bumps. They damage cars too. An example of the ineffectiveness of signage is the 7.5 ton weigh limits through the village, which are regularly ignored. There is a weight limit on most of the village; Cllr Kirkwood invited the PCSOs to comment on how residents can handle the situation. 20mph current policy is that unless there is accident incident data to say there is a health issue, and that is not near missed, they won't support 20mph except for outside schools.

Could it change if you're monitoring the speeds with speed guns? I think the only thing that could change is the way the police would deal with the data that is handed to them. There used to be a speed camera van that parked on Warwick Road from time to time and that was very effective at slowing traffic in Warwick Road for a period, but at the moment it is unlikely to change, even if there is evidence of people speeding. According to the last traffic survey that was done in the village about 2½ years ago we believe about 28% cars on Warwick Road exceeded 30mph, but because they did not exceed it by enough, the correspondence we received from the Police at that time it was not sufficient to take any action.

Would average speed camera be considered? Again it is a WCC Highways issue and my understanding that Warwickshire is not particularly keen on average speed cameras from the highway's perspective.

How much does a speed bump cost? No idea.

Former County Cllr Jose Compton had double white lines put through the village. Double white lines mean you cannot park roadside. What if the double white lines were removed, then everyone could start parking along Warwick Road. What would people think? (A straw poll was not in favour.)

Now we have a Community Speedwatch group are the Police likely to carry out their own speed monitoring? The Police encourage communities to set up Speedwatch teams and will support and work with them. When specific locations are identified as a problem, the SNT will visit when they are made aware. There is a Roadwatch campaign that you can email reports online.

The Community Speedwatch Team held a 45 minute session near the school recently and only caught 3 driving at 34+ mph. Often there is a perception of speed.

The Police have to be in high visibility jackets and as soon as people see them they will put it in the Waze app and everyone else in the area using Waze will be aware. They are only effective for the first 10 minutes. This is the same for the Community Speed Watch group, as well as having to put signage out.

LWFG thanked all who have supplied photos, videos and statements regarding the Anchor junction – keep them coming! It won't go away. I would suggest 9:40 on a Wednesday is a good time to visit the Anchor junction. A serious accident will happen at that junction. LWFG continues to apply pressure on this. Aside from general speeding the location that is of greatest concern in the Anchor junction; we have dray lorries parking on the pavement offloading for 10-15 minutes, vehicles cannot get round and will reverse onto Warwick Road, pedestrians get trapped, there are no pavements in areas, yet all been ignored with WCC Highways. When raised at the Inquiry, were told this was "typical village life". It is not a typical village because we have Police HQ on our doorstep, we have emergency response vehicles coming through the village. Look at how people tackle that junction, record it, send the information to LWFG and they will continue to forward it to Highways and the Police and they will be held liable when someone gets hurt.

Possible to have a speed gun on Woodcote Drive. Residents have witnessed vehicles speeding despite constant writing to Police, etc. It is a driveway with no lighting and no pavement and it is extremely dangerous. Repeatedly told when this is raised that this is not dangerous. Speed bumps were in place, but lost when road level raised and they should be replaced.

Cllr Kingston (Community Speed Watch liaison): There are four areas where the CSW group currently has approval to use the speed gun. There are:

1. Layby at bottom of village before the school
2. Bottom of Church Lane
3. Outside the wall/steps on Woodcote Lane
4. Halfway down Hill Wootton Road

If residents would like another place Cllr Kingston will take this to the CSW Police liaison to seek approval. Irony is that, if it's not deemed safe for the CSW to stand there with a speed gun, its not safe for pedestrians!

The PC wrote to the Police about a number of lights that were defective on Woodcote Drive and the vegetation blocking light and they took action quite quickly. Please give the PC details of your concerns and we can write again and draw it to their attention. PCSOs will take not and forward as well. Something fundamental has to change, with the turnover of staff, etc guidance gets forgotten. MoP has written to OPCC, Chief Constable, Estate Manager, repeatedly.

**5. Closure of Meeting**

The Chairman thanked Cllr Kirkwood, Leek Wootton Focus Group and all attending for coming and giving their time. Confirmed that his report, together with the RFO's Financial Report, the District Council Report and reports from various community organisations would be available on the website after the meeting at: <http://leekwoottonandguyscliffeparish.gov.uk/2024/04/13/annual-parish-assembly-2024-reports/>

The meeting was then closed.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

