

# **RUSHWICK'S ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 8 MAY 2024 AT 8.00 PM IN RUSHWICK VILLAGE HALL**

**PRESENT:** Mr. R Jenkins (Chairman)

**IN ATTENDANCE:** 38 parishioners were present at this meeting plus Guest Speaker Ian Macleod: Director of Planning and infrastructure, Andrew Ford: Senior Policy Officer and Urban Designer and Rebecca Buckley: Policy Officer and Project Officer

1. Welcome: Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming all parishioners.
2. Apologies for Absence: Cllr Lowe, Cllr Wise and Ginny Wigglesworth - Received.
3. The minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 10 May 2023 were approved as a true and correct record. No matters arising from these approved minutes.
4. Guest Speaker: Ian Macleod Director of Planning & Infrastructure from Malvern Hills District Council  
An update was presented on the South Worcestershire Development Plan Review - Local Plan explaining: -  
The process,  
Evidence base - Transport Model,  
Next steps - Officers are preparing evidence, working with Worcestershire County Council, National Highways and other stakeholders,  
Working with the Inspectors to secure a date for hearings which are held public.  
Work programme - Timeline to October 2024,  
Headlines - 1000 new dwellings within the plan period to 2041, up to 40% affordable housing,  
Overall density of 35 dwellings per hectare, 5 hectares of employment land, 10 plots for Travelling Showpersons provided within or at the edge of the settlement and improved accesses, including from A4103,  
What this means for residents - New primary school, New local centre, Improved active travel links to Worcester City, New railway station New Village Hall and 40% green infrastructure  
Principles - Infrastructure first where practically possible, safeguarding land for the railway station as a priority, retaining and enhancing biodiversity, respecting the existing character of Rushwick, protecting the views of the Malvern Hills and providing additional community facilities  
Going forward - Master planning with Council Urban Designers, focusing on delivery which supports existing residents, engagement  
This generated many concerns and questions from residents to Ian Macleod.
5. Annual Report from the Parish Council  
The Chairman thanked everyone for their attendance referencing the following: -  
He has responded to complaints/issues re: Claphill Lane and Lioncourt Development  
The play area continues to be well used and maintenance is regularly carried out.  
Received confirmation today from MHDC that the S106 funding application for £150K has been successfully awarded to upgrade the play area. Thanks were expressed to Cllr Hemsworth for this time and efforts.  
Thanks, were also expressed to Cllr Williams for all his efforts in keeping the footpaths clear of overgrown vegetation and responding to parishioners' complaints.

The Neighbourhood Plan has now been submitted to MHDC thanks to the efforts of Cllr Lowe  
There are two vacancies available for co-option.

The King's official portrait was presented to the Village Hall Committee for display at  
Rushwick Village Hall.

6. Police Report: Report from PC Jon Hand: -  
Rushwick Parish Council report.

Please see below crime figures in relation to Rushwick from 17/04/2023 to 17/04/2024.

Crime type Number of incidents:-

Assault 3

Burglary dwelling 1

Attempt burglary dwelling 2

Criminal damage 4

Public Order 1

Robbery 1

Theft of motor vehicle 1

Theft 1

Two of the incidents of criminal damage refer to car tyres being damaged, this occurred at the same location on the same night. The other refers to holes being drilled into a fence post by a neighbour. The last incident is a report from a lady who returned from holiday to find her living room window cracked; it's believed a stone was thrown at it.

The theft of motor vehicle relates to a scooter that was stolen from Christine Avenue, a male was arrested in relation to this.

The robbery relates to the theft of a bike from the park in August. Patrols in the park were increased in the summer months. No suspects were suspect were identified.

In relation to the burglary, a male was arrested in connection to it.

As for ASB, I have found five reports to Police in this time period. ASB in Rushwick remains very low in comparison to areas of a similar size. Three of these reports concern anti-social driving on FINNES FIELD. The driver in question has been spoken to and no further reports have been received.

Over the last year the local policing team has conducted speed enforcement in the parish and have visited the school to give the children an input on what we do. We have also visited the Scout Hut in Crown East and given an input to the Cubs.

