



GILLINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL

The Town Hall, School Road, Gillingham, Dorset SP8 4QR

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PLANNING COMMITTEE

Minutes of a meeting of the **Planning Committee** held on **Monday 13th February 2017** in **The Jubilee Room, Town Hall, School Road, Gillingham** at **7.58pm**.

These minutes do not constitute a true record until ratified by Full Council.

Members Present: Cllr B Von Clemens (Chairman), Cllr Mrs A Beckley, Cllr R Evill, Cllr A Frith, Cllr P Harris, Cllr Mrs S Hunt, Cllr Miss E Jones, Cllr S Joyce, Cllr Miss Purkis and Cllr D Walsh.

Also Present: **Committee Clerk:** Mrs Julie Hawkins.
Cllr Mrs D Toye (Non-member)
Mrs Sheila Messer, ROW Liaison Officer.
Four members of the public.
One member of the press.

Prior to the start of the meeting, Mr Robert Lennis, Senior Planning Officer (Major Projects) gave a briefing regarding the Southern Extension of Gillingham.

Mr Lennis informed the meeting that an application has been submitted by a supermarket chain to North Dorset District Council for permission to erect a retail store at Kingsmead Business Park in Gillingham. However, this application has not been validated and no consultations have been sent out. Mr Lennis explained that the reason the application has not been validated is because North Dorset District Council has requested an Environmental Statement to be submitted with the application as the district council considers that the application forms part of the southern extension. The applicant, however, considers the application to be separate from the southern extension and has appealed to the Secretary of State; who will make the final decision on whether or not an environmental statement is required.

Mr Lennis informed the meeting that it is not unusual for the district council to have pre-application discussions with speculative developers but these are handled confidentially due to the commercial interest.

Mr Lennis referred to the proposed Southern Extension and explained that the district council has met with Ministers and is working hard with The Consortium to get the details right before submission of the Master Plan Framework. Mr Lennis stated that The Consortium hope to have their infrastructure delivery schedule costed-out and submitted to the district council towards the end of March 2017.

The Chairman invited Cllr Monksummers to speak.

Cllr Monksummers asked Mr Lennis for a timescale for the proposed development.

Mr Lennis stated that it is not possible to set a timescale without the developers input. It was his understanding that a single developer would generally look to sell around 50 – 70 houses per year within a particular area; inferring if sales are good you can expect more and faster development. It is expected that the Southern Extension would continue through the North Dorset Local Plan (LP1) which covers the period to 2031.

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Briefing from Mr Robert Lennis, Senior Planning Officer (Major Projects) regarding the proposed Southern Extension of Gillingham – continued:

Mr Lennis noted that a public consultation has been held on the Master Plan Framework (MPF) and the District Council is working with the Consortium to finalise the details for the Infrastructure Delivery Schedule. It is hoped that the MPF would be submitted to the District Council in May 2017; however this date is subject to successful viability discussions. The content of the MPF will need to be agreed by District Council before the submission of applications.

Mr Lennis explained that following this, an outline application would then be submitted and because of the scale of the development this will take at least fifteen weeks before a decision is made. He also stated that it is hoped that the outline planning application would be submitted and a decision issued by the end of 2017. Following any outline applications there would be applications for reserved matters (detailed applications).

The process of submitting the reserved matters applications will be up to each individual developer; however, once the outline application is approved the applicant has up to three years in which to submit a reserved matters application. Mr Lennis stated that in his opinion the earliest date for the start of the building work would be June 2018.

Mr Lennis advised members that when considering an application for the southern extension, the committee should treat it in the same way as any other application and should make a decision based on good planning reasons such as traffic impact, amenity concerns, smell, noise, overlooking, privacy, design, and landscaping. Mr Lennis reminded members that commercial competition is not a planning reason and each application should be decided on its own merits.

The Chairman reassured Mr Lennis that the Planning Committee are aware of the planning considerations and reminded him that the committee includes the North Dorset District Council Planning Portfolio holder, Cllr Walsh.

The Chairman invited Mr Simon Kidner, Deputy Chairman of the Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan Group to speak.

Mr Kidner asked Mr Lennis for an update on the proposed development at Lodden Lakes in Gillingham.

Mr Lennis stated that outline planning permission for the development at Lodden Lakes (Application No. 2/2014/0968/OUT) was approved in May 2015 and an application for the approval of any reserved matters must be made not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of the permission.

The Chairman invited Cllr David Walsh to speak.

Cllr Walsh referred to the Government White Paper for Housing and stated that the new housing delivery test could be a concern for areas such as North Dorset if housing numbers are not delivered within a certain timeframe.

Cllr Walsh referred to the proposal for a supermarket and asked Mr Lennis to explain how a sequential test is used when considering a site.

Mr Lennis explained that a sequential test means going through a sequence of tests when considering the location of new development to ensure that the development is located in the most sustainable location first, before other, less sustainable locations are chosen. The intention of sequential tests are to ensure that retail and other development appropriate in town centres is not located in such a way as to draw trade away from the town centre. He explained that generally, applicants will need to consider at least three sites around the town and taking their desires into consideration they will need to demonstrate how and why each site can or cannot meet the specific needs of the company and the proposal.

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Briefing from Mr Robert Lennis, Senior Planning Officer (Major Projects) regarding the proposed Southern Extension of Gillingham – continued:

Mr Lennis stated that a company looking to build a retail store in Gillingham could consider, for example, locations such as the old Co-op Site in the High Street, next to Iceland, and maybe other sites at Peacemarth or Chantry Fields. Mr Lennis explained that these sites may not be realistic but the applicant needs to demonstrate that they have taken reasonable steps to find other sites within the town that meet their needs.

The Chairman invited local resident, Mr Herbie Light to speak.

Mr Light raised concerns that a supermarket could be considered as a separate application and emphasized the need for any proposal to form part of the overall southern extension. Mr Light referred to health care provisions and asked for reassurance that infrastructure will form part of the overall plan.

