Notes of a public meeting held at 7pm on the 26th March 2025 in the Grosvenor Centre.

The meeting was called by the Parish Council predominantly to address the proposed development on Wharf Road in detail and general planning matters.

At least 90 were in attendance including Parish Councillors and Borough Councillor Scott Spencer.

Gail Gregory, Chair of the Parish Council and Chair of the Parish Council's Planning Committee, chaired the meeting.

After welcoming everyone and explaining housekeeping rules, there was a detailed presentation given on the Local Plan and NPPF. Details of how the change of government was already influencing substantial changes in planning and development were shared and also specifics about what we should expect with regard to house building numbers and new government targets. The pressure this places on local authorities and upon Stafford Borough in particular was discussed in depth.

It was reiterated that the local parish council has limited powers, that the Local Planning Authority (Stafford Borough) is the decision-making body and it must adhere to government targets. The parish Council is here to provide guidance and support on how to approach responses to planning applications.

Onto the main matter of the Wharf Road application, it was explained that we had managed to extend the reply date for objections and comments with the planning department at SBC so the new cut off is 9th April. Thorough guidance on how to produce an effective response was given and it was agreed to be shared via website/ social media to assist the parishioners.

Members of the public were invited to ask questions: -

Questions/Statements were raised: and answered.

Q - Are you saying we don't have any choice? About development in places, we don't like? –

- GG - development is going to happen here in the village and all we can do is guide things by showing a preference, exercising choices between sites and considering which we would consider more or less palatable.
- If we say, 'we don't want anything' you are removing the opportunity to have a say or preference. The Local Authority will decide for you.
- If development is going to happen, we have to think about what the village needs, what it has and what it can provide and we have to use our responses to press issues that have up till now not been taken notice of.
- Government have said that infrastructure must come first and it rarely does, this is something we need to push for very strongly.
- The local planning authority MUST accept their mandatory housing targets and we can only help them make a choice by deciding and responding to each application and being tactical about it.

- As a parish council it's our responsibility to advise and guide over available options and that is what we are doing today.

Q – Who decides the distribution? And why do we take the path of least resistance?

- GG - It's about proving we are not anti-development but knowing our area and what it needs/can service. There is no shortage of land for sale around Gnosall, SBC has a list of what has been offered and will look at all of that based on housing targets. SCC are proposing that most, if not all, county council owned farms be made available for development at the end of the current tenancies within the next 5 years. There is also land that was considered at the preferred option stage such as land behind houses off the A518 and Lowfield lane and there are other sites in the village. What we don't want to do is give the impression of being anti- development because if we do, we shall have no say whatsoever and we may like decisions made for us even less than decisions we might have to make.

Q – Does that mean that leased farms will automatically be turned over for development?

- GG - Several have been offered but whether the Borough council chooses to take them up is another matter and it is their decision not ours. Every year SBC asks people to offer land that they wish to offer for development and a list is complied (the SHLAA) The SBC site has a disclaimer that just because land has been offered and therefore included in the SHLAA does not mean that it will be built on.

Q – Can I just say we are forgetting the word sustainable here and even if SBC have to build 800 houses on whatever land its not where they build them but is it sustainable? My question is based on commence, culture, conservation issues and have they now kind of gone out of the window and fully evaporated in the grand scheme of things and if they have it doesn't matter one iota where we choose?

- GG - I think a planner's definition of sustainable and yours are very different. Gnosall has a great many of the features which define "sustainability" in planning terms, such as the A road running through the village, a doctors' surgery, pharmacy, dentists, retail premises and school that can be expanded. I must tell you that with those facilities, it is virtually certain that Gnosall will have additional development, even though I know it isn't what you want to hear.

Scott Spencer was introduced, speaking as a Green party Borough Councillor who sits on the planning committee. He said that the Local Plan will have much more emphasis on sustainability than the current LP. There is now a focus on sustainability; for one instance Bio diversity net gain was sat at 1% and the new local planning team wants to achieve 10% on any development over a certain size. There is a lot more emphasis on solar panels and insulation and making things within house building and development greener all round and far more sustainable including flooding and attenuation etc.

Cllr Sullivan – planning committee- I have one point raised out of the NPPF by Angela Rainer MP, re community needs assessment which is a way of having one voice and an opportunity to have your say, we are in the process of getting a survey out to every household in the parish to be first out with this and feed it back to government; if we are proactive it gives us the best chance of positive progress whilst trying to retain the village we love.

Q – Bob Jobson, we keep hearing about sustainability in the village but nothing seems to have changed, i.e. doctors and another floor not being used, where will the doctors come from and nurses and ancillary staff, the school has 34 in a class and its full, the dentist is full, the roads are

dreadful, we are soaking it all up like a sponge and just keep getting bigger. This place is ballooning and just gets bigger and nothing ever happens.

