

# **STAPLEFORD ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

## **MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2024 IN THE JUBILEE PAVILION AND COMMENCED AT 7.00PM**

**PRESENT:** Cllr Gillian Pett (Chairman), Cllr Anna Disley-Stevens, Cllr Matthew French, Cllr Barbara Kettel, Cllr Howard Kettel.  
Stapleford Parish Council Clerk: Belinda Irons - Minutes  
South Cambs District Cllr Peter Fane  
Cambridgeshire County Cllr Brian Milne  
Mr James Littlewood, CEO, Cambridge Past, Present and Future  
Mrs Jenny Flynn, Chair, Stapleford and Shelford Neighbourhood Plan  
Ms Sarah Groves, Meldreth, Shepreth & Foxton Community Rail Partnership

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:** There were 51 members of the public present

**APOLOGIES:** Cllr Michael Gatward, Cllr Michelle Green, Cllr James Northmore.

1. Chairman's Welcome and Report:

The Chairman advised the meeting that David Pepperell sadly passed shortly after the previous Annual Parish Meeting, and former Parish Councillor Richard Beresford-Knox passed yesterday. A minute's silence was held for these two long term residents and Parish Councillor.

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked Councillors attending to make themselves known to the community present.

The Chairman thanked all Councillors and staff for their hard work across the year.

The year has been challenging for the village and for the Parish Council due mainly to highways issues and construction. UK Power Networks failed to follow protocol when it arrived unannounced in the village, at the same time Rangeford commenced work. The Haverhill Road closure created significant issues for residents and distress for those living in proximity to the work taking place on both sides of the road. UK Power Networks is due to complete works in September 2024.

There are three vacancies on the Parish Council and applications are welcomed.

Following discussions with Gt Shelford Parish Council, Stapleford Parish Council decided not to continue with a merger, but has improved co-working on issues affecting both Parishes. Joint caretaking has not been achievable.

Major achievements have been

- bi-weekly liaison with Rangeford and UK Power Networks,

Stapleford Parish Council Chairman's signature..... 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2024

- planting the community orchard planted by volunteers, to be named in memory of David Pepperell, a long-standing and well respected Parish Councillor. Sadly one tree has been vandalised.
  - Perennial wildflower meadows in various areas around the village planted by volunteers
  - Community Clean Up by volunteers which achieved repainting the phone box which will house a defibrillator, litter picking, bus shelter clean, and hedge trimming in Vicarage Lane.
  - The Tree Project Committee will undertake review of tree loss in the parish, along with education on the benefits of trees, and promoting tree planting.
  - Finally, WIFI is now operational in the Pavilion
  - The Speed Indicator Devices have been repaired thanks to Cllr Gatward with notable success.
  - Maintenance contract for the MUGA which is well used by Tennis, Netball and others. The field is used for football and cricket
  - New bollards to the recreation field on Haverhill Road and thanks again to Cllr Gatward.
  - Neighbourhood Plan – this extensive body work has been led by Mrs Jenny Flynn and our thanks go to her for all the work she and the group have put in on behalf of both Stapleford and Gt Shelford communities. Everyone is urged to complete the survey before the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2024.
2. Cambridge Past Present & Futures: A bus road and mass housing for south east Cambridge: presentation by CEO James Littlewood.

This was the third presentation by Mr Littlewood on the same theme – CSET and development. Mr Littlewood provided an update on the route of the busway and likely implications for ‘infill’ development between the busway and the villages it circumvents. CPPF and others have been campaigning for an alternative, less damaging and cheaper scheme which does not undermine any potential rail route. The Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) has not yet been persuaded of the benefits of the alternative scheme.

The GCP does not currently have the required £160m to build its scheme. Central Government have provided the approximately £7m to progress to a Transport and Works application to assess viability. It would then be subject to a public inquiry.

There is uncertainty as the GCP is also running the C2C busway scheme. It cannot take two schemes to TWAO at the same time, and it has funding to complete one scheme. The funds must be spent by 2030.

Michael Gove MP, Secretary of State for the Department of Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, has stated that Cambridge is to be the UK centre for biomedical advancement and an associated 150,000 new houses which requires new transport infrastructure. However,

there are issues surrounding water availability which are already threatening development in this area. Major lobbyists include biomedical companies. The areas under consideration are believed to be focused on South Cambridgeshire which includes Stapleford.

The issue surrounding Mr Gove's proposals is that delivery would be through a Development Corporation, which circumvents the local democratic process. Local people will have very little influence over where and what development takes place.

The next step is to lobby the GCP not to approve its own scheme. The scheme promoted by CPPF and Betterways4Busways was the original scheme promoted by the GCP before the Mayor for Cambridge and Peterborough promoted his Metro proposals which made the current scheme the preferred option. The Mayor's scheme has been dropped, and thus the current GCP scheme is not required.