Mr Lennis explained that the legal agreement and the financial contributions will be agreed at the outline application stage (the beginning) and there will be trigger points set at housing numbers that trigger infrastructure requirements such as road improvements at the junction of Shaftesbury Road and New Road. Mr Lennis explained that before development can start there will need to be an agreement for financial contributions for the expansion of St Mary's School. Mr Lennis reassured the meeting that the infrastructure requirements will be addressed at the beginning; however, the houses have to come first before there will be a need to expand the school and this process of infrastructure delivery is carried out throughout the country.

The Chairman invited Cllr Walsh to speak.

Cllr Walsh stated that the Consortium are working as a team in order to keep everything together and when the infrastructure is being considered they are doing it as one, which in his opinion is better as they can address issues across the whole site at the same time. Cllr Walsh stated that he was pleased to reassure the meeting that the developers involved in the consortium deliver high quality homes.

The Chairman invited Cllr Mrs Potheary to speak.

Cllr Mrs Potheary thanked Mr Lennis for updating the council on the progress of the proposed Southern Extension.

Mr Lennis stated that he visits Gillingham Town Hall on a regular basis and if anyone needs to contact him he can be contacted via Gillingham Town hall.

The Chairman invited Mr Lennis to brief the council on the Gillingham Royal Forest Project.

Mr Lennis outlined the proposals for the Royal Forest Project and explained that within the North Dorset Local Plan to 2011 there is a policy regarding the Gillingham Royal Forest (*Policy GH2 – The eastward expansion of Gillingham will be contained by the boundary of the Gillingham Royal Forest Project. Development will not be permitted within the Project area if it would jeopardise the overall aims and objectives of the project*). He informed the meeting that the project with Dorset Wildlife Trust is in its infancy and discussions need to take place with the landowners and farmers. The general idea is to plant trees, improve screening along the rivers and streams, expand copses and woods in the landscape and try to work with landowners in order to change fields into woodland pasture where possible.

Mr Lennis informed the meeting that the district council is working in partnership with Dorset Wildlife Trust, Wessex Water and Natural England to help deliver the project.

The Chairman invited Mrs Messer to speak.

Mrs Messer enquired about historic interests, economic and leisure activity within the Gillingham Royal Forest Project area.

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Briefing from Mr Robert Lennis, Senior Planning Officer (Major Projects) regarding the proposed Southern Extension of Gillingham – continued:

Mr Lennis stated that the project would have a broad focus to pick up on these aspects particularly with the area's historical past whilst also supporting the local economy.

The Chairman invited Cllr Mrs Beckley to speak.

Cllr Mrs Beckley referred to the water quality of the River Lodden and asked whether the project will address the existing issues.

Mr Lennis stated that studies have confirmed that 10m – 20m buffers of trees along waterways would act as a natural filter for chemicals being washed off from the fields. However, Mr Lennis explained that the project is subject to agreement by the landowners and securing the necessary funding.

Mr Lennis informed the meeting that Dorset Wildlife Trust are leading the project, supported by Wessex Water, Natural England, and North Dorset District Council. Mr Lennis stated that he was pleased with the positive response and support for the project.

The Chairman thanked Mr Lennis for attending the meeting and updating the council on the progress of the Southern Extension and Royal Forest Project.

The Planning Committee Meeting commenced at 7.58pm

322. **Apologies:** Apologies were received from Cllr Ms Baker.

323. **To approve the minutes of the meeting held on the 9th January 2017 and the interim meeting held on 23rd January 2017.**
Proposed by Cllr Mrs Beckley, seconded by Cllr Joyce and agreed by all voting members that “**the minutes of the meeting held on 9th January 2017 and the interim meeting held on 23rd January 2017 are approved as correct records of those meetings**”. **RESOLVED.**

324. **Questions:**
There were no questions.

325. **Declarations of Interests**
Members are reminded of their obligations to declare their interests in the following items and to indicate the action they will be taking when the item is considered as per the National Association of Local Councils (NALC) Model Code of Conduct which has been prepared to comply with the requirements of Section 27 of the Localism Act 2011.

Cllr Joyce declared a personal interest in Planning Application No. 2/2016/1545/FUL as he is known to the applicant and carries out the same type of work.

326. **Planning Application Decisions from NDDC:**

- a. **Application No:** 2/2016/1546/FUL **Date Registered:** 18 October 2016
Location of Development: The Dorset Store, Station Road, Gillingham, Dorset, SP8 4QA
Description of Development: Change of use from Retail (A1 to Landscape Gardeners Office and Store B1 and B8) with associated alterations and erection of replacement roof.
GRANTED
- b. **Application No:** 2/2016/1592/HOUSE **Date Registered:** 5 December 2016
Location of Development: Newlands Cottage, Access to Greenacres, Gillingham, SP8 4HD
Description of Development: Erect two storey extension, (demolish garage).
GRANTED

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326. Planning Application Decisions from NDDC continued:

- c. **Application No:** 2/2016/1768/HOUSE **Date Registered:** 24 November 2016
Location of Development: 4 Yarrow Court, Gillingham, Dorset, SP8 4XD
Description of Development: Erect two storey rear extension and single storey side extension.
GRANTED
- d. **Application No:** 2/2016/1806/HOUSE **Date Registered:** 6 December 2016
Location of Development: Willowfield, B3081 - West Bourton Road to Westbrook Road, Gillingham, Dorset, SP8 5NR
Description of Development: Erect two storey side extension (demolish existing single storey extension). (Alternative scheme to that approved by Planning Permission No. 2/2016/0929/HOUSE).
GRANTED
- e. **Application No:** 2/2016/1806/HOUSE **Date Registered:** 6 December 2016
Location of Development: Willowfield, B3081 - West Bourton Road to Westbrook Road, Gillingham, Dorset, SP8 5NR
Description of Development: Erect two storey side extension (demolish existing single storey extension). (Alternative scheme to that approved by Planning Permission No. 2/2016/0929/HOUSE).
GRANTED
- f. **Application No:** 2/2016/1669/MODPO **Date Registered:** 25 November 2016
Location of Development: 4 Mulberry Close, Gillingham, Dorset, SP8 4AU
Description of Development: Modification of Section 106 Agreement dated 26th June 2000 (subsequently modified in the supplemental Agreement dated 16/09/2003) relating in part to the property now known as 4 Mulberry Close, so that 4 Mulberry Close only is no longer bound by those planning obligations that specifically relate to it as a low cost market dwelling and as such restrict its use and future disposal.
APPROVAL OF REQUEST FOR MODIFICATION/DISCHARGE PURSUANT TO SECTION 106 AGREEMENT
- g. **Application No:** 2/2016/1693/LBC **Date Registered:** 28 November 2016
Location of Development: Madjeston Farm House, Bleet Lane to New Road, Madjeston, SP8 5JH
Description of Development: Relocation of Car Port, Repair and Alterations to Walled Garden Boundary Wall and Construction of Pool and Pool House
GRANT OF LISTED BUILDING CONSENT
- h. **Application No:** 2/2016/1692/FUL **Date Registered:** 28 November 2016
Location of Development: Madjeston Farm House, Bleet Lane to New Road, Madjeston, SP8 5JH
Description of Development: Relocation of Car Port, Repair and Alterations to Walled Garden Boundary Wall and Construction of Pool and Pool House.
GRANTED
NB. The proposal originally included a tennis court within the walled garden and the change of use of associated land from agricultural to residential however this has been removed from the application.
- i. **Application No:** 2/2016/1862/HOUSE **Date Registered:** 15 December 2016
Location of Development: Deer Leap Farm, Bowridge Hill, Gillingham, Dorset, SP8 5QR
Description of Development: Erect single storey side extension.
GRANTED
- j. **Application No:** 2/2016/1809/HOUSE **Date Registered:** 3 January 2017
Location of Development: 10 Somerset Close, Gillingham, Dorset, SP8 4LY
Description of Development: Install dormer windows to rear elevation and form additional accommodation in the roof space.
REFUSED

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326. Planning Application Decisions from NDDC continued:

Cllr Mrs Beckley asked why Application No. 2/2016/1809/HOUSE had been refused.

The Chairman informed the meeting that the reasons given by North Dorset District Council for the refusal of the application are as follows:

The proposed development on the front and principal elevation by reason of its design and excessive size in relation to the small scale of the host dwelling would not appear as a subservient addition introducing an awkward and incongruous feature that would be detrimental to the appearance of the bungalow as well as the wider street scene which is characterised by an unbroken, uniform row of similar sized and positioned bungalows. The proposal would therefore be contrary to North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 (2011-2021) policies 24 and 28.

The proposal on the front and principal elevation would set a precedent for similar types of development which repeated too often would cumulatively be harmful to the estate as a whole. The proposal would therefore be contrary to North Dorset Local Plan Part 1 (2011-2021) policies 24 and 28.

327. Tree Works Application Decisions from NDDC:

a. Application No: 2/2016/1887/CATREE

Location: Chantry Cottage, the Square, Gillingham, Dorset, SP8 4AY

Proposal:

T1 - Holly (group of three stems) - Coppice. Allowing regeneration to be trimmed and retained as smaller shrub/bush.

T2 - Variegated Leyland Cypress - Fell. Loss of amenity due to reverted green foliage now overtaking most of the crown.

T3 - Contorted Willow (dead/exempt) - Fell.

T4 - Cherry Laurel - Reduce crown by 30% volume, reducing branches by 1 - 1.5m and trimming into a rounded 'mop top'.

T5 - Copper Beech - Fell. Poorly positioned tree. As it matures it will shadow the southern garden. Furthermore, removal will promote growth of adjacent field maple.

T6 - Hazel. Fell. To allow Environment Agency to repair flood defences.

T7 - Ash (two stems) - Fell. Established trees that have not yet reached maturity. Undesirable position due to proximity to the flood wall and in addition the foreseeable pressures to prune branches overhanging thatch in future years.

T8 - Bay (group of eight stems) - Reduce canopy by 25%. Reducing height by 1m and laterals by 1m.

T9 - Willow - Pollard, cutting back to established pruning nodes.

NDDC HAS NO OBJECTIONS TO THE WORKS SPECIFIED

b. Application No: 2/2017/0007/TPTREE

Location: Oak Tree Cottage, Wyke Road, Gillingham, Dorset, SP8 4NW

Proposal: T1 - Ash - Reduce the three stems by 2.5m to a formative shape.

THE WORK APPLIED FOR UNDER APPLICATION 2/2017/0007/TPTREE GRANTED, SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS.

328. Planning Applications:

a. Application No: 2/2016/1901/FUL

Proposal: Erect 2 No. dwellings and garages. Create new vehicular and pedestrian access, and form 6 No. parking spaces (demolish existing single storey garage and link).

Location: Land East of 20 Barnaby Mead, Gillingham, Dorset.

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328. Planning Applications continued:

COMMENTS:

The Chairman informed the meeting that to date six objections have been submitted online.

There were no comments.

When put to the vote all voting members abstained from voting.

The Chairman asked members for their reasons for abstaining.

Cllr Frith explained that he had been unable to download the plans and therefore had not had the opportunity to view the proposals.

Cllr Mrs Hunt and Cllr Evill stated that there was insufficient information available for them to make an informed decision.

RECOMMENDATION:

Due to insufficient information, Gillingham Town Council is unable to comment on the application at this stage.

b. Application No: 2/2016/1545/FUL

Proposal: Change of use and conversion of former commercial building to 1 No. dwelling.

Location: Building in North East Corner of, London House, Station Road, Gillingham, Dorset.

COMMENTS:

The Chairman informed the meeting that to date no public comments had been received.

Cllr Mrs Hunt raised concerns over the proposed change of use from commercial to residential but was pleased that a business would be occupying the old Dorset Store building.

Cllr Joyce informed the meeting that the building backs onto residential flats and forms part of a dual development in connection with the business.

When put to the vote, seven members had no objections to the application. Cllr Joyce and Cllr Frith abstained from voting.

RECOMMENDATION:

Gillingham Town Council has no objections to the application.

c. Application No: 2/2016/1381/ADV

Proposal: Erect 1 No. internally illuminated 7.5m high totem sign.

Location: Lidl, School Lane, Gillingham, SP8 4QW

COMMENTS:

The Chairman informed the meeting that one neutral public comment has been registered online.