7. County Councillor Report: No report available from Scott Richardson Brown

8. District Councillor Report: Peter Whatley and Sarah Rouse

It's been a busy and rewarding first year for Sarah and I as your MHDC councillors. We've dealt with residents directly on matters such as waste bins and disputes between neighbours and interceded on a number of domestic planning matters. We've also tried our best to escalate highways related issues to Worcester CC, with, I regret, mixed results at best. Right across the ward, from Suckley to the bypass, WCC Highways appear to live in a universe of their own.

During the year, we managed to fund additional facilities at Rushwick Cricket Club, unlock over £80,000 to help refurbish your playing fields' equipment and kept up a regular dialogue with your parish council. We also had the pleasure of seeing the Whitehall reopen and have had the pleasure of a visit there more than once. We hope all those bodies and other local institutions such as the village hall continue to prosper.

However, we've no doubt that the main topic of interest for Rushwick residents will continue to be planning and the SWDPr in particular. On that, we have made some remarkable progress. Twelve months ago, the party line within MHDC was solidly that SWDPr was a rail-based strategy and wholly sustainable. Today, no one among MHDC's officers, nor among the ruling group of councillors is pretending that a railway station is likely to be built while SWDPr is valid, much less within a few years. Sarah and I pursued that topic at some length and it is now conceded that no station is likely before at least 2035. Probably rather later than that, assuming a station is built at all. That situation will not change irrespective of who forms a government after the General Election.

The current situation is that MHDC's officers assert that SWDPr is still sustainable as other public transport measures (i.e. buses or bike paths) can be put in place. That is also the stance of Cllr Tom Wells, leader of MHDC's councillors. Unfortunately for them, the county council have been obliged to concede that they have no funding to provide such services at present, nor are there any plans on the table to implement bike lanes between Rushwick and Worcester, let alone to anywhere else. We believe that these undisputed facts greatly undermine the fundamental requirement of SWDPr to be sustainable in respect of Rushwick. It may not surprise you to learn that similar issues also exist at Throckmorton, the site which will double Pershore's population.

So SWDPr has issues and might fairly be said now to be entirely car-based. Can it still be sustainable? Well, we have forced Worcestershire CC Highways to admit that they have no valid traffic estimates for the effects of the Rushwick development. This means that they have had to go back to basics and those numbers will not be available until around autumn 2024.

We have, we think, achieved quite a lot in the past 12 months, but the next steps require the participation of Rushwick's residents. At the moment, SWDPr's claims to sustainability are clearly suspect. Yet all the political groups within MHDC's councillors, with the possible exception of the Liberal Democrats, are in favour of SWDPr. Even the Green Party group is supporting building on green fields at Rushwick, for a plan that is entirely car reliant. You really couldn't make it up. However, the reality is that if SWDPr was voted on today, a large majority of MHDC councillors would vote for it, whether willingly, or because of being told to by their party.

How to change that? At some point this year there will be a General Election. At some point an inspector will start looking at SWDPr in detail. You, as residents are now the key. To put this in context, when a development of 100 houses was proposed for Kempsey, over 150 residents crowded into MHDC's planning committee room. When just 7 houses were proposed at a site in Abberley similar to that at Coronation Avenue, 50 residents were in the room. In both cases, residents spoke eloquently about the lack of sustainability of those sites. The proposed developments were both rejected by the councillors present. Public passion, used appropriately, is effective. Attend MHDC council meetings and speak as members of the public are entitled to do and – I must point out – as your parish councillors have done.

When either the election or SWDPr inspection is announced, write to your MP, the local papers, BBC Hereford & Worcester, the party leaders in MHDC and the inspector telling them how you feel about the proposed development. The keynote is sustainability. Be under no illusions: if this is a fight solely about Rushwick, with no consequences for the other 29 MHDC councillors or their political parties, you will get the 1000 houses. Make it a threat to those councillors' credibility, or their party's and you might just win.

9. Statement of Unaudited Accounts 2023/2024

The Clerk confirmed the Annual Accounts for 2023/2024 were currently being prepared for the Internal Audit inspection. As of 31.03.2024 the total bank balance is £48660.23. No further questions.

The Chairman thanked parishioners for their time attending this meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.58 PM.

Sharon Baxter – Parish Clerk  
Tel: 07815468928

Signed ..... Date .....