

MEPAL PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Mrs Karen Peck, email: clerk@mepalparish.org tel 01353 741066

Chairman: Mr Brian Rollason, email: brian@mepalparish.org

NOTICE OF MEETING: Mepal Parish Council
TIME: 18.00 to 19.00 (the meeting will close at 19.00 prompt)
DATE: Tuesday 11th October 2022
VENUE: Mepal Community Pavilion

All members of the Council are hereby summoned to attend for the purposes of considering and resolving the business to be transacted at the meeting as set out below.

MEMBERS 6
VACANCIES 1
QUORUM 3

MINUTES

111022/1 TO RECORD APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

None were received

111022/2 MEMBERS' DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made

111022/3 TO SIGN AND APPROVE MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF:

LW proposed and SF seconded that the minutes from 9th August 2022 were a true and accurate record of the meeting. Motion carried

111022/4 OPEN FORUM FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (15 minutes)

At the close of this item, members of the public will no longer be permitted to address the Council unless invited to do so by the Chairman

A member of the public raised concerns over the decline in community spirit. The Parish Council would welcome and help and support from the community and would encourage the community to hold events and activated at the community pavilion.

A member of the public asked if the tree heavily covered in brambles opposite Laurel Close Park could be looked at. Contractor is on site so this will be investigated

111022/5 TO RECEIVE DISTRICT AND COUNTY COUNCIL REPORTS

Reports available on the Parish Website

111022/6 COUNCIL BUSINESS

- a) To discuss correspondence received re Grass Verge Compromise and confirm the Parish Councils grass cutting policy village greens and verges to support Biodiversity in Cambridgeshire
The grass cutting schedule for 2023-24 will remain the same for Greens and Verges. It was agreed a budget of £500 be set annual to purchase yellow rattle seed to lay (this will help to slows the growth of the grass in areas of concern). Hazardous junctions are monitored throughout the season.
- b) External Auditor – to consider the option to opt out of the SAAA central external auditor appointment arrangements”
The Council discussed the options and agreed they do not wish to opt out. Proposed by LW seconded by JH. Motion carried
- c) To note “Completion of the limited assurance review for year ended 31 March 2022”
Noted

- d) To confirm essential stock to maintain assets annually
The Council discussed the need to agree to hold the essential stock for field and assets maintenance. Budget of £500 proposed by LW and seconded by SF to purchase sports and turf top dressing for annual maintenance
- e) Management of Mepal Parish Council website
The Council discussed the maintenance of the website and the time implications of the role. It was agreed to streamline the information contained on the site to essential Parish Council News, statutory information and signposting only for village groups. Proposed by LW, seconded by BR. Motion carried
- f) To discuss the 5-year plan
The draft plan was circulated before the meeting it was agreed to review the plan towards the finalisation of the Neighbourhood Plan and this could impact it. The plan will be a live Parish Council working document.
- g) Mepal Matters Newsletter
The Parish Council discussed the annual cost of the publication and comments received for and against its popularity. LW confirmed that the costs of the colour newsletter was the same as the old black and white version due to savings achieved using an online printer.
It was agreed to refer the decision to the community and in the next edition of Mepal Matters ask for readers to vote if they wish it to continue. The Council will then collate feedback and make a final decision on the matter later in the year/early in the new year. If there is lack of feedback the decision was made to cease publication in March 2023.
- h) Mepal Archive Request
A request had been received from the two-remaining member of Mepal Archives for Mepal Parish Council to take on the financial management of the service to keep Mepal Archives available for the community. As the Parish Council already support this service through a S137 donation it will mean that the Parish Council no longer make a grant payment under section 137 to the group, and we absorb this £100 into our budget. LW proposed, SF seconded to agree to the proposal. Motion carried
- i) Maintenance Report
A maintenance report was circulated to all before the meeting. The Council agreed unanimously to the following:
- Lilibet Wood**
Road Plainings Brangehill still in situ – request Cambs County Council again contact the builder and East Cambs Planning Enforcement
New Ownership Sign – vandalised after approx. 2 weeks and has been removed – Council agreed they will not be replaced
Observation – no new fly tipping but excessive dog fouling in the area.
- Village**
Village Sign – remedial repairs approve to try to further lengthen the rotten signs life expectancy
Bus Shelters – clean and weeding to be done in the next few weeks. Also, to note Chestnut Way Shelter still has one panel missing due to numerous vandalism attempts and the panel will not be replaced for a third time.
Sign as you enter village –bulbs purchased as per the donation from the old Gardening Club and will be planted shortly. The Parish Council wished to that the former members of the Gardening Club for donating what was remaining of their section 137 grant when the group folded
Benches - all to be cleaned in the coming months
Noticeboards – the two boards are still to installed due to the decision to hold off due to high levels of vandalism in proposed site locations. It was unanimously agreed to install one at the front of the pavilion building and the other at School Lane Bus Stop.
Weeds around war memorial – now removed
- Play Park**
Hedge around play area – to be cut. The Council discussed the purchase of a chipper to enable them to deal with the waste, as there are so many hedges under their ownership. It was felt further investigation into the correct machine was needed
Picnic Bench – to be painted in coming months
Play Equipment – to be treated in coming months
Sign – to be moved from wonky pole inside play area and put on the gate with correct mountings
Field
Field movement due to drought – the Council previous agreed a solution in 111022/6 (d)