Cllr Joyce stated that he had no objections to the proposed sign as this is common practice by all supermarkets.

Cllr Harris stated that he had no issues with the proposal, the sign would not be out of place and is part of the marketing for the store.

Cllr Miss Jones asked whether the proposed sign will block the visibility splay.

The Chairman informed the meeting that the Highways Authority has no objections to the application.

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328. Planning Applications continued:

Cllr Frith stated that he had no objections to the sign but asked if the sign could be illuminated during store opening hours only.

The Chairman invited local resident, Mr Herbie Light to speak.

Mr Light informed the meeting that there had been a sign at this location for over forty years.

Following a discussion all members agreed a recommendation of approval with a condition stating that the sign must be illuminated during store opening hours only.

RECOMMENDATION:

Gillingham Town Council recommends approval of the application subject to a condition restricting the illumination times to store opening hours only.

d. Application No: 2/2017/0090/LBC

Proposal: Replace roof to single storey extension, install 2 No. roof-lights and carry out internal and external alterations in association to this.

Location: Spring Corner, High Street, Gillingham, SP8 4AW

COMMENTS:

Cllr Mrs Beckley stated that in her opinion the existing single storey extension is scruffy and the proposals will tidy up the area.

Cllr Joyce raised concerns over the proposal to use slate effect on the roof instead of natural slate.

Cllr Walsh raised concerns over the application and reminded members that the building is situated in a prominent location within Gillingham Conservation Area. Cllr Walsh stated that any alterations should be sympathetic to the host building and the Conservation Area, and he raised concerns over the proposal to use upvc. Cllr Walsh agreed that the extension needs to be restored but expressed the importance of using materials that are sympathetic to the listed building.

The Chairman concurred with Cllr Walsh and reminded members that the property is in a particularly sensitive location as it backs directly on to the churchyard of St Mary's Church. The Chairman stated that it is proposed to replace the small dormer windows with larger windows which will be out of keeping. The Chairman agreed with the concerns raised by Cllr Joyce and stated that the proposed slate effect tiles will not weather in the same way as natural slate.

Cllr Evill stated that the existing structure does not enhance the Conservation Area and in his opinion the proposals will visually improve the area.

Cllr Walsh reminded members that Gillingham Conservation Area is on the 'At Risk Register' and it is important that any repairs respect the character of the area. Cllr Walsh stated that the use of upvc windows on such a prominent listed building within a Conservation Area is unacceptable.

Cllr Harris stated that whilst he supports the proposal to tidy up the building the proposed materials are inappropriate.

Cllr Joyce referred to the proposal to use upvc windows and stated that in his opinion the use of hardwood would be better.

Following a vote, seven members had objections to the application. Cllr Miss Jones abstained from voting.

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328. Planning Applications continued:

RECOMMENDATION:

Gillingham Town Council recognizes the need to improve the building, however, the council has concerns and objections to the application as the materials, as proposed, are not sympathetic to the building, conservation area or to the setting of the church. Members agree that replacement slate should be a natural slate, not slate effect and members have concerns regarding the size of the proposed roof-lights and the proposal to use upvc.

e. **Application No:** 2/2017/0089/FUL

Proposal: Replace roof to single storey extension and install 2 No. roof-lights.

Location: Spring Corner, High Street, Gillingham, SP8 4AW

COMMENTS:

Please see the comments made for Application No. 2/2017/0090/LBC

Following a vote, seven members had objections to the application. Cllr Miss Jones abstained from voting.

RECOMMENDATION:

Gillingham Town Council recognizes the need to improve the building, however, the council has concerns and objections to the application as the materials, as proposed, are not sympathetic to the building, conservation area or to the setting of the church. Members agree that replacement slate should be a natural slate, not slate effect and members have concerns regarding the size of the proposed roof-lights and the proposal to use upvc.

329. Tree Works Applications:

a. **Application No:** 2/2017/0218/CATREE

Location: Fountain Cottage, Wyke Road, Gillingham, Dorset, SP8 4NH

Proposal: T1 - Apple - Remove completely

COMMENTS:

The Chairman informed the meeting that the Tree Warden, Mr Ben Drew, was unable to attend the meeting and had sent his apologies; however, Mr Drew had sent a detailed report with the following recommendation:

‘Though the tree is substantial and can be viewed from the road, unfortunately there is significant signs of fungus and dieback. The owner has already planted a mimosa tree (Acacia dealbata) in a nearby spot. This is reasonably fast growing and will mitigate the loss of the asset. Several fruit trees (including an apple) have recently been planted in the garden and it is planned to add a pear tree. Recommendation: Approve the application to remove the tree.’

Cllr Joyce agreed with the recommendation of the Tree Warden and stated that if the tree is not removed the fungus could be transferred.

Cllr Frith and Cllr Mrs Hunt thanked Mr Drew on an excellent report.

When put to the vote, all members agreed with the recommendation of the Tree Warden.

RECOMMENDATION:

Gillingham Town Council has no objections to the application.

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330. To receive notification from North Dorset District Council that the provisional Tree Preservation Order (TPO) at (Kendall's Cottage, Kendall Lane, Milton-on-Stour, Dorset, SP8 5QA) was confirmed without modification under delegated powers on the 17th January 2017. There were no comments.

331. To receive notification that an appeal has been made to the Secretary of State in respect of North Dorset District Council's refusal of permission of the following application:

Inspectorate's Ref: APP/N1215/D/17/3166733

Appeal by: Mr M Hooper

Application No: 2/2016/1031/HOUSE

Location: Rivers Meet, High Street, Gillingham, SP8 4AA

Proposal: Erect single storey rear extension.

There were no comments.

332. To consider and agree that a recommendation is made to Full Council that Gillingham Town Council support the initiative of the Royal Forest Project. **APPENDIX A**
Following a discussion, Cllr Frith proposed, Cllr Mrs Hunt seconded and all members agreed that 'a recommendation is made to Full Council that Gillingham Town Council supports the initiative of the Royal Forest Project'. **RESOLVED**

333. To receive and consider information regarding Footpaths in Gillingham.

The Chairman invited the Rights of Way Liaison Officer, Mrs Sheila Messer to speak.

