

DODFORD WITH GRAFTON PARISH COUNCIL

Draft Minutes of the extraordinary meeting of Dodford with Grafton Parish Council held on Monday 3 June 2019 in Dodford Village Hall at 7.30pm

Present: Cllrs Lynne Griffin, Rachel Jennings (Chairman), Rory Lydon, Alwyn Rea, Scottie Sanderson and Jonathan Shapiro

In attendance: Wayne Barnes, Woodland Officer, North West and West Midlands Area, Forestry Commission England, Clerk Kay Stone and 18 members of the public

1. Apologies

County Councillor Shirley Webb, District Councillor Drew Beaumont, Scott Fuller, David Banks and Nick Button, reasons for which were accepted.

2. Declarations of interest

- i. None
- ii. None

3. Dispensations

No requests received.

4. High Wood

Wayne Barnes from the Forestry Commission gave apologies from David Banks (agent for the Woodland owners) and Nick Button (Natural England) who were unable to attend.

The Forestry Commission are the consenting operations in the context of UK Forestry Standards where an owner can achieve their objectives, but in the context of protecting/enhancing the condition of a SSSI designated woodland.

There will be a balance between short term disturbance and long-term habitat improvements, and it is often very difficult to accept these interventions in woodlands that have been left for many years. It is thought that High Wood has not been touched for over 20 years. Both Natural England and the Forestry Commission will be closely monitoring operations to make sure the work adheres to the approved plan and where practicable short-term disturbance is reduced to a minimum.

The operation in High Wood has moved on as the felling has now stopped but the extraction continues after which the rides will be smoothed out. Concern was shown by residents that there is damage being caused to trees on the extraction route and a suggestion was made that veteran trees that were being felled could have their branches lopped to avoid bringing down other trees when felled.

Wayne assured the meeting that under the Forestry Commission Licence the trees will be replenished with a proportion of the current open space replanted. It is essential to have a mix of different trees and age of trees which will enrich the area of regeneration. Because the woods have not been managed for many years it is essential to get light in to provide a habitat for species that rely on them. In ten years' time there will be different structure to the wood and different growth with thicker growth nearer the ground and there will be wood to take out again in ten years' time.

In answer to a resident who felt the woods were being cut down for the landowner to make money, Wayne explained The Forestry Commission are happy to give out licences for rural economy if best forestry practice is being adhered to. Where there is financial gain from this type of tree felling then the Forestry Commission looks for it to be economic, environmental and social.

The deepness of the ruts was discussed, and it was explained that large machinery was needed to extract the bigger trees but that the ruts will be flattened out. Extraction should not be taking place in wet conditions and if there is evidence of this then photos can be taken and sent to Natural England. The land agent decides which trees are to be felled but the Forestry Commission want to see diversity of trees and species and thinning promotes diversity in an Oak wood. It is important to have old and new trees.

Routes for extraction have been agreed between the landowner and the farmer for 5/6 years. The Northern section of the Wood will be felled next Winter with the extraction taking place next Summer. Exiting for this depends on the nearness of the road. The shorter the extraction route the better. The Forestry Commission has a duty of care with regards bird nesting and it is the Police who police bird nesting and residents can report any undue care of duty to the Local Wildlife Crimes Officer. There was concern that some trees could be felled that were not due to be felled and Wayne is happy to talk to any residents who have concerns on this, or any aspect of the Management Plan, as he appreciates the walkers in the woods are his ears and eyes. The contractors are approachable but should be done carefully during tree felling. Court action can be taken if the Plan is not adhered to and enforcement action taken to replenish.

The Clerk to invite David Banks to walk through the Wood with the Parish Council and residents on a Saturday morning, particularly to explain the decision-making process of which trees to fell.

Wayne Barnes: Email - wayne.barnes@forestry.gov.uk/england Mobile – 07833 154198

5. Worcestershire County Council's revised proposals for parking restrictions on Fockbury Road and Priory Road in the vicinity of Dodford First School

After a great deal of discussion with the residents who wholeheartedly rejected the revised parking restriction proposals, the Parish Council agreed on the following response to Worcestershire County Council:

Following the exchange of emails over recent weeks concerning the parking proposals round Dodford School, Dodford with Grafton Parish Council held an extraordinary meeting last night, so that they would be able to meet tight (7 June) deadline for comments. The meeting was extremely crowded, with the highest number of residents seen in recent years attending. All of them opposed the suggestions, and following a lively and constructive discussion, they unanimously rejected all the revised proposals for parking restrictions on Fockbury Road and Priory Road.

After the public meeting had ended, the Parish Council discussed the proposals in a sober and serious fashion. The Council is unanimous in its view that the revised proposals are unnecessary, a 'solution looking for a problem' to quote one resident. Specifically:

1. there has not been an accident near the school in living memory;
2. the school population has not changed in size significantly for many years;
3. the County Council itself has recently confirmed that speeding is not a real issue;
4. natural passing places already exist in residents' drives, without the need for yellow lines;
5. the installation of the proposed lines would merely move the parking issue further up the road, where the children would be exposed to more danger;
6. the extra 'urbanisation' signalled by yellow lines, signs and the like would be at odds with the recent extension of the Conservation Area to include the school itself and its environs;
7. the Police have acknowledged that any proposed parking restrictions would not be enforced due to the lack of perceived need and of capacity, and
8. there has been no explicit or formal lobbying from the school (which was not represented at the extraordinary meeting, despite its wide publicity).

In summary, Dodford with Grafton Parish Council sees no need to disrupt a stable situation, and therefore wholeheartedly rejects the proposals.

The meeting was closed at 9.10pm

Signed.....Chairman