Funding is needed to make the case that the proposed expenditure of £160m for the GCP current scheme is a poor financial investment and that a similar scheme can be delivered for £60m, a saving of £100m.

Please visit the CPPF or Betterways 4 Busways websites to donate; sign the petition; obtain more information on lobbying your local politicians.

A Q & A is shown below;

Q: A resident commented they have written to the Liberal Democratic MP candidate regarding the busway but has not received a response.

A: the Liberal Democrats support the busway. Keep writing.

Q: Do not assume Labour will stop this scheme if it is elected. It has been made clear that Labour will build on Green Belt. It is unlikely the GCP will run two schemes. A Development Corporation will have a transport scheme which may include the CSET scheme.

A: Labour would continue the scheme if elected

Comment: Cllr Brian Milnes: Cllr Milnes advised that he is on the GCP board, which is listening, but the CSET scheme has benefits over the cheaper on road system being promoted by CPPF and Betterways 4 Busways, There are already plans to increase the biomedical centres with an associated 25,000 workers travelling to the respective sites daily.

Mr Gove has scaled back his original scheme of 250,000 new houses. His scheme is driven by the Treasury reliance on the 'Golden Triangle' of London, Oxford and Cambridge to generate more income. However, there are major infrastructure issues which need to be overcome,

including water and electricity. The biomedical centres want more housing for their staff. Genome, Granta and Babraham biomedical campuses are growing for national purposes. South Cambs District Council has approved new housing which are effectively tied to employment at to the respective biomedical organisations.

Q: Stapleford is very well served by its existing bus service. The busway would destroy the local service and the community would lose out as bus operators would deem the local service uneconomic.

A: The CSET service would be part guided. The GCP has not as yet decided which system it would commission. An optical system could be used on the Betterways 4 Busways scheme. The CSET scheme does not serve local villages

Q: How likely is development between the village boundary and the proposed busway route?

A: very likely.

Q: The Planning Inspectorate was clear when granting permission for the Rangeford Strawberry Fields site that this development would open up land for development. Therefore the busway is not the only reason for development.

A: South Cambs District Council turned the development down. The Planning Inspectorate approved the appeal. Mistakes were made. Cllr B Kettel commented that Stapleford Parish Council strongly objected to the Strawberry Fields development on a number of planning grounds. There are a number of developments coming forward which, due to planning legislation, the District Council is unable to refuse. We are stuck with the current planning system which favours development. Mr Littlewood commented that local pressure needs to be applied to the elected Members.

Q: There is a legacy issue relating to lack of infrastructure – as fast as one issue is resolved, another issue comes to the for and takes years to deal with. We must have cohesive infrastructure.

A: fully agree. This is a national problem. Continuous growth means continuing need for infrastructure upgrades.

Cllr Milnes commented that the Cambridge congestion relief issue has been ongoing for decades with the original scheme promoted between 2007/9 and worked on for a decade, and then dropped as it was considered an electoral liability. The congestion charge is designed to reduce private car use. If this doesn't happen, we are all doomed to sit in queues of traffic.

Q: Railways take years to progress and often don't happen due to costs. The busway is more cost effective.

A: The logic of the busway is traffic management, and it works best around junctions. However, there are no junctions, and once near Cambridge and off the CSET route, the bus will travel at the same speed as all other traffic – there is no separate route for the bus to travel on. It is better to have a bus road.

3. Neighbourhood Plan: update: Mrs Jenny Flynn, Chair of the Stapleford & Shelford Neighbourhood Plan group provided an update on progress and urged everyone to respond to the Regulation 14 public consultation which closes on the 30<sup>th</sup> April. The consultation is available online on the Gt Shelford Parish Council website, hard copies are available in Gt Shelford library, or you can write and email or send to Gt Shelford PC Clerk or Stapleford PC clerk.

The final version of the Neighbourhood Plan will go to referendum later this year.

If the Neighbourhood Plan had been made when the Rangeford application was submitted, we might not have been able to stop it but we could have influenced the style and design. It does make a real difference to the planning process.

4. Jubilee Pavilion: refurbishment: The Chairman described the proposals to the meeting – an enlarged and modernised kitchen, a small extension to incorporate the current entry walkway into the café area, the away team changing room to become a small meeting room, an outside door into the main changing room, and an acoustic suspended ceiling with new lighting to the main hall, with storage at the far end for chairs and tables. New CCTV and AV systems will be incorporated. Appropriate grant funding will be applied for.
5. Community Rail Partnership Presentation: Ms Sarah Groves: Ms Groves provided an illuminating talk on the work of the Meldreth, Shepreth and Foxton Community Rail Partnership, explaining that the local community is involved in station maintenance and gardens, how the Partnership includes young people, and how the scheme could include Shelford and Whittlesford.