Mrs Messer informed the meeting that the Adopt a Footpath Scheme had been launched. Mrs Messer explained that there are over 40km of Rights of Way in Gillingham and she was delighted that ten people have already signed up to the scheme. Mrs Messer stated that the Ramblers Holiday Charitable Trust had provided a grant to the Walkers are Welcome Group for the production of a leaflet which is now available at the Library and the Town Hall.

Mrs Messer informed members that she wished to make them aware of problems along Footpath No. 73 between Peacemarsh and Milton-on-Stour. Mrs Messer reminded the meeting that a pre-application consultation has been carried out and an application will shortly be submitted for the diversion of the footpath. Mrs Messer explained that part of the route is very muddy and slippery and difficulties at this point are exacerbated by a slope. Mrs Messer advised the council of problems with two stiles along this section of the footpath and explained that as the walked route is not the legal definitive right of way, the situation cannot easily be rectified. Mrs Messer informed the meeting that she would contact the land owners to discuss the issues.

Mrs Messer referred to Footpath No. 51 off of Common Mead Lane and informed the meeting that the Rangers have cut back the hedge and improved the route. Mrs Messer stated that the land owner has erected a sign saying private property, however, there is a legal definitive right of way across the land which means that the public have a right of passage.

Mrs Messer informed the meeting that 29 stiles have been replaced with gates, and as part of the Stiles to Gates project there is one remaining gate to install. Mrs Messer stated that the North Dorset Ramblers have been left a legacy and have decided to use the money to replace another three or four stiles with gates.

Mrs Messer informed the meeting that the dates for the 2017 Gillingham Walking Festival will be 2nd September until 10th September with a Quiz Night taking place on 1st September.

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334. To receive and consider a report from the Conservation Area Working Party.

Cllr Mrs Hunt, Lead Member of the working party thanked the staff and officers for preparing the information for the public consultation held on 10th and 11th February. Cllr Mrs Hunt stated that the event had been successful and she had been impressed with the number of people who had attended.

335. To receive information from Kate Williams, Senior Conservation Officer for Dorset Councils' Partnership regarding Conservation Areas at Risk in Gillingham, Blandford and Sturminster Newton.

Members noted the decision of the Dorset Councils Partnership to postpone the work on Conservation Areas at risk until the council is better resourced and have a permanent Service Manager in place.

336. MATTERS PERTINENT TO THIS MEETING. Members are advised that inclusion of items is at the Chairman's discretion and that 'A Council cannot lawfully decide any matter which is not specified in the summons (*agendas*)'. The Chairman to be advised prior to the commencement of the meeting.

- a. The Chairman informed members that Dorset Council Partnership has arranged a planning training session for town and parish councils which will take place on Wednesday 5th April from 6pm until 8.30pm. The Chairman stated that the planning session is to update members regarding the scheme of delegation changes which require input/comments for town and parish councillors based on material planning considerations. The Chairman asked members to advise the Planning Committee Clerk if they would like to attend. Cllr Walsh informed the meeting that he would be attending as the North Dorset District Council Planning Portfolio Holder.
- b. The Chairman informed the meeting that Ben Drew, Gillingham Tree Warden has offered to join the Royal Forest Project Steering Group that will advise on local priorities and issues.
- c. The Chairman informed the meeting that Ben Drew, Gillingham Tree Warden, has registered as a Tree Warden with the Tree Council.
- d. The Chairman informed the meeting that it had been brought to his attention that some members had recently experienced difficulties in accessing planning applications online. The Chairman reminded members that in support of the Nordon closure project and as part of the Data Centre migration, the IDOX Server (Planning IT System) had recently moved to South Walks House in Dorchester and this had caused some IT issues. Member's comments have been noted and the situation will be monitored.

Closure. The meeting closed at 8.42pm

NORTHERN BLACKMORE VALE AND GILLINGHAM ROYAL FOREST PROJECT PROPOSAL

The vision for Gillingham Royal Forest project is to collaborate with the local community to investigate the potential to restore; recreate and reconnect a historical landscape whilst make an increasing contribution to the sustainable development of Gillingham

