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**NAILSEA TOWN COUNCIL**

Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> March at 7.30pm in the Tithe Barn, Church Lane, Nailsea.

**PRESENT:** Cllr Packham in the Chair, Cllr Barber, Cllr Barclay, Cllr J Blatchford, Cllr M.Blatchford, Cllr Frappell, Cllr Hamblin, Cllr Heappey, Cllr Holt, Cllr Hunt, Cllr Jameel, Cllr Lees, Cllr Middleton, Cllr Petford, Cllr Ponsonby, Cllr A.Tonkin, Cllr J.Tonkin and Cllr Wilson. The Clerk and the Assistant Clerk.



**20/16 APOLOGIES** were received and accepted from Cllr Phillips.

**21/16 DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

Cllr Frappell declared a personal interest in the agenda item ‘Consideration of design proposals in relation to land at Engine Lane by Barratt Homes’ as she knows the adjacent landowners.

Cllr Hamblin declared a personal interest in the agenda item ‘Consideration of design proposals in relation to land at Engine Lane by Barratt Homes’ as her son in law is a coach at Nailsea and Backwell Rugby Club.

**22/16 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION - CONSIDERATION OF DESIGN PROPOSALS IN RELATION TO LAND AT ENGINE LANE BY BARRATT HOMES**

The Chairman gave a brief description of the background to the current situation. At its meeting on 4 November 2015 the Town Council had agreed in principle to sell its land on Engine Lane “subject to planning consent and the proceeds being reinvested in the town.” It had been further decided to open negotiations with Barratt Homes. Subsequent to this Barratt Homes had produced some indicative design ideas (delivered that morning) and a firm financial proposal, which would be discussed by the Town Council later that evening in a closed session.

The Chairman then invited members of the public to give their views.

Richard Sibley, said that although, as a resident of Claverham, he is not affected by the proposed development, he regarded it as a watershed for the district. Barratt Homes have recently announced record profits and are “sitting on” land on which 500,000 houses could be built. He said the infrastructure at Engine Lane is poor.

A resident living near Engine Lane said that the infrastructure is not suitable for a development in the area. The lanes are too narrow for additional traffic and the road links to the A370 need to be improved. The density of the proposed development is too great.

Diane Millward said that Engine Lane is a natural point of “cessation” to development, offering space for walking. The local roads are inadequate and the proposed schemes at Engine Lane and Youngwood Lane are the wrong side of the town.

Julia Miners reiterated concerns about the roads, and said the development would be using prime agricultural land. Services in the West End of Nailsea have been cut so that there is now no bus or mobile library and the internet connection is poor.

A resident said that there would be no jobs for all the additional residents and the healthcare

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services and schools would not be able to cope.

A resident said that she wants her children to be able to walk and cycle independently but new development would make this too dangerous. She said that health and education services are already under pressure and she is frightened about the future for Nailsea.

A resident said that the roads could not cope with extra traffic, and the proposed housing density was too high. Account does not appear to have been taken of the mine workings in the area. In the past a JCB disappeared into a hole and could not be found.

Michele Harvey said that she was concerned about the trees that would need to be cut down to accommodate the development.

Geoff Connock said the centre of Nailsea should be developed. Heritage, art, culture and restaurants should be promoted. The Council should concentrate on bringing business to Nailsea, instead of it just being a “suburb of Bristol.”

Doug Pomphrey said that the building works would create five years of disruption. The infrastructure and range of shops in Nailsea is inadequate.

A resident said she moved to Nailsea for peace and was concerned about the risk of gridlock with more houses. The proposal will take up good farming land. There are drainage problems and in 2012 there was flooding. More housing will create more problems.

A resident said that with the Youngwood Lane development two-thirds of the traffic would be going to Bristol and one-third to Weston super Mare, which would create major problems on the roads if there were no improvements to the infrastructure.

Alan Terrell said that instead of encouraging young people to be active the Town Council was “picking on” a site used by the young. He said a new development would be too far from the centre for older people. The Lidl debate had highlighted the shortage of car parking spaces, and the Town Council should be focussed on promoting the town centre.

Cllr Holt asked to speak and said that not all town councillors were in favour of the proposed development.

Matthew Thomas said that he understands the pressure from North Somerset Council for new housing, but he questioned the need for this in Nailsea. He asked why the Town Council is “sacrificing” open space. He said that the land was now allocated for development by North Somerset Council because the Town Council had made it available for sale.

Jacqueline Williams said that Engine Lane is “unsafe” because it contains two side roads and has unsighted bends. Any development would mean children will not be able to walk to school. She said the road should be widened.

Michele Eaton-Betts said that it seems people are “afraid” of North Somerset Council and residents should stand up to them over housing numbers. Building on Engine Lane would be “morally wrong.”

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Cllr Ponsonby said that North Somerset Council would not have considered the land on Engine Lane as part of the Site Allocations, unless the Town Council had approached them

Some other councillors strongly disagreed with this comment. Cllr Barber agreed with Cllr Ponsonby's statement.

Cllr M.Blatchford said that until the Planning Inspector had increased the housing numbers for the district, 350 homes had been allocated for Nailsea. However, the allocated site for development at North West Nailsea cannot be developed.

Cllr Barclay said that in terms of proper planning North Somerset Council's intransigent refusal to consider a review of the green belt has created a great problem in allocating suitable sites for development.

Keith Nicholls said that he had objected to the development of three bungalows at the rear of his property, and the Town Council had recommended refusal. He said that a district councillor had offered him support but voted in favour of the application at North Somerset.

Cllr Packham said he would try and respond to the numerous points raised. He said that selling the land would give an opportunity to invest in Nailsea. Everyone wants to see an expansion of retail activity in the town and additional residents would help. Nailsea School is short of pupils and additional development would help. He said that a planning application would require a highways report and it would be for North Somerset Council to determine whether the roads are adequate for a proposed development. The roads in the town are generally not overwhelmed by cars. He reiterated Cllr Barclay's point about the green belt, which wraps around the eastern side of the town.

He said that Nailsea has many paths for recreation and Gaulacre is not accessible for the public to use. The proposed development would give the Rugby Club enhanced facilities. As for bus services, it is important that more people use them in order to keep the services running. The government has made major cutbacks which have affected services offered by North Somerset Council, and the Town Council is trying to fill the gaps. The Town Council wants to see more jobs in the town but this is not within its control. The population of Nailsea has declined in the last twenty years.

There are no preservation orders on the trees on Engine Lane, and the flooding in 2012 was largely because drains had not been cleared. Selling the land would allow the Town Council to invest in recreation elsewhere in the town. An alternative to this would be to increase the precept. The objective of the Town Council is to "work for all the people of Nailsea."

Cllr Frappell said that she has lived in Nailsea for seventy years. She used to graze a pony where Waitrose now is, and she was opposed to the Mizzymead development. However, she was in favour of selling the land on Engine Lane. No sports clubs can afford to relocate to Gaulacre, and using it for grazing is not a good use of the land. Selling the land gives the Council the opportunity to invest in other facilities in the town, on behalf of all the residents.

Val Smith asked whether the decision to approve in principle the sale of the land could be reconsidered since it was a tight vote.

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Cllr Packham said there are a number of steps to be considered before the Council makes a final decision on the Barratt Homes offer.

Cllr Ponsonby said that nothing is cast in stone and she addressed the audience and said “I told you we bought it [i.e. Gaulacre] in perpetuity.”

Cllr Holt said she would continue to oppose the sale of the land “until I am heard.”

Cllr Heappey said she was secretary of the Rugby Club when it was developed. She said that with the demographics of the town new housing is required, but she was opposed to the development because the roads must be improved first.

Cllr A.Tonkin said that children can walk to school from St Mary’s Grove and Hannah More road without danger. The busiest times on the roads are at the start and end of the school day. There is a lot for young people to do, such as brownies, cubs and sports, but new housing is needed for the future of the town.

Cllr Packham said that the Council is taking a bigger picture perspective on the future needs of the Town.

Cllr M.Blatchford said there is a need for more houses, but the infrastructure must be improved.

Cllr Packham said that the planning process identifies the need for infrastructure, and that with a need for housing in the country as a whole Nailsea should take its fair share.

Cllr J.Blatchford confirmed that he was the councillor referred to by Mr Nicholls. The total picture of potential development on Engine Lane, the Uplands and Youngwood Lane could be 750 houses which would generate around 250 primary school children and 225 senior school students. The infrastructure, including bus services, needs to be improved. People need to be given a reason to shop in Nailsea.

Cllr J.Tonkin said there is a need to fully investigate the Barratt Homes proposal, and if it is not for the benefit of the town he will vote against it.

Cllr Lees said the Council’s Planning sub-committee has talked to North Somerset Council over many years about planning for the future of the town. The sub-committee has analysed the demographics of the town in great detail and the declining population, especially the proportion of younger families, is a great concern. The best place for new developments is north of Nailsea but this land is in the green belt and North Somerset Council refuses to review the boundaries. As the owner of the land on Engine Lane the Town Council can have a major influence on what is built there.

Cllr Petford said that everyone at the meeting lives in Nailsea and wants the best for the town. The Town Council can get the right type of housing on the land it owns, and this could release money to invest in the town, including youth facilities.

Cllr Jameel said that there is no need to sell the land, which is a valuable asset for the

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benefit of Nailsea. The land will increase in value and she agreed with every view expressed against development. The proposed development lacks imagination. She said the Town Council cannot control the type of housing and the proposal is incremental and there is no coherent plan for development in the town. There are physical and mental health benefits to open space and the options for how to use the land on Engine Lane as therapy spaces should be explored.

Cllr Barber said that selling the land would be rescinding what was said when it was bought.

She said the land is unsustainable for economic reasons. It is a loss of open space and it is too far from shops and facilities. It is the wrong site for building and should remain as open space as was promised.

Cllr Wilson said that although he is against this development the Town Council is not its own masters on this issue. The current district plan is for 21,000 houses, of which 900 could be allocated to Nailsea.

Cllr Middleton said that apart from a four year gap he has been a town councillor for 23 years. He favours the development because of the town's declining population and the viability of the senior school. The retailers in the town need more customers. Something must be done regarding the population figures. He said he does not like the site on Engine Lane for development, but where else is there? Town Council policy is against developing land south of the Morgan's Hill bridleway, and the opportunity to find land suitable for development in the next ten years is virtually non-existent. There is no sign of a developer wanting to utilise the allocated land at north west Nailsea. As the owner of the land the Town Council can influence what is built, based on its Housing Mix policy.

Cllr Hunt said that the Council is in a very difficult position. She urged people to try and see the situation from the opposing viewpoint. She said she was very much in favour of buying the land on Engine Lane for recreation, but councillors voting against housing are also voting against the opportunity to invest in recreation with funds resulting from a sale. She expressed concern about Gaulacre being an asset that is not really being used. She said that people today need homes in the same way as people a generation ago were able to get a home in Nailsea. Many people are working hard for the town, and the school is one of the 100 most improved in the country. She was sorry for everyone adversely affected, but the town needs more homes.

Steven Burley said that the Council should have hired a bigger hall for the meeting.

Matthew Thomas said that he accepted there are things the Town Council cannot influence and he recognised the need for new housing. However, the Council does control this land. He asked whether this is the only place where development could happen and whether this is the only way to get the funds to invest in the town.

The Chairman said that as everyone had been given an opportunity to comment he would now move to other items on the agenda.

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None.

**24/16 CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS**

**a) To consider a financial proposal from Barratt Homes**

Pursuant to section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 it was

**RESOLVED: that because of the confidential nature of the business to be**

**transacted, the public and press leave the meeting during consideration of the above. The meeting therefore closed at 9.01pm.**

Whilst there were matters which needed to remain confidential as they were of a commercial nature, those matters which were discussed and are not confidential have been recorded in the minutes.

Gordon Isgrove of Bilfinger GVA explained the basis of the financial proposal from Barratt Homes. He described the difference between Gross and Net valuations and the notion of the Net Developable Area of land. The Net valuation is the figure reached when all the site-specific 'abnormal' costs have been taken into account. It is easier to compare the valuations of different sites on a Gross basis.

Given that there are a number of detailed issues which would require further analysis, members agreed that there is not enough information available to accept the offer.

The meeting reconvened at 9.58pm.

It was proposed by Cllr Lees and seconded by Cllr Wilson

**RESOLVED: To appoint a working party to consider the Barratt Homes proposal in more detail and to report back to Town Council. The working party members are Cllr Barber, Cllr J.Blatchford, Cllr Hunt, Cllr Jameel, Cllr Lees, Cllr Packham, Cllr Petford and Cllr Phillips. Meeting dates will be publicised to all councillors, who are welcome to attend.**

The vote was 12 in favour and 6 against.

Cllr Middleton said that if negotiations reached the stage where a contract could be considered, a paper should be produced explaining the terms and a public meeting should be called to discuss the proposal.

It was agreed that the Council's position regarding the restrictive covenant on the land leased to the Rugby Club and the overage on Gaulacre need to be resolved. This requires legal advice. The Clerk noted that the Council had previously agreed to appoint Tim Walker of Clarke Willmott, but he had not been formally instructed as the position with Barratt Homes had not reached the stage where legal advice was required.

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It was proposed by Cllr Middleton and seconded by Cllr Lees

**RESOLVED:** to agree to instruct Tim Walker of Clarke Willmott to represent the Town Council in negotiations with Barratt Homes at a maximum cost of £20,000.

The vote was 16 in favour, 1 against and 1 abstention.

**b) Consideration of a late nomination for the Community Award for 2016**

Pursuant to section 1 (2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 it was

**RESOLVED:** that because of the confidential nature of the business to be transacted, the public and press leave the meeting during consideration of the above. The meeting therefore closed at 10.05pm.

The meeting reconvened at 10.07pm.

It was proposed by Cllr Barber and seconded by Cllr Tonkin

**RESOLVED:** to agree to make a Community Award to the nominated person.

The vote was 17 in favour and one abstention (resulting from the declaration of a personal interest).

**25/16 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- a) The Chairman reminded members that the raising of the Commonwealth Flag would take place at 10am on Monday 14 March.

The meeting closed at 10.10pm.