The main aims of the scheme are:

- Provide a voice for local community eg East West Rail. Local success has been the opposition of the proposed closure of ticket offices and changes to the Meldreth crossing which has been refused by the Transport and Works Act Order.
- Healthy, sustainable and accessible travel especially for those who haven't tried train travel.

- Bringing communities together eg station gardening – a well-kept station reduces anti-social behaviour.
- Social and economic development for the villages – local attractions such as village walks, shops, and pubs are promoted. Sustainable Shepreth promotes train travel. The underpass at Melbourn has been revamped in conjunction with the local community where 200 people cleaned it up, and helped paint a mural designed by the village.
- Platforms for Change – involves local Scout and Cub troops and relates to safety and good citizenship with gardening, painting and fund raising.

Ms Groves wants to promote Shelford and Whittlesford being included in the scheme.

6. Refurbishment of The Slaughterhouse: Cllr H Kettel reported that Stapleford Parish Council is reviewing opportunities for the Slaughterhouse which could include:

- Do nothing – this has a cost as the building needs ongoing significant maintenance including replace the thatched roof. The Parish Council has to pay business rates on it, plus electric and associated inspections to ensure the building is safe for use. It has to have separate insurance as it is classed as an empty building which is very expensive.
- Community use – the building still needs to be weather proof and would need the addition of water and sewer services requiring an extension to the building. Ideas are needed if this is what the community wants.
- Commercial – another organisation would bear the cost of renovation and refurbishment
- Residential – this could be a 1 bedroom unit with potential to enhance the street scene.

All options with cost/benefit analysis are to be considered. This important building needs careful renovation which will come at a high cost. The Parish Council is already paying a significant amount just to keep the building as it is. The Parish Council is keen to ensure the public purse is protected, whilst maximising the building's potential, including financial return. The Parish Council will be presenting it's findings and conducting a public consultation to ensure full transparency and community involvement in decision taking.

Comment: recommend community use as a community café and for sale of local produce.

Comment: Can CPPF assist with funding.

Comment: Dr Bike is providing an excellent service for the community from the building and would want this to continue.

Ideas for the building's future use are needed. Please contact the Clerk.

7. Stapleford Parish Council: Parish Council vacancies: there are currently three vacancies and residents or those working in the parish are invited to apply.
8. (Parish Organisation reports and SPC Annual Accounts: available on the SPC website)
9. Public Discussion: any other matters

Damage to Haverhill Road and verges: this was highlighted as a serious safety issue and a suggestion was received that the Health & Safety Executive should be involved.

Cllr H Kettel advised that he chairs a bi-weekly meeting with Rangeford, UK Power Networks, Kier, and Bennetts and is supported by Cllrs Peter Fane and Brian Milnes. Councillors are all volunteers and doing their best working on behalf of the community.

Cllr B Kettel clarified that the road surface is the responsibility of Cambridgeshire County Council which coordinates diversions and road closures. The Rangeford development is not the sole user of Haverhill Road, and thus not responsible for the condition of the road surface or the verge damage. Rangeford has stated that it wishes to assist if it can, but it needs the express permission of Cambridgeshire County Council to do so. The Rangeford road widening scheme will resolve issues around the Strawberry Fields entrance. Cambridgeshire County Council has diverted traffic from other road closures onto Haverhill Road which has exacerbated the poor condition. Cambridgeshire County Council via Cllr Milnes has suggested filling the verge damage with road planings but this is yet to happen. Rangeford has applied for a speed limit on the whole road. Stapleford Parish Council has submitted a 20mph application for Haverhill Road and Bury Road within the village boundary.

A resident suggested contacting 'Vision Zero'.

Sawston Greenway: The proposed greenway will use cycleway funds to undertake highway maintenance. Cycles do not cause damage to the highway, therefore highway maintenance should be paid from the Cambridgeshire County Council Highway budget, not from the GCP cycle capital budget. Further, the original 1998 greenway scheme resolves the issues around the Spar shop and London Road junctions which the current scheme does not. Cyclists are not having any input into this scheme which is patently wrong. The current scheme takes the easiest route, rather than the best route, which would require a small parcel of land subject to compulsory purchase.

Collier Field: the entrance needs to be secured. The Chairman advised that this is in the school remit.

The Tree Public House: it is in very poor condition. Cllr Fane advised that there is an issue with contacting the owner to serve notice. The Parish Council has contacted the Health & Safety Executive about the failing hoarding.

Meeting closed at 8.40pm