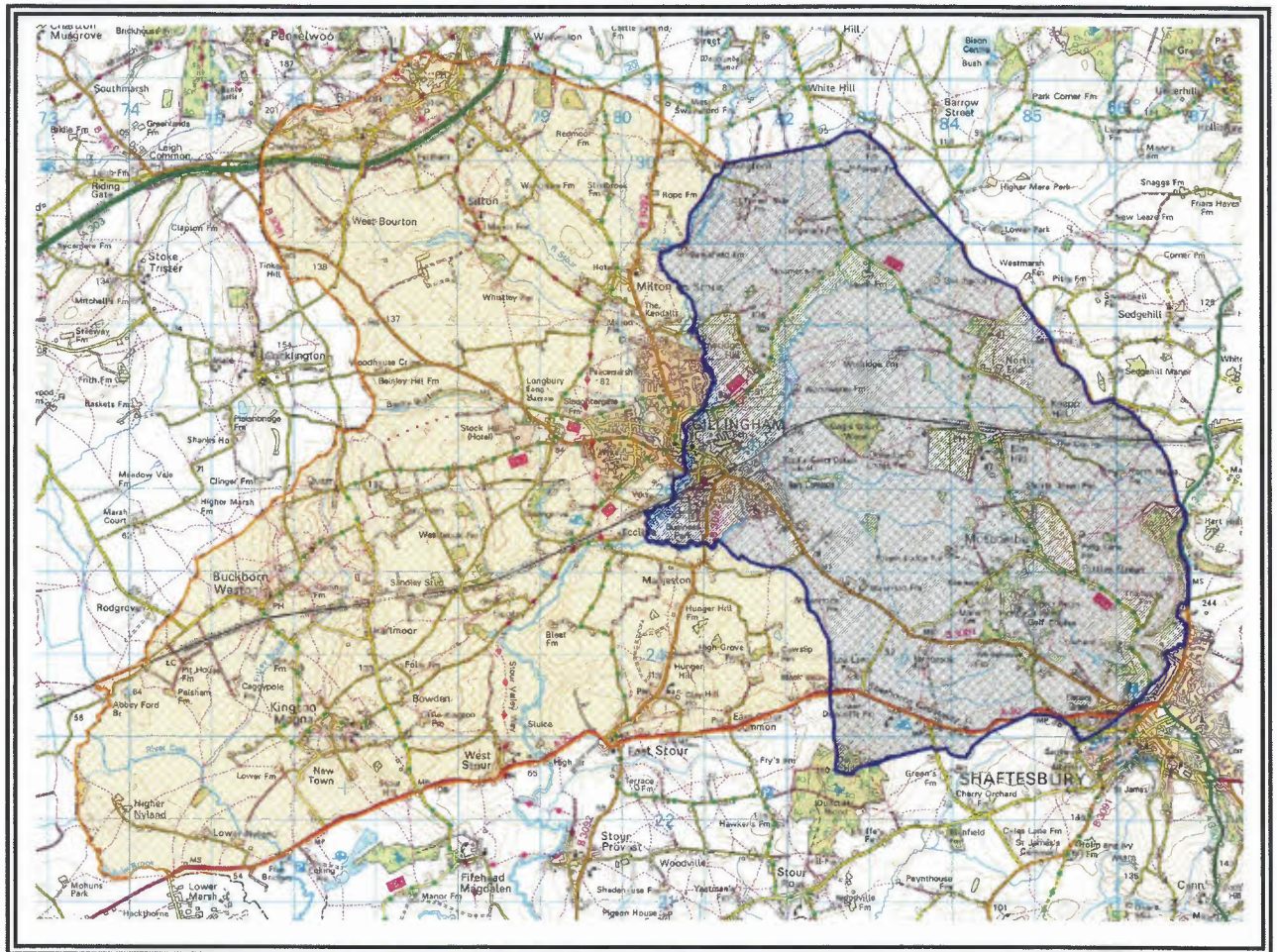


Figure.1. Boundary area for the Northern Blackmore Vale (orange) and Gillingham Royal Forest (blue)

The blue boundary is the core project area and was produced from a map of Gillingham Forest 1624, it is proposed in the NDDWLP that this boundary area runs close to the eastern built-up limits of the town and that this should form the eventual limits of the town in its expansion in this area. The red boundary area is the extended project area which can help to deliver wider landscape objectives.

POLICY BACKGROUND FOR GILLINGHAM ROYAL FOREST

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It provides a framework within which local people and their accountable councils can produce their own distinctive local and neighbourhood plans, which reflect the needs and priorities of their communities. The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.

There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.

The Gillingham Royal Forest will play an important role in sustainable development and will contribute to the National Policy Framework by;

- **Economically** – building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that that GRF land is available to support Gillingham's growth and innovation.

- **Socially** – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy community, by creating a high-quality environment, that will reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being.

- **Environmentally** – contributing to protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment; part of the project will include helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources sensibly, improving water quality, and mitigate and adapting the landscape to climate change.

North Dorset District Wide Local Plan

Under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 The North Dorset District Wide Local Plan (NDDWLP) was first adopted in 2003. This local plan provided detailed framework for the control of development and other use of land, it also provided clear strategies which pay greater regard to the need to conserve the environment and to achieve sustainable development.

Section 1.148 of NDDWLP states that as part of its tree management strategy, the District Council will be co-ordinating the long term re-establishment of the former Royal Forest of Gillingham.

Within the NDDWLP local area policy for Gillingham it identifies the need to

- enhance the Gillingham Royal Forest landscape and aid the diversification of agriculture through the provision of additional woodland planting
- provide and co-ordinate additional countryside recreational facilities within Gillingham Royal Forest

Gillingham Growth Study report 2009 identifies that Gillingham has the potential to grow from a population of 11,000 to 20,000-30,000 in the next 30- 40 years and although it recognise that trees,

woodlands, water and wildlife already play an important part in Gillingham's quality of life, environment and economy, it also realises that without action, Gillingham's historical landscape will decline and Gillingham will see a decrease in the contribution that the "Royal Forest" has to offer, which will be crucial for the growth of Gillingham.

GILLINGHAM ROYAL FOREST STRATEGY:

The aim is to work with local communities, community groups and land managers to develop a strategy for a Gillingham Royal Forest Project

A strategy for Gillingham Royal Forest which could incorporate;

- Vision statement
- Local policies
- Aim of the strategy
- History of Gillingham Royal Forest
- Key strategic links
- Key Themes
- Projects Phases
- Stakeholders
- Delivery
- Timescale
- Cost and funding

DRIVERS FOR THE PROJECT

Access to the countryside - Health, Wellbeing and Engagement

The World Health Organisation estimates that depression and depression-related illness will become the greatest source of ill-health by 2020. This is partly because some behaviours, such as smoking, over-eating and high alcohol consumption are likely to be coping mechanisms for mental ill-health and stress however, there is substantial evidence that links the natural environment with good physical health and psychological well-being.

As the population of Gillingham grows access to the countryside will become an important asset for improving public health in Gillingham.

The improvements to the well-being of Gillingham could be achieved through this project by;

- Increasing public awareness about the history of the Gillingham Royal Forest.
- Providing opportunities for "Royal Forest" base attractions such as arts and cultural venues/events, sports and environmental engagement.
- Investigating location for a circular bridle route from Gillingham to Motcombe
- Reinstating historical walks which link to the "Royal Forest" (Cleare Walke, Lawne Walke, Woodes End Walke)

- Setting up environmental and cultural champions (volunteer groups) such as River Champions, Veteran Tree Surveyors etc

Natural Flood Management

The Dorset Stour Catchment Flood Management Plan (CFMP) assess inland flood risk across the Dorset Stour and has produce flood risk management policies. The Policy Option 3 and 6 are within the project boundary.

Policy option 3 Gillingham; states that the Environment Agency could manage the flood risk through more sustainable measures such as Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS).

Policy Option 6 Upper Stour and Blackmore Vale Area; state that the Environment Agency along with others will take action to store water or manage run-off in locations that provide overall flood risk reduction or environmental benefit. As this is a large rural area there are opportunities to change how the land is used and possible flood attenuation through improving/maintain connectivity between channel and floodplain in line with environmental objectives. This will help reduce peak flows and potentially benefit other subareas downstream: Tarrant Winterbourne and Allen, Blandford forum, Hambledon Hills and Gillingham.

