**A Special Meeting of the Hawthorn Parish Council was held at 7pm on Monday 18th November 2024 in the Community Centre.**

**MINUTES**

**Present**

Cllr Diane Hughes (Chairman)

Cllr. Sheila Irving (Vice – Chairman)

Cllrs. Alan Askew, Maxine Smith, Sheila Wilson, Carolyn Winter

Councillors  Julia Griffiths and Robert Forster from Murton Parish Council

64 Members of the Public

# Welcome

The Chair, Cllr Diane Hughes, welcomed everyone to the meeting and confirmed that Public Notice of the Meeting has been given in accordance with Sch 12 paragraph 10(2) of the LGA 1972

# Apologies

Lesley Swinbank (Parish Clerk)

In the absence of the parish clerk, Cllr Sheila Irving took the official minutes.

# Proposed Development by Bellway

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and thanked them for attending.

A brief overview was given on the proposed development by Bellway.  In order to assist members of the public to make a decision either for or against the proposed development, documentation was provided giving information outlining the grounds on which any objections could be made.

In addition:-

1. Everyone in hawthorn had been notified of a consultation event at the Stapylton Arms the previous Thursday which had given details of Bellway’s proposals for a new development on land adjacent to Stockton Road.
2. Bellway has also written to the parish council suggesting a meeting with the council to discuss the development
3. Bellway had been invited to this meeting but had said they were unable to attend and had asked for alternative dates

**2.   Discussion and Comments**

Legend   :    **PC**=  Parish Council    /     **P**  =  Public

## Affordable Housing   (P)

Concerns were raised about affordable housing which was proposed.  It was felt that this category of housing was not acceptable because of the possibility of bad tenants.  It was understood that affordable housing was usually managed by Gento or Believe Housing.  It was stated that affordable housing fell into 2 categories which are :

**\***  For people who want to get on to the housing ladder

**\***Those who would be prepared, or could only afford to rent a property.

A member of the Parish Council had attended the recently held presentation in the Stapylton and had been informed by a member of Bellway that there would be 8 bungalows only which would be classed as affordable housing.

##  Rented Properties  (P)

It was pointed out that rented property was already available in Hawthorn, and any affordable housing within the new development, could be added to that which was already being rented in Hawthorn.

## Speed of Traffic (B1432)  (P)

The speed of traffic on the B1432 was brought up and the suggestion of having an island on the stretch of road  near to Letch Avenue, was not thought to be a sensible suggestion.  It was also pointed out that having an entrance/exit off the B1432 in order to access the new housing development was also far from safe.

## Planning Application Progress  (P)

A member of the public pointed out the various ways and processes in which planning applications were considered by the local Authority.  This proposed planning application, if and when submitted, would be considered in the usual manner.  Governments past and present had always recommended the construction of housing and because Hawthorn was a unique and very pleasant place to live, it needed to be protected and fought for.  Under those circumstances, any objections which were submitted had to fall into a worthy category which could possibly bear weight, rather than being submitted on an emotional basis.

The worthy categories may be the wildlife, the conservation area, the degree of flooding which takes place, the protection of water voles and bats, the current inadequate sewage system.

## Current Living (PC)

The Vice Chairman asked everyone to consider why they were currently living in  Hawthorn.  If they had lived here all their life  -  why had they remained here for so long.  If they had lived here a few decades,  -  why had they remained in Hawthorn, and if they had only been living in Hawthorn for a short time, what had brought them here in the first place.  The answer to these 3 questions would probably give the answer of whether they would vote for or against  the proposed new development.

## Formation of Objections  (P)

The question was raised that it may be better if a petition should be set up which could be signed by several people objecting to the proposed development, and this may hold more weight.  Advice was given that this sort of petition would not be the best way forward.  Individual objections are far more important.

## Housing Quota  (P)

As the Garden Village is within Hawthorn Parish, it was stated that Hawthorn must by now have more than its' quota of housing which could be grounds on which to refuse the proposed Bellway houses.

## Flooding (P)

Complaints were made about the frequent flooding at the eastern end of the village and this proposed development would not only be detrimental to the properties in that area, but also detrimental to the environment, due to the possible loss of wildlife.  It was also suggested there was a possibility that new roads and footpaths on the new development would make flooding even worse than it is currently.

## Church View  (P)

Comments were made about the view of the Church from the B1432 which was in danger of being lost if the proposed development was passed.  The view of the Church had to be retained and not blocked.  This ruling had been brought about when previous planning applications had been submitted.  These planning applications had been made when  St Michael's Rise was being built and an extension to the site had been put forward, but was blocked by the Government Inspector as the Church had to remain in view from the B1432.

