

CRESSING PARISH ASSEMBLY

Notes of and Reports to the meeting held on Wednesday 11th May 2022 at 7.00pm at St Barnabas, Claud Ince Avenue, Cressing

Attending: Parish Councillors: John Lawton, Colin Haines, Alison Lapper and Harvey Porrett; County Councillor Paul Thorogood, District Councillor James Abbott and 11 members of the community.

Chairman of the Meeting: Councillor John Lawton, who welcomed those present.

APA 22/01 Discussion of traffic issues in the Parish of Cressing

Cllr Paul Thorogood began by giving an update on the A120 where National highways are re-considering the previously proposed routes, although Essex Highways preferred option remains Route D. An announcement is expected in July. Work has started at Rivenhall incinerator, and the Information Centre will be formally opened by members of the Belgian Royal Family on 12th May, First stage consultation has been launched by National Grid into project “East Anglia Green Energy Enablement, proposals to reinforce the high-voltage electricity transmission between Norwich, Bramford and Tilbury. Whilst Cressing and the immediate surround area is not affected by the installation of additional pylons, the areas affected will include areas to the east of Silver End and White Notley. Detail can be found on the National Grid website: nationalgrid.com/east-anglia-green together with an interactive map to show more detail of the preferred corridor.

Bulford Mill Lane

Cllr Thorogood has met with a representative of the residents and the Clerk to discuss possible resolutions to the traffic issues along Bulford Mill Lane. The Clerk has submitted an application to the Local Highways Panel with the support of County Cllr Thorogood and District Cllrs Abbott and Wright. The comments of residents have been collated into a report, together with evidence of altercations between drivers, drivers experiencing difficulties (e.g. due to flooding) and damage to property and road surfaces. Cllr Thorogood has provided copies of this and photographs to the LHP Officer and Engineers are investigating the introduction of a further (lower) weight restriction – existing is 5 tonnes; a reduction in speed limit to 20mph – currently 60mph. It is unlikely that suggestions of closure, access only or blockages to prevent through traffic will be considered as this is a main route from Black Notley to Cressing Station.

Speed Surveys

Recent speed survey carried out in The Street and Church Road showed an average of 45mph in a 60mph area, that for The Street showed 33mph average in a 30mph area.

APA 22/02 LHP requests

Those submitted are currently going through the validation process, which can take some time. It is not expected that all will be successful due to the very restricted budget available for road schemes in Essex.

APA 22/03 Parish Council Chairman’s Report

Planning

Throughout the year the Parish Council has discussed every planning application that has been submitted for the Parish of Cressing. To reach their opinion, Councillors have considered policies within the Cressing Neighbourhood Plan, impact of any development (large or small) on neighbouring properties, the limited facilities within Cressing, the potential for at least another two vehicles per new property erected and, mostly importantly, the effect on the roads through and education in Cressing.

Sadly, the Planning Authority, Braintree District Council, did not always agree the objections raised by both the Parish Council and residents who took the time to submit their own comments. When they did agree to reject the application for 250 dwellings between Braintree Road and Long Green, that decision was overturned by the Planning Inspector.

It should be noted that the Parish Council does not object to every application that comes through. Where they complement existing properties and environment, the Parish Council frequently has no comment to make.

Every month the Parish Council looks at any large development proposals that are seeking permission in neighbouring parishes. If the situation arises, the Parish Council will submit its comments in line with those proposed by the relevant council.

Development consultations and public meetings

The Parish Council is often approached by developers or planning agents to discuss potential developments. It is Parish Council policy that any such approach will be agreed only if it is a public meeting, to which all residents are invited. Two such events were held during the year. The potential development of 80 retirement properties off Mill Lane by Scott Properties was met with much comment at the public meeting and to date the application has not been submitted. More recently, a meeting was held to hear proposals for a “self-build” development on Ashes Road (opposite Lanham Green Road). As well as Councillors, four residents attended and there was a lot of discussion. Again, to date, we have heard nothing further on this one.

IWMF (Rivenhall Incinerator)

Each Parish Council meeting is briefed by District Councillors Abbott and Wright on progress with the incinerator. Whilst this is not located in the Parish of Cressing, we will be affected by vehicles travelling to/from the site during both the construction and operational phases. Indaver, the developers, have highlighted the changes to recycling practice which they consider makes the other processes of the Integrated Waste Management Facility unviable. With the closing of the site at Basildon, Essex County Council will be re-considering the proposals and we await the outcome.

