

## NEROCHE PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Meeting of an extraordinary meeting of Neroche Parish Council held via Zoom on Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2021 at 7.30pm.**

**Members Present:** Cllrs. Bell, Aplin, Beck, Bray, Macey, Palmer, J Parsons, Pope, C Parsons and Street

**In Attendance:** J Wanstall (Clerk), Cllr Ross Henley and over 30 parishioners

### **2021/1 Apologies**

Apologies were received by Cllr John Thorne

### **2021/2 Declarations of interest and dispensations**

None reported

### **2021/3 A358 Link Roads**

An Extraordinary Meeting of the Parish Council was called to discuss the A358 proposal and the impact on our parishes. Highways England are proposing the closure of Bickenhall Lane and using, as the main access point to the A358, the road that leads to Capland, referred to as Staple Fitzpaine Road.

The background of the scheme was discussed and impacts on other parishes, outside of Neroche, and there were many concerns raised about the environmental impact of the whole dualling scheme of the A358.

It was agreed by all present that *neither* the Staple Fitzpaine Road nor Bickenhall Lane are suitable to be the main road linking Bickenhall to the A358. Both these options are single lane roads, with insufficient passing points. Neither road is suitable or wide enough to withstand the increased traffic of farm vehicles and other business delivery vans, lorries, and cars.

By closing one of these routes, the traffic on the remaining road will increase enormously as most of the traffic uses the Bickenhall Lane route currently. This will have a dramatic impact on all those who live on, or near, the lane or use the lane for their leisure purposes.

Whilst acknowledging that neither road is fit for this new purpose, we understood the need to have an access point to the A358 for our villages.

Therefore, a vote was carried out, at the end of the meeting, from all 10 councillors present, on their preferred road. The Staple Fitzpaine Road received 5 votes, Bickenhall Lane received 3 votes and 2 votes were cast for neither road. The outcome was then agreed that the Staple Fitzpaine Road is our preferred choice, in line with the proposal from Highways England.

Although the new A358 will create a barrier between communities, thereby segregating villages, this option provides locals with some social mobility and access to Hatch Beauchamp and was seen as the lesser of two evils.

All present agreed for the Staple Fitzpaine Road to be the main access point, there are improvements required to the road which are vital for both road safety and quality of life for those who live in the immediate area. These improvements are as follows:

- Upgrading the route to include more passing points to be created in the lane. This single-track road does not currently have enough passing points, meaning all vehicles, large and small, are frequently required to reverse a significant distance to enable the flow of traffic. This is clearly a safety issue which needs to be addressed.
- The Staple Fitzpaine Road will need re-surfacing as much of the carriageway has been worn away. There are sections of the route that abut a deep stream bed, which continually has issues with collapsing into the stream, even with the current limited traffic flows and will be greatly exacerbated by the increased traffic levels.
- The bridge on the Staple Fitzpaine Road is not robust enough to accommodate an increase in traffic flow, and therefore, needs to be improved. The banks fall away to the side of the bridge, with over a 3-metre drop, with very weak barriers currently in place. There will be a greater risk of vehicles going off the road, into the river, due to increased traffic and congestion.
- The Staple Fitzpaine Road, like many roads in Bickenhall, often floods in the winter months, making it impassable. We wish to know how the road drainage will be improved.
- To aid the noise reduction, on the A358 and the general environmental impact to the community, we would like the planting of trees and hedges along the road, with high banks where the topography allows, to act as noise barriers.
- To mitigate the additional noise, we insist on low noise road surface for the A358.
- Currently there is no lighting on either the Staple Fitzpaine Road or our section of the A358, we would like this to remain the same, to avoid any further light pollution.

The Parish Clerk is to write up these agreed outcomes and submit it to Highways England by the deadline of 30<sup>th</sup> April 2021.

Meeting closed at 9.05pm