

Clerk to the Council: **Joy Pegrum**

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## **Minutes of the Extraordinary Meeting of Coughton Parish Council, held at the Old School Nursery, Sambourne Lane, Coughton, B49 5HS Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> April 2019**

**This meeting was called to discuss the issue of the suggested traffic routing from Redditch Gateway Development through Coughton on the A435 and the implications arising from this and recent applications to vary the previously approved plan for the development.**

In attendance were: Councillors: John Gittins (in the Chair), Maureen McTavish; Len Carter, Roy Piddington & the Clerk, Joy Pegrum plus 5 members of the public

### **1) Public participation**

Before inviting public comment, Chairman Cllr John Gittins elected to outline to the meeting his interpretation of the proposals over the traffic routing strategy. This was devised at least a year ago to manage the traffic, originating from the Eastern Gateway Development, where it runs south of Studley. If adopted, this would include the Warwick and Coventry Highways through Redditch, around the west periphery of Studley to Sernal Ash and back onto the A435 through Coughton and Kings Coughton towards the Alcester bypass. An illustrative map was circulated. Number plate recognition technology would be used to penalise infringement but it is unclear who (i.e. drivers, site occupiers, delivery/haulage contractor, etc.) would be penalised. Working details are unclear and the proposals have yet to be agreed by the Statutory Agencies.

A planning application was submitted before Christmas 2018, for an anonymous applicant wishing to vary the original outline development to part of the site that lies within the Bromsgrove District. If approved, the proposal would involve an increased size of building, straddling the county boundary, the removal of ancient hedgerows and affect the brook and footpaths. The associated plans presented a five-fold increase in the number of HGV parking and loading bays, many having cold storage facility. The proposed scheme indicates a clear diversion from the original high tech business park presented at the outline planning stages and now expected to be a major distribution warehouse. It would necessitate re-routing the brook and hedgerows on the extremes of the development site and a possible district boundary shift. Although denied by the developer and not built into traffic projections, the feeling from local parishes and concerned groups is that this change must undoubtedly have an impact on the nature of the traffic travelling to and from the development, with an inherent increase in HGVs.

All 3 district councils must approve any planning application before development can be authorised. Cllr Gittins had attended all 3 District Council planning committee meetings and reported that:

- **At BROMSGROVE there was much discussion by members who had reservations** over tenant anonymity and environmental impact. The Committee agreed to **defer decision to the Chair after consultation with relevant bodies.**
- **STRATFORD approved the application.** Timescales prevented CLLR GITTINS making representation at this meeting but he reported his concern over an apparent lack of empathy over the issues and its potential impact. SDC had been informed incorrectly by the Developer that BDC had unanimously approved the application.
- **REDDITCH listened seriously to CLLR GITTINS's presentation and also those from other objectors.** There was full discussion on all matters raised, particularly over the scale and nature of the scheme, anonymity issues, and lack of information. They also had a full understanding of the HGV implications on the A435: they **did not grant approval.**

The developer now has to drop or revise the plan and it is expected that a revision will be submitted after the imminent local government elections in May.

**Members of the public were next invited to speak and to offer their opinions to Council.**

Ms Gazey expressed her concern as a kerbside resident already exasperated by the state of the main road which causes vibration, pollution and flooding issues that put her health and home at risk. She is aghast that a County Council blaming lack of funds for the lack of proper road maintenance can support such an increase in traffic which can only make matters worse. She asked why Studley should be spared and not Coughton and why the health and safety of children attending Coughton primary school were not being better protected. She further reported that the poor state of the village drains was a major worry with increased traffic, since WCC had told her they could not be repaired until they collapsed. This would inevitably happen sooner with more HGVs coming through, posing a real risk of a major accident that could badly affect the properties running adjacent and so close to the road, all listed buildings with no foundations. The risk of injury in such an incident should not be underestimated.

At this, Cllr Gittins mentioned that WCC is hoping to secure central government funding for roads and that WCC Clive Rickhards (not present) had intimated that the A435 should benefit from this significantly.

Ms Gazey responded that at the very least CPC should press for a traffic speed reduction to help minimise the risk and impact of increased traffic on the bordering listed buildings at the centre of Coughton, to match that currently enjoyed by Studley residents along the A435 as well as in many in parts of Alcester. DH added that an average speed system would be the best option in his opinion.

Cllr McTavish posed the question as to whether slower traffic might pose an increased risk from emission pollution. Cllr Gittins explained that WCC will not consider air quality monitoring in Coughton since it does not satisfy the criteria for this. Mr Hackett, with concurrence from visiting Alcester Councillor Gill Forman, explained that emissions should not be an issue from commercial vehicles since they are now required by law to use emission busting additives with fuel. Cllr Gittins further commented on the move to electric vehicles, suggesting that air pollution should not be a pre-requisite for the Routing Strategy as congestion is the problem, not air pollution.

Mr McTavish expressed concern that HGV and other regular drivers to & from the development will soon work out that there are other options to avoid the traffic bottlenecks that already exist at peak times and will inevitably worsen, through Sambourne and Astwood Bank and on to the southern bypasses via Alcester Heath.

Cllr Gittins reiterated that there had been mention of a number plate recognition system and fines for those that do this, but Mr McTavish felt that this was unlikely to be an effective deterrent.

Ms Gazey asked if WCC and WCC Councillor Clive Rickhards were supporting efforts to oppose the routing & Cllr Gittins explained that County Cllr Rickhards is now a member of the Steering Group but that a promise from Steering Group chairman, Studley Councillor Paul Beaman, of feedback from group meetings had not materialised. WCC does not appear to support CPC in its traffic concerns and has said that it does not consider the Sernal junction to be of significant risk or a potential problem. They appear to only record or consider the number of injuries, not accidents, in making this assessment. An apology had been received for the lack of inclusion in the consultation process. A representative from Highways had been invited to attend this meeting but the relevant person was unavoidably unavailable.

Alcester Councillor Gill Forman noted that the impact of traffic from Alcester will also become a challenging factor for the A435, since work on a major housing development and a technology park will be commencing soon.

Ms Gazey posed the question as to whether Coughton residents' are being listened to and taken notice of at all or if it is the case that the higher authorities are of the view that the Village concerns are trivial.

- 2) **To receive Disclosure of Interests:** No interests were disclosed
- 3) **It was decided that CPC challenges the conclusion of WCC in its original appraisal of the A435 in producing the traffic routing strategy remains robust. CPC further feels that WCC referral for air quality monitoring is a merely a distracting tactic, since it has also informed us that we do not meet the criteria.**

**Action:** Cllr Gittins will draft a formal response to WCC, based on the opinions and concerns expressed at this meeting and will broker an approach to neighbouring Sambourne to discuss their views, inviting them to join with others in objecting to the proposals, namely ATC on behalf of Kings Coughton, RDC, Winyates Green, and Mappleborough Green. Ullenhall have raised similar concerns over HGVs taking alternative routes and are expected to share these with CPC.

- 4) **Other Business** – None raised.

The meeting closed at 8.05pm

Signed:

Date: