

## BENTHAM TOWN COUNCIL

### Minutes of the Council Meeting held on Monday 20 December 2010, at 7.30 pm in the Town Hall

Present Cllrs Adams, Barnes, Burton, Faichney, Hurtley, Procter, Wills & Yaman, DCllrs Barrington & Brockbank, CCllr Ireton. Also the Clerk, Mrs Burton & 6 parishioners

#### 166. To Receive Apologies from members unable to attend

Cllrs Brown, Marshall & Webster

Cllr Burton, Vice Chairman, took the chair for the meeting in the absence of Cllr Marshall. Cllr Burton welcomed everyone to the extra meeting of the Council to discuss the planning application for the proposed new primary school. He reminded those present that the discussion and debate was about the plans for the new school, not whether Bentham needed a new school, which was a fact with which he was sure everyone would agree; nor whether the site was the right one as the Council had already fought that battle and lost.

#### 167. To Receive Declarations of Interest from members present

Cllrs Marshall (the landowner) and Webster (a teacher at the school) had declared personal and prejudicial interests in the planning application which was the sole topic of discussion at this meeting and had therefore decided not to attend. Cllr Wills, a governor of the school, declared a personal and prejudicial interest at the meeting.

#### 168. To Receive Comment & Concerns

Members of the public commented that the planning application was already flawed as the closure of the Middle School and the addition of Year 6 means that the proposed school will have no room for expansion, despite the expected growth of Bentham in the Local Development Plan. Also the inclusion of children over the age of 10 at the school means that the proposed playing field is now too small. This combined with the lack of land for the proposed 'occasional car park' mean that the application is inaccurate. The proposals for the access to the school by road or on foot are not good enough, and the extra costs have not been included in the proposal.

The clerk read two letters that had been received by the Council on the subject, one of which questioned the validity on the application on the technicalities of the notification of the landowner regarding the application. The clerk confirmed that NYCC Planning had asked the lawyers to look into this and if the application is found to be invalid it will have to be withdrawn.

CCllr Ireton said that, as a substitute on the Planning Committee, he had come to listen to the debate and public comments but not to comment. DCllr Barrington was concerned about the safety of traffic from High Bentham, with parents wishing to turn round and return to the town.

Cllr Wills confirmed that the new school would now have to cope with Year 6, and when asked said that there were currently 120 children in the school and Year 6 could be as large as 24 pupils. The proposed size of the school is 150 children. He also said that the money for the school was only in the NYCC Capital Plan until 1 April, after which no one knew what would happen, particularly with the cuts. If it became a private finance initiative then the financiers would be allowed 2 places on the board of governors.

*Cllr Wills left the room*

#### 169. Planning

##### 169.1. To Consider and Comment upon the application for the erection of a new primary school including change of use of land currently in agricultural use to provide ancillary sports facilities and formation of new vehicular and pedestrian access on land at Low Bentham Road, Bentham

The Council confirmed it's complete support for a new school in Bentham, and that it had accepted NYCC's choice of site. It did however have several concerns regarding the current application, both in terms of discrepancies within different parts of the supplied plans and in the provisions for road safety.

When asked about the provisions for improved pavements to the site, CCllr Ireton confirmed that these will be provided by NYCC Highways, either as a condition of the planning application or as a section 106 agreement – either of which means that the LEA will pay for their provision. He confirmed that a section 106 agreement is legal and binding whilst a condition can be challenged.

The biggest concern was regarding the provision of parking and the assumptions made by the developers. It was pointed out that, being a primary school, parents are expected to both drop and collect their children within a small time window and the majority will accompany their child to it's classroom, consequently the provision of 19 car parking spaces to be used 3 times in short succession is inadequate and will result on car parking on the road and potentially blocking accesses to other properties in the area. The provision of yellow lines and zigzag lines within the area will be inadequate as these will not be policed. Council agreed that greater provision for off-road parking was a necessity to ensure the safety of both children and parents. The facility to turn round on Low Bentham Road must be catered for as the majority of journeys to school will result in cars returning the way they have come. A recent accident on the road when a driver did a U turn shows that this is not safe. An adequate pull in must be provided to ensure that parents can turn round safely.

The actual proposed provision of parking spaces, pull ins and pavement improvements was somewhat confusing as different plans showed different layouts, consequently the Council was unsure what was actually proposed. The correct plans need to be clarified.

Concern was also expressed regarding the provision of a pelican crossing. This particular stretch of Low Bentham Road is the fastest in Bentham. The Council felt that a push-button pedestrian crossing would be safer as the presence of traffic lights would force vehicles to stop. It would also be less obtrusive in a residential area than the flashing belisha beacons which accompany a pelican crossing.

The lack of plans for the occasional event car park and the concern raised by Sport England regarding the size of the playing field for children aged under 11 were also seen as areas of concern.

The Council agreed that, as the school will only be built once, it is important to ensure that the right school is built. One that is suitable for educational purposes – which it was agreed the building seemed to be – but also one that was safe for the dropping off and picking up of the children and for the safe arrival of these children if they walk to school.

It was proposed and unanimously agreed that, whilst the Council was very much in favour of the new school, it was currently unable to support these plans as the discrepancies within them made it impossible to be sure exactly what the Council was supporting. It was also felt that there needed to be better provision for the safe access for car to park on the site, bearing in mind that as a primary school, parents will be taking their children into the school.

**RESOLVED: That, whilst fully supporting the provision of a new school in Bentham, the Council is currently unable to support these plans due to the discrepancies within, and because the current plans do not appear to make suitable provision for the safe dropping and collecting of young children by car on the site.**

170. Items for next meeting and minor items only - none

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.15pm