Solar Farms

These seem to have become the popular route for potential use of land for maximum income. One off Links Road in Bradwell (that touches the borders of both Cressing and Silver End parishes) was approved very quickly when it went before the Planning Committee, although the final size approved was smaller than originally requested. Shortly after that, a potential site in Rivenhall was refused.

Now, we have two Environmental Screening applications being considered by the Planning Authority for a site off Lanham Green Road and one either side of the railway line in Cressing. We shall keep a watchful eye on this.

Planning Enforcement

Where it has been evidenced that planning conditions have not been adhered to or development/building work that requires planning approval has not been obtained, the Parish Council has been referring such cases to the Enforcement Team at Braintree District Council. BDC investigate and if appropriate take the necessary action. This can be a long process.

Open Day and consultation

An Open Day was held to gain public feedback on proposals for improvements to the changing rooms at the playing field. The rain and cold probably kept many residents inside, but those who did attend were able to view an exhibition provided by the Fire Service, Speedwatch, Royal British Legion, Essex Police, Community 360, and the community team of Braintree District Council.

It is proposed that an Annual Open Day will be held by the Parish Council.

Feedback as the Open Day to the Parish Council's proposals for the changing rooms was very positive and resulted in a planning application being submitted for this and an external family garden to the rear of the Cressing Sports & Social Club.

Unfortunately, the application for the family garden was not successful, but the Planning Authority did approve the plans for the changing rooms. We are now going through the process of preparing building specifications ready for a tendering process prior to applying for S.106 funding.

When this is complete later this year, Cressing Sports & Social Club, with the Parish Council, will be encouraging more use of the playing field for sporting activities.

Local Highways Panel

Like so many villages, Cressing has been subjected to increased traffic, parking issues, speeding and road defects that seem to take an age to resolve.

The Parish Council has discussed these issues and has submitted several applications to the Local Highways Panel for schemes to be implemented to improve things. These cover such things as improvements to Bulford Mill Lane to alleviate flooding, access to properties, damage to properties, etc. An application has been submitted to look at parking on greensward around the village and how this can be prevented; replacement of fallen, missing or damaged road signs; parking in Benton Close and Jeffrey's Road. These applications can take a very long time to be verified by Highways and then they must be considered at LHP meetings to decide whether they are viable and if they can be funded in terms of importance.

Highways and Footpaths

The Parish Clerk and Parish Handyman take note of issues as they go around the village and get alerted to faults that need attention. These are reported to Essex Highways, who then inspect and determine priority, whether it is something that needs immediate attention or can be included into their routine maintenance schedule. Any member of the public can report faults and are encouraged to do so.

Rainbow field

Some years ago a small area of land accessed via Polecat Road and sitting behind The Street, was passed to the Parish Council. There have been numerous ideas for the use of this land (albeit restricted by its location and physical access), none of which were really feasible. However, this year the Parish Handyman has been in

there, cleared the undergrowth and brambles and levelled for a footpath through it. The next stages will be to make it a peaceful haven for wildlife and for residents to sit and contemplate the many bird varieties that are already visiting the site. A seat will be installed as well as bird nesting boxes and suitable natural “homes” for small invertebrates and other species.

Seating

Another project for this financial year is to replace and increase the availability of public seating at the playing field and other locations around the village.

Planting and trees

On your travels around the village you will have noticed that in areas where the Parish Council is permitted to do so, some footpaths are being cleared of overhanging vegetation and two areas (triangles at top and bottom of Polecat Road) have been planted with spring bulbs, which this year flowered beautifully. Further planting will take place for summer and autumn colour at these locations. Planting is also planned elsewhere in the village for next spring.

Tommies

You will have seen the black figures erected on the village sign posts to commemorate those who lost their lives or whose lives were changed forever in conflicts around the world. To support the memorial at All Saints Church, the Parish Council purchased these Tommies and with the help of the Parish Handyman and a resident, these were installed. The Parish Council hopes that residents agree this was a very worthy gesture to those earlier residents of Cressing who gave so that we may continue to enjoy everything that Cressing has to offer.

Councillor resignation

During the year we had one Councillor resign from their post. An advert is out, and subject to any call for an election (an election to fill the vacancy will be held if ten local government electors for the electoral area so request – see advert on noticeboards and website) by 16th May. After that time the Parish Council will be able to advertise for potential Councillors to apply for co-option.

Other councils

On a quarterly basis, the Parish Council meets with those who are in the same BDC electoral ward, i.e. Silver End and Rivenhall. We discuss areas of mutual interest to see where we can support each other and look at any initiatives that can be shared.

APA 22/04 Playing Field/Pavilion

Unfortunately, no report had been received from Cressing Sports & Social Club at the time of the meeting.

