

## SEMINGTON PARISH COUNCIL

### Minutes of the ExtraOrdinary Parish Council meeting held on 24 February 2021 at 7.30pm – Virtual/Remote Zoom Meeting (as a result of COVID-19 ‘Lockdown’ restrictions).

#### Present.

Councillors P Smith (Vice-Chairman and Acting Chairman for the meeting), V Bodman, M Kasasian, R Oglesby, W Scott, C Wade, R Bruges, S Chown and the Clerk Roger Coleman.

Wiltshire Council Cllr. J Seed attended (Part-time).

There were nine members of the public present.

#### **1. Apologies.**

There were no apologies. All councillors were present.

#### **2. Declaration of Interests.**

No interests were declared by councillors.

#### **3. Purpose of Meeting.**

The Chairman explained that in accordance with established strategic planning principles, Wiltshire Council has commenced the process for developing a new Local Development Plan for Wiltshire covering the period 2016 to 2036. He stated that Wiltshire Council has invited interested parties to comment on the contents of this draft plan and the consultation period for any such comments to be received by Wiltshire Council ends on 9 March 2021. He added that it was important that the parishioners of Semington as well as the Parish Council had the opportunity to make their comments known. He added that the purpose of this meeting was to alert parishioners to the existence of this plan and to capture any comments from parishioners regarding its contents and for the Parish Council to note these comments when formulating the Parish Council response to be sent to Wiltshire Council.

#### **4. Wiltshire Council Local Development Plan 2016 to 2036.**

The Chairman summarised the main points of the Development Plan with particular reference to Semington and the implications that the proposed areas identified for housing development would have on the village of Semington and its current rural character.

#### **5. Public Participation.**

The Chairman adjourned the meeting for members of the public to make any representations that they wished the Parish Council to note.

The members of the public present were of the view that the unique rural character of Semington village would be destroyed if the proposed residential development was to proceed and that the village identity would be lost with an associated loss of unspoilt recreational space and valuable wildlife habitats, including irreparable damage to the setting of the Kennet & Avon Canal, Whaddon Lane and other local amenities.

#### **6. Parish Council Discussion.**

Councillors had noted the proposed draft Parish Council response circulated to all councillors by Cllr. Scott and the Parish Council **resolved** to endorse the general thrust of that response but requested Cllr. Scott to amend that proposed response to accurately reflect the additional comments made by parishioners and councillors at this meeting. Cllr. Scott argued that the

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proposed housing allocation for Semington of 35 dwellings shown in the Development Plan should also be challenged as excessive. After further discussion it was agreed that this issue should be included in the response to Wiltshire Council. Cllr. Scott agreed to redraft a possible response to be sent to Wiltshire Council.

*Clerk's Note.*

*This response is attached to these minutes.*

The Council **resolved** that once the draft response is agreed by councillors (via email consent) that it is sent to Wiltshire Council as the formal comments on the Draft Wiltshire Council Local Development Plan 2016 to 2036 from Semington Parish Council.

The Council further **resolved** that:

The Parish Council response and the introductory narrative explaining the detail of the Local Development Plan and its implications is to be sent to:

- Leader of Wiltshire Council (Terence Herbert)
- Deputy Leader of Wiltshire Council (Richard Clewer).
- Cllr. T Sturgis (Spatial Planning).
- Cllr. J Seed.
- M Donnelan MP.
- A Murrison MP.
- Melksham Town Council.
- Melksham Without Parish Council.
- Great Hinton PC.
- Steeple Ashton PC.
- Keevil PC.
- Bulkington PC.

### 7. Meeting Close.

The Chairman thanked everyone for their interest and contributions. He closed the meeting at 9.15pm.

Chairman  
Semington Parish Council

10 March 2021

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## AGREED PARISH COUNCIL RESPONSE.

### **Melksham local plan proposals – submission from Semington Parish Council**

Our response to the local plan consultation for Melksham, which we have drawn up in consultation with villagers, is in two parts. The first is a statement of our overall priorities for village development; the second addresses specific issues raised by the local plan proposals.

#### **Overall principles**

Appropriate, small-scale development in the village may be supported provided it meets identified parish needs.

It is essential that the integrity and identity of the village is maintained and protected from the over-expansion of surrounding towns.

The long-established and naturally-integrated green spaces between settlements must be safeguarded against inappropriate development as the presence of this land, and access to it, is essential for the mental and physical well-being of everyone who lives in the county.

Over-development will bring an irreversible loss of habitat and protected species at a time when the national priority is to enhance biodiversity rather than destroy it.

Such development will also have a negative effect on the popularity of the area both to visitors and residents, all of whom make a hugely important contribution to the economic viability of the county.

#### **Specific point**

The Kennet and Avon canal is a hugely important heritage, leisure and wildlife asset that is of national significance. Retaining its rural character is crucial if it is to continue to attract visitors and be a tourism asset for the county with all the economic benefits that this brings. Accordingly, should Sites 5, 6, or 7, singly or in any combination, be selected for Melksham housing needs, Semington Parish Council wants a 500m no further development buffer zone to be established to the north of the canal and maintained in perpetuity with legal guarantees in order to protect the canal and its immediate environs.

### **Trowbridge local plan proposals – submission from Semington Parish Council**

Our response to the local plan consultation for Trowbridge, which we have drawn up in consultation with villagers, is in two parts. The first is a statement of our overall priorities for village development; the second addresses specific issues raised by the local plan proposals.

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### Specific points

**1** We regret that these proposals halve the spatial separation between the Trowbridge conurbation and Semington village with the destruction of open green space that this entails. This makes the Semington setting much less rural than it currently is. No amount of artificial recreation space within the “self-contained, sustainable new community” will compensate for this irretrievable loss.

**2** Although you say (paragraph 29) that “the scale of proposals allows us to set in place a new long-term boundary for the town”, we think that the logic of your proposal is that, by a steady extension of Trowbridge towards Semington, our village will be swallowed whole as Hilperton is set to be.

**3** We think it is essential that Wiltshire Council sets a definite, hard urban edge to these new settlements, with “long-term” being quantified. We propose 100 years from now.

**4** We oppose any proposal to build houses on Hag Hill (site 6) and to extend development across the A350 towards Great Hinton.

**5** A final point is that we also oppose the further urbanisation of the Kennet and Avon canal as this is a significant heritage, leisure and wildlife asset that is of national significance.

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### Specific points

**1** We wish to challenge the requirement of 35 new houses to be built in the village up to 2036. We think that this is too high given that Wiltshire Council is planning to build more houses than are needed in this period.

**2** We are profoundly disappointed that Semington parish council was never explicitly consulted by Wiltshire Council about being moved from one Housing Market Area to another. This seems

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high-handed and undemocratic. We have to conclude that, for whatever reason, it was deliberately not done, and ask for an explanation.

**3** It is clear from a map on the Wiltshire Council website [Page 1 of [tinyurl.com/23rbcyte](http://tinyurl.com/23rbcyte)] that this decision was first mooted by Council planning officers long before the 2019 consultation. What is less clear, however, whether elected members ever had this decision explicitly drawn to their attention. As such, we should like to know whether elected members ever gave informed explicit consent to the shift.

**4** Semington parish council wants the parish to remain in an undivided Melksham Community Area and within the Chippenham HMA and will be asking our elected representative to petition the Wiltshire Council Cabinet for this to be agreed.

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