

# Blofield Parish Council

## Minutes

Of extra Meeting of Blofield Parish Council held on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2023, from 8.10pm to 10.40pm in Blofield Courthouse

**Present:** Cllrs. Stuart Smith, Sarah Dhesi, Yvonne Burton, William Crane, Paul Culley-Barber, Joseph Scholes, Stella Shackles, and Deputy Clerk Eleanor Bannister.

The meeting was also attended by thirty-seven members of the public.

1. **Welcome and introduction by Chair** Cllr. Stuart Smith welcomed everyone and explained why the meeting was called at short notice. Historically, the Parish Council had strongly recommended that there should be no secondary footpath through Wyngates, and Norfolk County Council Children's Services (NCCCS) had confirmed in writing that they had no intention of including a footpath, which was why it was not in the planning application (FUL/2022/0055). It was only on 24<sup>th</sup> March that BPC was informed of the new proposal.  
  
The Chair also noted that Blofield Parish Council (BPC) had no authority or jurisdiction in the planning process, and was purely a consultee, as were all those present. BPC needed to consider all those impacted by the proposed secondary pedestrian access to the new school and ensure BPC represented the residents of Wyngates, and the wider parish of Blofield as best it could.
2. **To consider apologies for absence.** There were no apologies for absence. Cllr Mary Moxon attended the meeting via zoom but did not vote.
3. **Declarations of Interest and requests for dispensation on items on the Agenda**  
Declarations of pecuniary interest were received from:
  - a. Cllr. Paul Culley-Barber in relation to items 5, 6 and 7.
  - b. Cllr. William Crane in relation to items 5 and 6.
4. **Open Forum - For parishioners to raise questions on and/or make statements about matters on the agenda**
  - a. There were many questions and issues raised by residents who would be impacted by the proposed secondary access. The Chair and councillors responded where they had answers and it was stressed throughout the meeting that NCCCS had requested comments to their secondary footpath consultation by 14<sup>th</sup> April, and it was important that each individual consultee submitted their response by this deadline, by emailing [schoolreview@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:schoolreview@norfolk.gov.uk). After this date, if NCCCS had to submit revised plans for the new school showing a secondary footpath, all consultees (residents and the Parish Council) needed to **re-submit** their comments against the revised planning application (on the Norfolk County Council Planning website: [www.norfolk.gov.uk/rubbish-recycling-and-planning/planning-applications](http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/rubbish-recycling-and-planning/planning-applications)).
  - b. In response to a question regarding timings, the Chair confirmed information provided by NCCCS:
    - Week commencing 17<sup>th</sup> April, NCCCS, NCC Highways and NCC Planning were meeting to discuss the responses to the consultation. The options they would consider were:
    - Option A: NCC Highways removes objection, there was no change to NCCCS submission, and no secondary path would be built. Planning application would be determined via NCC Planning (Regulatory) Committee on 26th May 2023.
    - Option B1: NCC Highways maintains objection but NCC Planning Officer overrules Highways objection. Therefore no change to NCCCS submission, and process as per option A.

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- Option B2: NCC Highways maintains objection, NCC Planning officer concurs and enforces requirement for a secondary path. A revised design submission is then made, a new period of consultation opens - so objections can be submitted or re-submitted. Should this happen, NCCCS could not confirm timings but were still aiming for a planning decision via the planning committee on 26th May.

The Chair noted the dilemma that if the decision was delayed until the following NCC Planning (Regulatory) Committee, which is likely to be two months later (end July), this could impact the planned opening date of the school, and schools could not easily open mid-academic year.

c. Questions asked included:

- What were the plans for the footpath when it arrived at the school fence? BPC noted there were no plans for the secondary footpath yet lodged against the planning application so BPC did not know what NCCCS were planning.
- Could the old school area be turned into a car park / drop-off area given the predicted increase in traffic at school drop-off and pick-up times? BPC noted the Secretary of State had agreed in principle that some of the old school land could be transferred to Parish Council, but technically the BPC did not yet own the land. Assuming the land was transferred to the Parish Council following completion of the new school *and* new school playground, the Parish Council envisaged providing an element of parking to help service the school, doctors' surgery and relieve congestion on the street. However, this would not address NCC Highways' objection which was based on the need for additional pedestrian access.
- Were Anglian Water works on Plantation Road related to the new school? BPC had been informed that they related to Surgery's plans.
- The school said it would cater for Blofield, Brundall and surrounding areas; this would cause more traffic/parking issues? BPC was informed that when the school opened it would initially be at 55% capacity, with the majority from Blofield. Cllr. Culley-Barber explained that it normally takes seven years for a school to reach full capacity; reception class will start with 60 places, and the years above with 30. Additionally, NCCCS had committed to reviewing parking 12 months after the opening of the new school.
- Was this a done deal; until very recently, NCCCS had said there would be no secondary footpath via Wyngates but now all changed? BPC reiterated that everyone should submit responses and even if it appears this will have a limited impact, the planning application does go to the NCC Planning (Regulatory) Committee. This committee is made up of planning officers, *and* councillors who are independent and should consider all arguments presented including those submitted by consultees on the planning portal. Additionally, the County Councillor for Blofield was Cllr. Andrew Proctor. Due to ill health, he has had to reduce his work commitments, but it was possible that his emails were being dealt with by another, so he could be petitioned.
- Could residents discuss the application with a councillor who sits on the planning committee? BPC noted that it should be advertised who sits on the committee, and consultees could try and write to them with their concerns. [The deputy clerk is trying to get a list of committee members.]
- Were there any reassurances that the new playing field would not be rented out to e.g. other clubs? BPC was not aware of any plans but this was a school-related question; to date very few events had been organised by or at the existing school.
- In response to a question on the role of the Parish Council, the Chair confirmed that BPC had been in discussion with NCCCS for at least five years. Some requests had been successful, others not. For example, the Parish Council had fought hard for a nursery alongside the new school, given the increasing demographics. NCCCS had responded it was not warranted. BPC had also suggested a new, community parking area (north of the doctors/school access road on land owned by Norfolk County Council). The recent response to this was 'no' but more parking would be considered if a nursery was built.