Within the Gillingham Royal Forest project, it could;

- Investigate locations for natural flood management and wetland creation such as channel and scrape creation, ditch re-profiling, riparian tree planting, improving connectivity with the floodplain
- Set up working groups to explore and encourage agri-environment and woodland schemes to help fund enhancement of the woodland resource and its management to increase water retention in the sub-catchment.
- Encourage and influence the uptake of agri-environment schemes to improve land management activities and efficiency of soil and nutrient management and use best practice with respect to rainfall run-off.
- Highlight opportunities for farm business diversification and funding opportunities
- Support the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems in urban areas

Biodiversity - Restoring ecosystems at landscape scale

Nature Conservation in the UK is driven by a wide range of policies, legislation and agreements. In 1994, the UK became the first country to produce a national biodiversity action plan (BAP), as part of its commitment to the Convention on Biological Diversity, since then England has produced its own biodiversity conservation strategy - Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services. This document it highlights the need for:

- A more integrated large-scale approach to conservation on land

Biodiversity 2020 identifies the need for large number of high quality sites which contain the range and area of habitats that species require. It also would like to see ecological connections that allow species, or their genes, to move between these sites. For many species, habitat does not have to be a continuous, physical connection for them to disperse. An ecological network is this network of high quality sites,

protected by buffer zones, and connected by wildlife corridors and smaller, but still wildlife-rich, “stepping-stone” sites. The ecological networks for different species work at varying scales: some species need a large area, others a much smaller area. An ecological network for England therefore consists of a range of networks.

Within the Gillingham Royal Forest the key wildlife species consist of:

Great Crested Newts

The great crested newt is a European protected species, and thus, developers need to apply for a licence from Natural England to disturb them. While Natural England licensing work is critical to protecting important colonies of some of our most endangered species, this work has been criticised in some quarters for being rigid, prescriptive, disproportionate, and unable to offer a pragmatic solution.

GRF project could provide an alternative solution by ensuring efforts and mitigation are focused on newt populations and habitat within GRF.

North Dorset District Council could use new technology to test ponds for the DNA of great crested newts, which indicates to developers and planners whether newts are present and saves considerable time over traditional surveying techniques.

Development is then guided away from these areas towards more suitable sites, paving the way for much quicker and cheaper development in areas with fewer newts. After that, a plan is put in place to secure the extent of the species and enhance its main conservation requirements in GRF. This means agreeing a single licensing framework with the Local Planning Authority. This could avoid the need for an individual licence to be obtained for each development and allows instant approvals for most developments, careful design in sensitive locations, and conservation funding delivered on the back of planning provisions.

This will give planning certainty to the developer, avoids costly time delays and consultancy fees, and most importantly all the money generated goes into directly providing the most valuable conservation effort that the species needs in the GRF.

Water voles

Although the water vole is considered one of Britain’s most endangered mammals and is rapidly declining in many areas, Dorset contains core area populations of water voles one of these areas is Gillingham.

Water voles require clean water and lush growth of native species of emergent vegetation but not too much shade from shrubs or trees. Most waterside banks need managing to prevent the prolific growth of trees and shrubs that will eventually turn the bank into scrubland. This is commonly achieved either by grazing livestock or by mowing. However, over grazing and trampling (termed poaching) of stream banks by livestock is very detrimental. Excessive grazing reduces the amount of food available for water voles and poaching destroys their burrows and compacts the soil making it difficult for burrowing. Restricting access of livestock to streams and fencing the banks a few meters from the stream is ideal.

Water Vole surveys are carried out every five years to take a 'snapshot' of the status of this mammal in the county.

The GRF project could target water vole recovery by;

- Training volunteers to undertake water vole surveys
- Undertake water vole surveys
- Provide advice how to restore, create and manage water vole habitat such as pond creation, improving water quality and enhancing bank and vegetation structure.

Willow Tits

Willow tits have undergone huge population declines and range contraction in the past 40 years. This contraction in range has been most notable in the south, leaving populations in the south west of England isolated and vulnerable to habitat loss.

The reasons for these declines remain unclear but may be due to changes in habitat structure, drying out of woodland soils, or high adult mortality.

Between 2005 and 2010 the RSPB identified key habitat features associated with woodlands that were occupied by willow tits compared with those that they have been lost from. Woods that have retained breeding Willow tits have damp soils, lower tree canopy cover and higher cover in the mid shrub layer and have more species indicative of scrub and wet woodland e.g. hawthorn, elder, willow and alder.

Considering the continuing steep declines in willow tit populations and their known habitat preferences, the GRF project could test whether managing habitat to provide ideal structure and tree species can maintain or enhance Willow tit populations

Therefore, the GRF project would

- Identifying habitat associated with presence/absence of willow tits by undertaking Willow Tit surveys
- Create favourable habitat features.
- Inform best management practice for willow tits.
- Test recovery of the willow tits, by annual willow tit surveys.

Bats

British bats are European Protective Species and are small, insectivorous and dependent on available roost sites (e.g. trees, bridges, caves, buildings etc.) and feeding habitats (e.g. woodland, sunny glades and rides, water features, hedges), which are under constant pressure by increased development and population expansion.

In Dorset, bat populations have declined considerably over the last century the decrease in bat numbers mirrors the ever-changing countryside. Natural habitats such as hedgerows, woodlands and ponds have been declining and fragmenting.

Therefore, it is important that GRF project

- Creates new suitable habitats (hedgerows, woodlands, grasslands and ponds)
- Manages and enhance existing habitats.
- Improve connectivity

Otters

Otters are a European Protected Species their main source of food is fish, particularly eels, but they will also eat frogs and crayfish. Otters are now present on virtually every river catchment in Dorset. However, the largest cause of otter mortality today is road deaths.