APA 22/05 Community Speedwatch Report

The Community Speedwatch Co-ordinator submitted the following report:

It has been a slow start to the year for one reason or another covid, holidays and family engagements and I've tried where I can to get out as much as possible, I was a little perplexed at the negative response I had at suggested dates and times when I was available, it didn't seem that the original volunteers wanted to take part in the CSW.

Out of the original 14 volunteers 9 are now trained but only myself and 4 others are the only ones being active on the watch.

I got a rather stern message out to the volunteers and it seemed to work as I got a good response.

Mill lane has been very active with 6 speeders recorded (sorry don't know exact details as Tony sent the record off).

I can tell you that The Street has recorded 12 speeders the lowest speed was 36 and the max recorded was 41.

We have been using the speed sign on a regular basis and that helps a great deal.

On the speed note the police are only interested in speeds of over 35mph.

Now I have the time I'll get out and encourage as many of our volunteers to join me.

If any resident would like to be involved in Community Speedwatch, please contact the Parish Clerk in the first instance.

APA 22/06 Cressing Action Group

The Cressing Action Group submitted the following report:

Cressing Action Group was set up in 2019 after individuals' opposition to the Bellway and Countryside Developments, which were outside the then development envelope of Tye Green, had no success. Braintree Planning Committee passed both projects for development. The Bellway project is now complete and Countryside's project is well underway. It opposed the large speculative development by Gladman on farmland to the east of the B1018 (ref. 19/01968/OUT) which remains outstanding. Also the proposal for 250 dwellings between the B1018 and Long Green by Begin Braintree Ltd (ref. 18/00549/OUT) which was initially rejected by Braintree Council but allowed on Appeal. That project has since been transferred to Persimmon for development but detailed layout plans have yet to be approved. Members of the Action Group entered objections to this high density proposal which is clearly out of context with the remainder of Cressing Parish and we hope that the developers' proposal will not be approved as submitted.

The Action Group attended the meeting on 16 September 2021 at which the Parish Council had invited Mr Martin Scott of Scott Developments Ltd to give a presentation regarding his planning application for 80 bungalows to be built on land to the west of Mill Lane. The Action Group circulated details to members and there was a good turn out on the night with strong opposition being expressed in particular:

1. The development would destroy what had become an important wildlife asset.
2. Problems that increased traffic would cause in Mill Lane and Bulford Mill Lane neither of which is able to cope satisfactorily with the existing traffic volume.
3. It was evident from Mr Scott's responses that the development's proposed amenities would almost exclusively benefit only the residents in the proposed housing and would create no additional resources which would benefit the village as a whole.

This meeting showed that there remained an active membership of Cressing Action Group. The Group had been inactive and had been unable to hold an AGM for two years due to Covid 19 restrictions. An AGM was arranged on 21 October 2021. Several original committee members expressed a wish to stand down, but others

came forward and the Group now has a small but functioning committee. The main Officer posts are filled but more committee members would be welcome.. After the business of the AGM Cllrs Thorogood and Wright gave an update on current planning issues and answered questions from the members present. Since the AGM no meetings have been held as most of the proposed developments around Cressing and Tye Green have not been decided by the Braintree District Council other than the proposal by Rainier Developments Ltd for 35 new dwellings on farmland to the east of the B1018. This has been rejected by the Planning Department. The Action Group encouraged members to oppose this development and the rejection by BDC Planning was encouraging particularly so because of the support it gave to the Cressing Neighbourhood Plan.

The Group is anxious to know what progress has been made regarding:

1. Completion of the BDC local plan
2. The proposals for Millennium Way slip roads
3. Improvements to the Millennium Way and Galley's Corner roundabouts and access to the A120.
4. Improvements to the long outstanding issue of the Cressing Bends. It is accepted that some alleviation may result if the Begin Braintree/Persimmon development proceeds, but that may be a long time away and the problem meanwhile gets worse as the B1018 traffic volume continues to increase

So many of the developments approved or not yet decided appear to be contingent upon resolutions being reached on these four issues.

Where do we stand regarding the Gladman Proposal for 350 houses west of B1018? The Group has concern regarding the recent Screening Application for a large solar farm (ref. 22/01062/SCR on land off Lanhams Farm Road and to the West of Mill Lane and continuing over to the Railway Line and the A120. This is in addition to the Approved Links Solar Farm (21/01878/FUL) between Silver End and Cressing. The project would impact significantly on the visual amenity enjoyed by Cressing residents and on several footpaths in the open countryside buffer that separates Cressing from Braintree.

Close of meeting

There being no further reports to be heard, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 8.05pm.