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BPC had also asked whether improvements to Footpath 4 (south and parallel with A47) had been considered. NCCCS had considered it but it was not viable.

- How do we all move forward? Options suggested included liaising with neighbours (Wyangates WhatsApp group), discussing via Blofield Community Facebook page, and checking Norfolk County Council Planning Portal for details on all the comments raised, to help prepare an informed response. If further queries, can also contact the Parish Council; [blofieldpc@gmail.com](mailto:blofieldpc@gmail.com)

d. Additional concerns and points raised related to:

- Safety of children given ponds and flooding in area 3 which the footpath would cross. BPC has already raised these and other safety concerns.
- Pick-up and drop-off times were already complicated, and at some schools, even resulted in quarrels between parents in vehicles as a result of the congestion.
- The increase in traffic/poor parking at above times would obstruct emergency vehicles.
- The NCCCS consultation letter had in several cases been blank when delivered.
- It was suggested that when responding to NCCCS consultation, the letter that had been delivered anonymously beginning 'Dear Neighbour...' raised practical, valid arguments against the footpath, and the points raised should be echoed by other respondents. BPC confirmed factually based arguments presented a stronger argument.
- The Parish Council confirmed that they had invited NCCCS, NCC Highways and NCC Planning officers to attend the meeting. Apologies had been received from NCCCS.
- It was understood that overhead cables would be diverted underground.
- The issue of more litter and the increase in CO2 from parked cars with engines running.

e. The Chair clarified the background to Wyngates land which was owned by Norfolk Estates / Norfolk County Council and was going to be transferred to the Parish Council for community use. About six/seven years ago Wyngates was deemed the only land suitable for building the new school. If the Parish Council had refused permission for the school, Norfolk County Council (NCC) could have organised a 'compulsory purchase' of the land. The alternative was for the Parish Council to enter into discussions with NCC with the aim of maximising the benefits for the whole community, and this is what has occurred.

## **5. To review information received from Norfolk County Council Children's Services (NCCCS) at a recent meeting with the Parish Council**

Cllr. PCB noted that the school had not been informed that it would be responsible for the maintenance of the unadopted access road, and this needed to be discussed. It was likely that the Surgery was also unaware of this. Other concerns included who would be responsible for the footpath lighting and subsequent costs, and the lack of a continuous footpath from Farman Way, given the anticipated increase in vehicular access across Farman Way, which was not designed for it. The option of enhancing existing pedestrian access, adding pedestrian crossings at the King's Head / Yarmouth Road junction, Plantation Road and where Doctor's Road meets The Street should be addressed first. The catchment area will include Brundall within 2-3 years, so there would be an increase in traffic.

## **6. To discuss and decide response to a request from NCCCS to install a footpath across the bottom section of Wyngates Area 3 to facilitate secondary footpath access provision to the new school**

a. The issues raised during the open forum were discussed and points below were noted:

- There are already cars parked on the Wyngates pavements proving an obstacle for buggies. This would also be a hazard for children walking to school.
- Farman's Way is a loop, and delivery vans mount the pavements to pass other cars/vans.
- Could request double-yellow lines at Wyngates but how would this be enforced.

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*The Parish Council unanimously resolved to extend the meeting beyond 10.00pm in order to complete the agenda and suspended standing order item 3w.*

- Would NCCCS be requesting 'permissive rights' from BPC for the footpath across Wyngates area 3, though this was not yet owned by the Parish Council?
  - Should the Parish Council take on responsibility for area 3 when flooding / pond issues were not yet resolved and a potential 3m wide footpath could run through the middle?
- b. All agreed they were fully supportive of the school but had major concerns related to the safety of children and the school community given the reality of the footpath route (through Farman Way and Wyngates area 3) at the moment. There was no safe continuous pedestrian footpath, with children, parents and cars sharing the same space through Farman Way. (Blofield Neighbourhood Plan supports a new school, which the Parish Council endorsed and continues to endorse.)
- c. All agreed the Parish Council should ask NCCCS and NCC Highways to consider the near future (3-4 years) given the predicted increase in children, and to work together *now* to address issues, including safer drop-off points, more safe pedestrian crossings (as per Minute item 5.), and the option of new car parking on NCC owned land, north of school/surgery access road, to alleviate existing and future congestion.

*Cllrs. Paul Culley-Barber and William Crane left the meeting for the duration of the final discussion and the vote, outlined in item 6.d below.*

- d. The Parish Council voted on whether, while fully supportive of the new school, it was for or against the proposed secondary pedestrian access via Farman Way and Wyngates area 3, taking into consideration all the safety reasons discussed. The vote was unanimously against the proposed secondary access footpath given the serious safety concerns. [Deputy Clerk to confirm this to NCCCS.](#)

**7. To receive an update from NCCCS regarding the drainage works taking place on Plantation Road for the next 11 weeks.**

It was noted that this was understood to be under the Surgery's expansion plans rather than related to the new school.

**8. Other reports and items for the next agenda for information only –**

Revised planning application 20220211 had been considered by the Planning Working Group and the Deputy Clerk would submit the Working Group's comments to BDC given deadline of 14/4, for ratification at the Parish Council meeting on 24/4.

**9. The date of the next Parish Council Meeting on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> April 2023 at 7:30pm at Blofield Courthouse was confirmed.**

There being no further business, the Parish Council meeting closed at 10.40pm.

Signed.....

Dated.....