Poo Bag Theft and Dog Fouling Issues – poo bags now being left in green and blue recycling bins and poo bags being stolen in large quantities from the dispenser. As a result the station remained empty for a few weeks. A small number of bags have now been refilled and the situation is to be monitored. Dog walkers are reminded these bags are for emergency use should you forget and bag and for the whole community to make the recreational space safe for all.

Hedges on Witcham Rd and Pavilion – on hold

Sign in field (voltage and no motor bike sign etc) – purchase of a 50mm pole to re-site was unanimously approved

Pavilion

Extractors Fan issue -Electrician to do further works to rectify the issue. As not being used currently placed on hold

Alarm – ongoing issue with the alarm going off due to what is thought to be a mouse. Bait/Traps/Holes being blocked, and the proposed purchase of Ultra Sonic Deterrents being suggested by LW. Necessary to move the sensor in the boiler room to a door activated one to stop the false alarms. Agreed unanimously

Broken Slabs – to be replaced

Drain cover outside pavilion – to be recemented

Security Bollards – become loose in drought to be re filled

Loft boarding out to make safe – it was agreed to have an energy survey on the pavilion before any decision was made

Various other Changing Room jobs -Mirrors, showers, fans- on hold as not in use

Allotments

Plots 1 and 2 notice received and accepted. Contact made with the next people on the waiting list and agreed that individual plots to be issued now only to allow everyone a chance to hold a tenancy, due to waiting list.

Plot 8 has also received notice and offered to next person on the list

Plots condition to be monitored in line with tenancy agreement going forward and flooding of site in wet periods to be monitored.

Overhanging Branch near water butt –to be actioned

121022/7

PLANNING (10 minutes)

RESPONSES SENT:

22/00833/FUL Horticultural site between 8 and 14 Bridge Road, Mepal

Construction of dwelling (plot 2) previously approved under reference 19/00799/OUT – pending decision

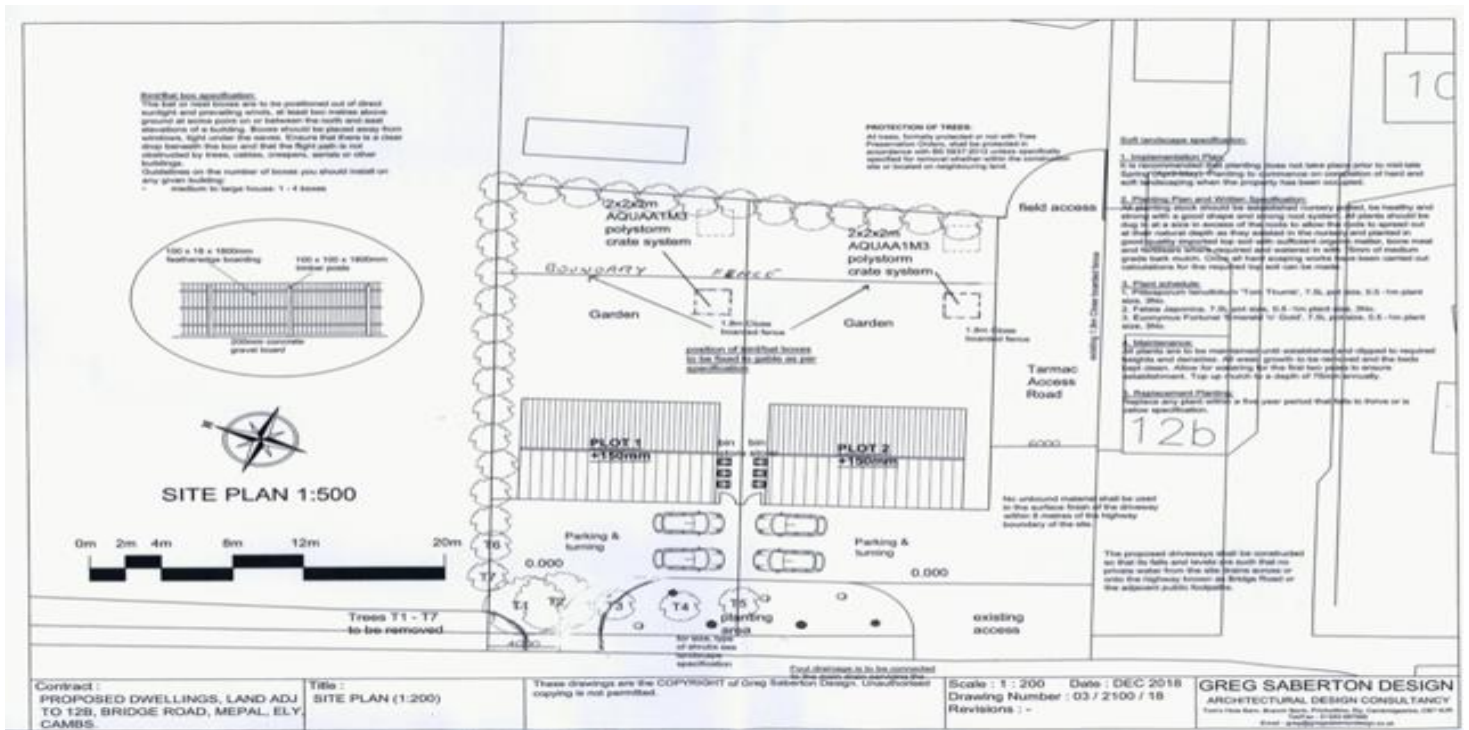
22/00834/FUL Horticultural site between 8 and 14 Bridge Road, Mepal

