

**MINUTES OF A MEETING OF BURNTWOOD TOWN COUNCIL
HELD AT BURNTWOOD LIBRARY, SANKEY'S CORNER, BURNTWOOD ON
WEDNESDAY 10 MAY 2017 COMMENCING AT 7.00 PM**

PRESENT

Councillor Mrs Stokes (in the Chair)

Councillors Bamborough, Mrs Banevicius, Ms Brettell, Mrs Conolly, Mrs Constable, Constable, Drinkwater, Ennis, Mrs Evans, Mrs Fisher, Humphreys, Mosson, Mrs Shingler, Stokes

In attendance

Mrs M Danby, Chief Executive Officer

Mrs J Bennett-Smith, Administrative Assistant

14 members of the public

PUBLIC FORUM

Mr Chamberlain, representing the Burntwood Action Group (BAG) thanked Burntwood Town Council's Members and Officers for all the help the Group has been given in the last few weeks for their campaign – the help was much appreciated.

PRAYERS

Councillor Mrs Stokes asked that Members take a moment for quiet reflection.

PRESENTATION BY THE BURNTWOOD ACTION GROUP

Members of the Burntwood Action Group (BAG) gave a presentation which gave details of BAG's submission to Lichfield District Council on the Local Plan Allocations consultation and how they had arrived at their conclusions and why they were asserting that the proposal to take Sites B14 (Land South of Highfields Road) and B15 (Land East of Coulter Lane) out of the Green Belt were unsustainable. BAG had also formulated a "Vision for a Better not Bigger Burntwood" and a precis of this was given to Members.

Councillor Drinkwater said that there does not seem to be any synergy within Officers at the District Council; he also mentioned a recent newspaper article which referred to research undertaken by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) which held that councils are ignoring powers they have to limit building on the green belt.

133. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Councillors Miss Fisher, Pullen, Mrs Rigby, Mrs Tranter and Mrs Woodward.

134. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST AND DISPENSATIONS

None declared.

**135. LICHFIELD DISTRICT COUNCIL:
LOCAL PLAN ALLOCATIONS CONSULTATION**

Members were requested to consider the Local Plan Allocations document and to agree this response to the District Council which had to be submitted by 5pm on Friday 12 May 2017.

Councillor Mrs Fisher:

This meeting has been arranged so that we can consider Lichfield District Council's Local Plan Allocations document, comment, then submit a cross party response back to LDC.

The consultation document affects Burntwood greatly with the potential loss of two sites in the area which are situated in the green belt.

Lichfield District Council has to spread its housing allocation across the District as a whole so Burntwood must, in time, take its share.

We are not against housing in Burntwood but we want to see the right types of housing built in appropriate areas – not on the green belt.

My colleagues and residents alike are genuinely concerned about what will happen to our town if we allow any more large scale development to take place before infrastructure is improved.

Burntwood Action Group mounted an ambitious campaign to fight these proposals earlier in the year and a similar group has now formed in Hammerwich.

During the last few months I have received well over 200 emails from residents of both Burntwood and Hammerwich and they all echo the same concerns.

Residents value our green surroundings, we must do what we can to protect these areas where we can all pursue a healthy lifestyle.

These areas under threat are often areas of high environmental significance and are homes to many important birds and any development would surely increase air, light and noise pollution.

The Highfields Road site if built on, would leave virtually no distinct division between Staffordshire and the West Midlands at this point.

Burntwood is without question lacking the infrastructure and facilities to support the families living here now and this lack of infrastructure is accepted by Lichfield District Council.

We have 350 new houses currently under construction and permission granted for another 150 and 80 coming forward on a small piece of the Mount Road site. And in my opinion facilities haven't changed much since the St. Matthews estate was built.

Some of us live close to shops but others in the town aren't as lucky to have shops within easy walking distance. Residents on the St Matthews estate and obviously the proposed Coulter Lane site will need to jump in their cars to go out for the basics, clogging up the roads and struggling to park.

I believe local schools are already full so if we are to welcome more families to Burntwood we need extensions to our existing schools or a new one.

And anyone who tries to get around the town at 8.30am and 3.30pm during term time knows about the congestion that we already suffer and things will only get worse.

Residents who emailed me also highlighted sewerage and drainage issues, the general state of our roads, whether it be pot holes or floods! Also a lack of public transport and we've all observed speeding motorists. All these things should be seriously looked at before we are asked to take more housing.