## New Development Consideration  (P)

It was felt that perhaps the new development would help the village as there would be an influx of younger people.  This would help the village to stay alive, which it currently isn't.  The slow downturn of the village's existence is a reason why the pub nearly closed.

## Action Group  (P)

it was suggested that it may be beneficial to form an Action Group/Committee which would concentrate only on the new development in order to help the Parish Council.  It was stated that the Parish Council should retain the issue of the possible concerns about the sewage system, and the Action Group would concentrate on wildlife, and road speed.

## Education and Health  (PC)

The Parish Council stated if there are 80 houses or more to be built, there will be more children and this raises the question of available school facilities, pressures on GPs, extra traffic (usually quoted as 2 vehicles per household).

## Population  (P)

A member of the public made a statement that at the moment the majority of the residents in Hawthorn are elderly,  but feel safe living in the village.  The question was raised if Hawthorn needed or wanted more young people in this undisturbed, unique, quiet village.  It was felt that such a safe environment should be protected.

## Environment  (P)

A member of the public stated that they had come to live in Hawthorn because of the location, the quietness and the ability to be able to walk in pleasant surroundings, all of which needed to be fought for.  More housing would erode this environment.

## New Build Time  (PC)

It was stated that the proposed size of the development by Bellway would take approximately 3 years to build.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 8.30pm.

# Additional notes which were taken by the Chair, Cllr. Diane Hughes and Cllr. Alan Askew

* The proposed development is not in keeping with the village
* There will be further use of vehicles onto the 60mph road, increased traffic
* Detrimental to Stockton Road and the Letch  from the increased traffic, noise and difficulty  in crossing  the road  safely from one side of the village to the other. also difficulty in vehicles exiting and entering  the village at the junctions due to increased traffic, bearing in mind the current speed  limit. The new housing development at Easington Greyhound track has already added to traffic and delays at junctions .
* The proposed shop would be counterproductive to the use of the road, likely to be more accidents and create more litter Doctors, dentists, schools etc. more school runs will create more traffic
* the village doesn't have the infrastructure to support more houses
* Noise and light pollution causing a further detrimental effect on wildlife
* Water / sewerage  drainage, flooding and risk of  sewers overloading worse than it already is,  i.e.. the drains wont cope
* the beck has already been rerouted in parts (illegally() and the person who did this was fined.
* Detrimental to the character of the buildings already in Hawthorn
* The ancient village- dating back to the Saxons would completely erode the history of this unique village and its heritage and way of life. This is an ancient farming community.. There are conservation areas within it.
* The loss of trees and hedgerows, again detrimental to wildlife. some trees and hedgerows are very old, potentially ancient
* Destruction of wildlife. There are hedgehogs, voles, bats, black wild rabbits and other wildlife  in the area designated,
* There are currently 10,500 new homes being built in our catchment which takes us way over the percentage area for our allocation. (according to the County Durham Plan which  lasts up to 2035.. The developers are struggling to fill those homes. there is also a relatively new small build where the Pemberton arms used to be, which has taken years to  sell.
* If the quarry ever reopens this will add to the noise and traffic volume to the same road on which  the development is proposed.
* Prospectus 80 Dwellings
* No bungalows mentioned by Bellway.
* Current renting in the Village was mentioned.
* Traffic speed in the Village was discussed.
* The proposed shop was discussed.
* Objections to be prepared as soon as possible.
* Planning procedures were outlined.
* Garden Village houses were mentioned.
* Hawthorn wildlife was mentioned.
* Personal objections were recommended.
* Current house holders’ local interests were discussed.
* Current land ownership was tabled,
* Housing split was discussed,
* Current Political views were discussed,
* Hawthorn history was mentioned.
* Building materials were discussed.
* Current drainage limitations were mentioned.
* Sunderland road emergency facility was tabled,
* The current water course was discussed,
* Prospective drainage was discussed.
* The brief period to prepare comments prior to the planning process was emphasized.
* Bellway contact was discussed.
* County Councillors had been invited.
* It was mentioned that planning applications were published weekly.
* Street lighting was discussed.
* Sunderland Road entrance specification was tabled.
* Current main road access difficulties were discussed.
* Future neighbouring housing density was discussed,
* Schooling was discussed,
* Future loss of current views was discussed,
* Leisure was discussed,
* The friendly Village was tabled,
* Western Park layout was discussed,
* Current Village flooding was discussed,
* Future Group discussions were tabled,
* Independent views were encouraged,