Construction of dwelling (Plot 1) previously approved under reference 19/00799/OUT and 20/0157/RMA (partially retrospective) – pending decision

Mepal Parish Council would like to object in the strongest terms to this retrospective planning application, that has the effect of repositioning the houses closer to the footpath and highway by 1.4m (north side) and 2.1m (south side) compared to the granted outline planning permission and recommendations from the planning officer when approving the initial plans.

The application site is located to the north of the existing dwelling No. 12B Bridge Road. It is outside of the development envelope for Mepal in the countryside but immediately adjacent to the boundary meaning the housing site to the south is within the framework and the application site is without it. We had previously recommended refusal of the outline planning permission as we felt the proposed development was inconsistent with its surroundings. In relation to the outline planning application, the planning officer admitted that the development would not normally be considered acceptable in principle in this location as the application site lies just outside the defined development envelopes of Mepal in the countryside, but as the Council could not currently demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites as required by paras 67 and 73 of the NPPF, that this meant that permission could be granted. The first condition of the permissions was that the development shall be carried out according to the drawings 02/2100/18, 01/2125/18 & 03/2125/18.

03/2100/18 (picture below) shows the acceptable positioning of the houses with the adequate parking and turning circles, and the retrospective planning permission reverses this very clear requirement. .



The scheme proposed a layout in which both dwellings face the street, set back on a similar building line to other dwellings in the area, with frontage parking and gardens to the rear. It also states that the outline planning application layout shows two off-street parking spaces on each plot which would provide sufficient parking and comply with the Council's adopted parking standards. The parking and turning areas are also sufficient to allow domestic vehicles to turn on site and leave the site in a forward gear. This retrospective planning application will mean that the fundamental aspect of the outline planning has been completely disregarded and this is not acceptable.

The houses along Bridge Road are all set back from the road and path (more so than even in the original outline planning application), and allowing this change will completely alter the character along the road and seems to deliberately contradict the outline planning permission, which stated that although it fell outside the development envelopes, as the proposed design was set back from the road far enough it would not negatively affect the general vista.

We believe acceptance of this major positioning change sets a dangerous precedent that encourages developers to submit outline plans that meet a requirement to set properties back from the road and path, and then to start building closer to the path and road before full permission is applied for and then try to submit retrospective full planning permission when an objection is made pointing out the 'error'. In our opinion this is not a small error in positioning, where we might take a more sympathetic stand.

We are also very disappointed that highways have made no objections to the retrospective application as we believe they have failed to properly consider appropriate levels of safety for pedestrians, vehicle traffic and horses on this road. There seems to be a lack of consideration for the feasibility and practicality of cars being able to turn and reorientate out of the driveways and onto a National Speed limit road because of a decision to ignore the outline planning layout and requirement for parking and turning in front of both houses. We can see no evidence of any physical checks, attendance, or measurements for this yourselves on site, where the house development on both plots is already well underway.