It is well documented that Burntwood needs two new health centres, our GP surgeries are over stretched and residents struggle both to get an appointment within a decent amount of time and to park. The County Council is committed to deliver the GP practise and pharmacy at Greenwood House but the other one seems a long way off.

Traffic problems is another huge issue for residents, more houses will surely lead to a considerable increase in the number of road journeys. Farewell Lane and Woodhouses Lane are carrying a greater amount of traffic as a result of the St Matthews development already.

If the Highfield Road site went ahead then potentially an extra 500 vehicles would regularly use Chasetown High Street or use the already congested Newtown Bridge traffic lights or will choose to use the A5190 rather than tackle the A5 to go to Lichfield.

I'd like to address the Mount Road site. As you will see from your agenda I asked Lichfield District Council about what had been done to bring this brownfield site forward. According to LDC the site is in approximately 17 ownerships and although contact was made with those landowners only 8 responded and of those 8 only two suggested they would potentially be interested in redeveloping the site for residential use.

The question we have to ask ourselves at this point is has enough been done by the District Council? In my opinion, it hasn't. The easy option is to go straight for the attractive land out of the green belt that we all know developers favour. We have other brownfield sites around the town and we should use these previously developed sites as surely this has the advantage of removing those unsightly areas and we can put the housing we need onto them.

We must remember it was Lichfield District Council's local plan strategy in 2012 that stated all of Burntwood's housing needs to 2019 should be on brownfield sites.

Finally, can I turn to Burntwood Action Group's vision and plans for a Better not Bigger Burntwood?

I applaud the 'can do' attitude shown by the Group who have decided to work towards an alternative to what we are faced with currently.

We have seen their presentation tonight and I don't intend to go over it.

I am happy to support the Group's vision and plans and I will be interested in other Members comments.

This has been well received by the leadership at LDC and by Michael Fabricant. The Leader and Deputy Leader of LDC who came to the recent public meeting have committed to working with BAG and others through the Town Deal group to take things forward.

I am aware that LCP have emailed the Burntwood Action Group supporting the Vision document.

I would however like to quote from the document which says "This is a golden opportunity to redress the decades of imbalance and allow Burntwood finally to have a plan in place which solves some of its problems and provides an appealing, sustainable future for the town and its inhabitants."

Councillor Mosson:

As Chairman of the Burntwood Neighbourhood Plan Committee which is a committee formed of local Councillors and members of the public I would like to submit a response to Lichfield District Council's Local Plan Allocations Document, this is not a response on behalf of the Committee merely I as the Chairman, however I am sure many of the committee members would in no doubt share my concerns which I summarise below.

I have severe concerns relating to the potential loss of B15 Land off Coulter Lane within Burntwood and ask that this particular piece of land be left as it is and remain as Green belt land.

Burntwood is a town surrounded by countryside creating a natural and beautiful boundary separating us from Lichfield, Brownhills, Cannock and Rugeley, making it an attractive and peaceful place to live and work.

The plan to potentially allow the development of 80 homes on the above site will have a significant impact on the area and its people for the following reasons.

The area in and around Coulter Lane is mainly residential, with no shops, schools or employment areas, therefore by adding 80 new homes will inevitably lead to a considerable increase in traffic and road journeys in this area as people go about their everyday lives.

This current network of roads (single carriageways) north and west were never intended as through routes their original intention was to provide a link to remote settlements, since the development of the St Matthew's site both Farewell Lane and Woodhouses Lane are used as through routes leading to increased traffic and congestion in other parts of the town.

Nether Lane and Hobstone Hill which are close to Coulter lane are part of the National Cycle Network (route 54) Abnalls Lane which is closed to through traffic at Spade Green is often abused by motorists and is also part of this network.

There are no bus routes servicing the area in question and although routes can be changed, navigating buses into these areas will be difficult and slow due to the level of traffic which is currently high and will be higher still with an additional 80 homes.

Although Staffordshire County Council remain committed to redeveloping the Greenwood House facility into a new GP/Health Facility, our existing healthcare provision within Burntwood is sub-standard and increasing the number of houses

within the area is putting more pressure on existing facilities. Not to mention local Schools who are also under pressure to provide places for new Children arriving in our town.

We don't need to be reminded that we already have 350 new homes under construction near Milestone Way with a further 150 with planning permission to be built nearby and a further development of 80 homes on a small part of the Mount Road site.

I do believe that more should be done to investigate further development of brownfield sites such as Mount Road, access is far better at this location and housing development with a focus on affordable housing would be far more welcomed by local residents, rather than having the current eye sore of commercial buildings either occupied or unoccupied and some of which are in a poor state of repair. The danger is that these sites may never be developed if we allow development within our precious Greenbelt. Can LDC hand on heart say enough has been done to investigate this particular site further?