The GRF project could help Dorset otters by

- Undertaking otter surveys
- Identify Otter fatality 'hot spots' by surveying road bridges
- Work with a range of relevant organisations to implement solutions at these bridges so that otters can pass safely under them.
- Improve habitat connectivity

Gillingham Royal Forest project has the potential to meet other biodiversity objectives by:

- Bringing some of the woodlands back into sustainable management
- Expanding woodland planting to improve habitat connectivity through corridors and 'stepping stones'
- Work with farmers to help improve their local business by collaboratively working together e.g. setting up farmer groups, training events, co-ops
- Creating habitat projects such as, save an elm, plant a hedgerow tree, the next generation of veteran trees, grassland restoration\recreation, Blackmore Vale pond project etc.
- Survey veteran trees in the area and provide advice regarding management
- Create stepping stones for wildlife (ponds, hedgerow trees, grasslands) between areas which are already rich in wildlife
- Making the most of water retention measures to boost biodiversity

Economy – sustainable economic growth

In Defra research paper, Economic growth and the environment (2010) states that the natural environment plays an important role in supporting economic activity, such as

- Providing resources and raw materials such as water, timber and minerals that are required as inputs for the production of goods and services
- Providing ecosystem services including carbon sequestration, water purification, managing flood risks, and nutrient cycling.
- Providing a place for our wellbeing, recreational opportunities and improving our health.

The Gillingham Royal Forest project will aid the sustainable economic growth of Gillingham by;

- Creating a community green space where appropriate and a new, inland visitor attraction
- Promoting access and improvements to countryside walks
- Providing opportunities for “Royal Forest” base attractions such as arts and cultural venues/events, sports, environmental engagement and volunteering opportunities.
- Creating tree planting schemes or other habitat creations with the community
- Co-ordinate advice to landowners to support ecosystem services.
- Engaging local community and school with talks, walks and environmental days centred around the Gillingham Royal forest covering art, history, geography and biology
- Support agriculture by looking for business opportunities e.g. pastures for life, free range milk, direct from Dorset etc.
- Investigating the potential of water and timber production of goods and services – fishing group, access to rivers, woodland management options (biofuels, recreational, forest schools, wood co-ops etc....)
- Direct and indirect creation of jobs through land and access management.

Water quality

In 2013 the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) launched a policy framework to facilitate the creation of catchment partnerships within England (the Catchment Based Approach (CaBA)), which saw the formation of the Stour Catchment Initiative Partnership who are working towards improving water quality and helping partners to protect and restore the water environment.

Within Gillingham Royal Forest project boundary lies the River Lodden and Shreen Water which are tributaries of the River Stour, adjacent to these rivers the land is mostly managed for dairy and beef farming. Water pollution from these sources is compounded as there is little or no protection of the river banks in the way of trees or hedges. Pollution from agriculture and point source pollution from sewage treatment works have been identified as the main factors for poor water quality in this area in the Catchment Information Pack for the Stour. Due to likely future development in Gillingham, population increase will put further pressure on water companies to increase treatment capacity, in order to facilitate greater volumes and nutrient loading of sewage effluent. Although water companies have done a lot of work to remove nutrients from sewage treatment works discharges, point source pollution is still a risk in this catchment.

Working with farms to minimise the risk of pollution would be achieved through this project by;

- Providing farm visit for advice and guidance, including diversification were appropriate.
- Set up farmer groups who can work on a landscape scale to improve water quality
- Identify areas for environmental improvement of the water quality e.g. mob grazing, riparian planting etc.
- Helping landowners to seek appropriate advice from relevant organisations such as, Catchment Sensitive Farming, Natural England, Forestry Commission, Environment Agency etc.

Climate change - mitigation and adaptation, including carbon abatement

In the UK, there are numerous policies referring to climate change mitigation and adaptation which have been taken from the White Paper, the UK Low Carbon Transition Plan (2009), in this paper the Government identified woodland creation and soil protection as a cost-effective way of fighting climate change and recognised the urgency for tree planting schemes and farmer engagement.

This can be achieved through this project by;

- Providing advice, encouragement and support to farmers to uptake environmental grants such as Countryside Stewardship, woodland creation and water quality grants.
- Recreate natural corridors (grasslands, hedgerows, woodlands) and stepping stones (ponds, hedgerow and pasture trees) in the landscape through tree planting, pond and grassland schemes.
- Reconnect these habitats by linking them to the greenspaces within Gillingham and surrounding villages.

Historical and cultural

Gillingham is well-known for its medieval heritage, within the project area there are two Scheduled Monuments Kings Court Palace and the Gillingham Park boundary bank. Both of these ASM are marked as vulnerable. These Schedule Monuments have the potential to transfer knowledge of our predecessor's landscape, provide a cultural identity and offer opportunities for research, education, leisure and tourism, deliver social benefits and contribute to economic growth.

The Gillingham Royal Forest project would promote its historical importance by;

- Engaging the local community by providing historical guided walks
- Carefully design the landscape to include woodland, wood pasture, glades and open grassland from historical records which relate to the medieval park
- Provide outstanding learning opportunities for all, whether they're visiting Gillingham Royal Forest, browsing online or reading Gillingham Museum publications
- Create and publicise a greater range of volunteering opportunities
- Provide opportunities for "Royal Forest" base attractions in Gillingham such as arts and cultural venues/events, sports and environmental engagement

ASSOCIATED MAPS AND AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY

Appendix one – 1947 aerial photography (currently being mapped)

Appendix two – Trees lost from the landscape (currently being mapped)

Appendix three – Old water channels (currently being mapped)

Appendix four – Current woodlands coverage (currently being mapped)

Appendix five – Old orchards and potential woodlands sites (currently being mapped)

Appendix Six – Pond and GCN Locations (currently being mapped)

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROJECTS

Heritage Lottery Fund, LEADER, Section 106, Big Lottery

Match funding;

North Dorset District Council, Environment Agency, Dorset Wildlife Trust, Stour Catchment Initiative, Wessex Water

STAKEHOLDERS

North Dorset District Council, Stour Catchment Initiative, Natural England, Environment Agency, Historic England, Forestry Commission, Dorset County Council, Dorset Wildlife Trust, Woodland Trust, Three Rivers Partnership, Cranbourne Chase and West Wiltshire AONB, FWAGSW, English Heritage, Wessex Water, Farmers, Land managers and the local communities.