The limited space in front of these houses, now that they have been moved significantly closer to the path and road compared to the plans in the outline application, for parking and turning, also suggests that parking will then take place on the road on the bend in front of the houses. This includes for visiting cars and deliveries. This puts passing traffic, pedestrians and the horse traffic who use the road daily, at significant risk. There has been no consideration by Highways for changes to road markings to try and prevent this happening.

Finally we would like to state that one of the National speed limit signs on this corner, that was and should be in front of this development has also either been removed by the developer when putting the site fencing up or has 'disappeared'. The opposite sign is now also covered in overgrown shrubbery, so perhaps planning officers are not aware that this site opens onto a national speed limit road, and we would like serious consideration of this risk when deciding whether retrospective permission is appropriate in this case.

UPDATES:

22/01216/F3M Mepal Outdoor Centre Amendment – Red line has been amended to exclude part of the northern site boundary not within the applicant ownership - The Parish Council had no objection - pending committee

22/00671/FUL 22 High Street, Mepal

Demolition of existing rear extension, construction of new ground floor rear extension, infill side extension, first floor extension above existing garage, garage conversion and replacing garage door with window – The Parish Council had no objection - Approved

22/00748/FUL Mepal Store, 7a High Street, Mepal

Extension and alterations to existing store with new accommodation above - Withdrawn

The Parish Council have no objection

22/00561/FUL Broadmead Boarding Kennels, Witcham Road, Mepal

Construction of three bed dwelling

The Parish Council have no objection – pending decision

121022/8

TO NOTE CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED (INFORMATION ONLY)

Email from two villagers –Football in Mepal

Email from villager – VAS Unit and possible traffic calming Sutton Road

Email from villager – grass verge compromise

Email from resident – parking Laurel Close

121022/9

FINANCE

1. To approve payments and Bank Reconciliation up to 30th September 2022

a) Online Payments: August and September 2022

HMRC, Wages and Expenses	£3655.80	BACS
Container People	£680.72	BACS
CGM – Grass Cutting Rec only	£221.88	BACS
Ernst Doe – service and repair	£676.21	BACS
Wave – Pavilion Water	£51.24	BACS
SLCC books	£156.20	BACS
HMRC, Wages and Expenses	£3353.60	BACS
Redact – Website support	£240.00	BACS
PKF Littlejohn – External Audit	£480.00	BACS
Red Shoes - Payroll services	£61.20	BACS
Newflame – maintenance of fire equipment	£51.30	BACS
Mepal and Sutton Responders	£87.45	BACS
Unity Bank – Service Charge	£18.00	BACS
Amazon – condolence book, stationary supplies	£53.14	OC
Twentypence Garden – Bulbs and Pest Control	£92.89	OC
MFG Witcham Toll – Fuel	£41.88	OC
Optimum – monthly fee	£1.99	OC

b) Direct Debits Made:

N Power - Street Light Energy	£31.06	DD
EE – phone and internet	£41.92	DD
EE – phone and internet	£41.92	DD
N Power – Street Light Energy	£30.98	DD
British Gas	£28.43	DD
British Gas	£26.33	DD

c) Income

UK Power Network – 01.01.22-31.12.26	£5.75	BACS
SSE - Fit Payment 09.07.21-08.07.22	£1365.35	BACS
Groundworks UK – Neighbourhood Plan Grant	£10000.00	BACS
East Cambs DC – 2 nd Instalment Precept	£19396.00	BACS

Unity Bank Interest Deposit Account £72.69 BACS
Proposed by LW, seconded by SF. Motion carried

121022/10 COUNCILLOR FORUM
No matters were raised

121022/11 TO ADOPT DELEGATION SCHEME
LW proposed, JH seconded to implement between meetings due to personal circumstances of Councillors and availability issue. Motion carried

121022/12 CO-OPTION OF PARISH COUNCILLOR
Application received from Mr Jim Stewart to join the Council; info circulated before meeting. Mr Stewart introduced himself and the Council voted unanimously to accept his application. MR Stewart was welcomed to the council and invited to join the table. The Clerk and Mr Stewart completed all forms and they were signed within the meeting

121022/13 DIARY DATES - 13th December 2022 @ 6pm

Meeting Closed at 19.03

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K Peck
Karen Peck
Clerk & Responsible Finance Officer
Mepal Parish Council

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L Williams
Lorna Williams
Vice Chairman
Mepal Parish Council