Having seen Burntwood Action Group's response to this particular development and their proposed alternative vision for Burntwood, I would strongly suggest LDC take on board and listen to their concerns, issues and vision for the greater good of our community.

Hundreds of local residents are also in support of BAG and vehemently against the possibility of developing Coulter Lane.

Burntwood Action Group are a group of local residents. Many of whom have resided in Burntwood for many years and truly care about the area where they live. Many have had to endure and experience the result of a lack of infrastructure and vision of developments allowed in the 1960's and do not want to simply stand by and allow the same mistakes to be made again.

I have been advised that Burntwood Action Group and Hammerwich Action Group will be sending 4263 individual letters of objection from residents directly to Lichfield District Council opposing any plans for any potential development on Green belt land off Coulter Lane in Burntwood and Highfields Road in Hammerwich, this clearly shows the level of objection from residents of both parishes.

Can I also stress that in Lichfield District Council's local plan strategy published in 2012 it states that all of Burntwood's housing needs up to 2019 should be on brown field sites, we are seeing that happen, however our brown field sites need to be exhausted before any ideas are formed about our Greenbelt.

Councillor Pullen had submitted the following comments:

As set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (paragraph 80), the Green Belt exists partially in order "to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land". We submit that there is substantial need for urban regeneration within the area administered by Burntwood Town Council. The area has a disproportionately high level of deprivation when compared to Lichfield District as a whole.

The NPPF goes on to state that the green belt boundary must only be altered in exceptional circumstances (para 83). These exceptional circumstances, in the view of Burntwood Town Council have not been demonstrated, particularly where it is clear that suitable brownfield and derelict land is currently available for development within the town's boundaries.

Core Policy 1 of the Lichfield District Council Spatial Strategy states that "the important role of the green belt will be recognised and protected". Whilst Burntwood Town Council recognises that it is the role of the greenbelt being protected rather than the greenbelt itself, it is difficult to see how the decision to build upon the greenbelt whilst ignoring potential infill sites, which are largely derelict/brownfield, is taking this Core Policy seriously.

Burntwood Town Council submits that the Local Land Allocations, as currently constituted, is not in keeping with the Core Policies of Lichfield District Council, nor the National Planning Policy Framework, and expresses its deep concern at the current plans to alter the green belt boundary.

Councillor Mrs Evans congratulated BAG on their excellent submission and said that it was worthy of further consideration by the District Council. She said that everyone around the table wanted to protect the Green Belt; she added that the Town Council's Labour Group would be making its own submission to the District Council on the consultation.

Councillor Mrs Evans said that Burntwood had taken the bulk of housing development in the past but the infrastructure has not been delivered to support that development as promised. Burntwood needs more school places, the town's primary schools and high schools are over-stretched. Adequate health provision is desperately needed and two health centres were promised. The Burntwood Health & Wellbeing Centre is experiencing problems and they are having to cope with locum GPs because they cannot attract permanent GPs to work in the temporary building. Burntwood needs better shopping facilities. The town does not have the transport links that were promised and these are desperately needed.

The town does not need or want development on Green Belt which would have a dribbling effect towards the West Midlands conurbation.

In the 1980's the Highfields Road site was subject to three planning applications which were refused, one of which went to Appeal which was lost. We must continue to fight and get things right now for the future.

Councillor Mrs Constable said that the sewers were inadequate in the 1990's and no real work has been done on them since then.

Michael Fabricant MP is very supportive of the BAG Vision and has said he will do everything he can to support this. The Town Council needs to support the BAG Vision.

We do not want to join with Birmingham and must fight this.

NHS England are to release the money for Greenwood House to become a Health Centre. The other Health Centre site on the Leisure Centre complex was lost by the PCT because it prevaricated too long.

Councillor Ennis said that Chasetown has taken much the development for the town and this is causing parking problems. District Council Officers, when asked where people are to park when no provision is made within developments, merely say that people will have to park on the road – this is not acceptable. The infrastructure and road systems in Burntwood needs to be looked at in depth; he also noted that when road repairs are undertaken these should be done properly so that they do not need to be redone in a short space of time.

IT WAS AGREED that the Town Council’s submission would be drafted by the CEO from Members comments made at the meeting and that Councillors Mrs Evans and Mrs Fisher would approve the submission to be sent to the District Council within the stated deadline.

(The meeting closed at 8.12pm)

Signed

Date