- GG - This is an ideal opportunity to play the cards we have and prove our infrastructure is not up to scratch. Many of the things you mention are not within our power as a parish council. We don't have the power to improve the roads, nor build schools, the CC does, all we can do is make people aware of our concerns in a detailed and informed way. That I feel is the best thing we can do!
- Scott Spencer – with large developments something called a section 106 which is where the developers have to invest into the community where the development is taking place and speak to all councils, parish councils and authorities and decide how its spent, i.e. schools, playgrounds, recreation centres etc. It's the only way to increase infrastructure.
- GG – we have had such things as tennis courts and the like, as we have not had huge investments come from large developments which would fund a school for instance.

Q – Is there any targets for affordable/ social housing for future developments?

- GG – The overall housing number for the borough is 830 homes. SBC decides on what proportion of social and affordable homes within each development, as yet this is unknown. But there are developments such as the old Co-op department store which is now planned for development for social housing, parking, shops etc.

WHARF ROAD SPECIFIC DISCUSSION AND QUESTIONS: -

Clarification was given on the definitions of Local Green Space v Green Infrastructure and what Stacey's field is.

There had been some confusion about the designation of this land.

The NP lists areas of Local Green Space, which enjoys some but not total protection from development. 5 areas listed and either owned by GPC, or SBC for recreation areas, or CART. They include the Village Green, Richmond Park, Barley Orchard, The Acres and Canal Side.

Then there is Green Infrastructure (TCPA) which as a designation confers no protection from development at all. It is in private hands and therefore GPC could not determine its future so used this designation to show that value was placed upon it. There is a list of key features for Green Infrastructure:

Support mental & physical health	Encourage active travel
Cool urban areas during heatwaves	Attract investment
Reduce water runoff during flash flooding	Carbon storage
Provide sustainable drainage	

It was felt that the flooding and drainage capability were the categories most applicable to this land, given its past and present use. For the avoidance of doubt, the Gnosall PC Planning Committee, has acknowledged that normally we would support development within the SB as per NP Policy 7, but we cannot support this until certain things happen.

We are using this as an opportunity to lay great emphasis on issues which we know have been ignored for years. If we could get those put right, the majority of opposition would be reduced greatly.

We want to share with you those concerns and how you can use them in your response and address the particular specific concerns of residents along the Rank, specifically Mossley Court. General issues first.

Q – is the current neighbourhood plan out of the window?

- GG - No the current NP that's part of the current local plan is still in existence and carries weight until 2031, it can be challenged but is still extant. If there was a conflict between the two the local plan would always take precedence. Policy 7 of NP says we will support development within the settlement boundary.

  Under normal circumstances we would therefore expect to offer no objection to development within the settlement boundary. When we wrote as a planning committee on this matter, we wrote that we would be not be supporting this application at this time due several reasons which were detailed very extensively. That letter will be visible on the SBC Planning Portal soon and we can put it on our website.

Valid planning objections: - generally.

Negative amenity such as noise (not during building) disturbance, overlooking/loss of privacy, loss of light
Over development – densely packed in an area that is quite different. Block of flats in estate.
Visual impact something so incongruous that it stands out like a sore thumb. Houses in and of themselves aren't this.
Environmental – flooding exacerbation for4 example.
Local character. Tricky, in Bournville or Port Sunlight there's a distinct character a vernacular for building. Similarly in some places. Not so much here.
Design – bulking massing (height etc) materials or style – i.e. uber modern in conservation area, ignoring local design policies, out of scale with surroundings – block of flats again.
Conservation areas – development that threatens or takes away from heritage assets
Highways need real hard evidence – a commissioned report or SCC Highways.

Contrary to Local Plan – this is in a SB so that won't apply.

Not the view you've enjoyed for years

Not the lack of infrastructure

Local road conditions

Not the state of the roads without evidence

Not the lack of need for housing in Gnosall

Not the effect on your property's value

Not worries about opening the floodgates, future applications

Not the reason why it is being offered

Q – so the fact that it's a nice bit of green looking land that has always been there historically doesn't come into it?

- GG - No, sadly not which is why we need to focus on the other objections that can count.

Q – Since we are talking about design issues with the build are there not issues with the visual impact as its designed on plans and banking against the houses that are already there?

- GG - We will discuss that very shortly.

Highways and Highways Safety: -

- SCC Highways Report has power to halt or pause an application. **None there as yet. Crucial document.**
- One week's speed monitoring – but we know different. Size, nature, and speed of traffic
- Many more incidents. Seeking FoI info about this but if you have evidence of such incidents, use it
- Exit from the site is up a slope, Stacey's Gardens entrance opposite.
- Fish & chip shop next door, pull in opposite, bus stop opposite, parking. lorries parked on road.
- Could adequate visibility splays be put in?
- Threat to Ash tree?
- Street lighting
- Highways assessment to investigate:
- History of **INCIDENTS** not ACCIDENTS
- History of speeding
- Assessment of volume and nature of traffic
- Investigate whether lighting is adequate
- Consider whether suitable splays could be put in:
- There is an alternative – change plan and use Wharf Road.
- **Keep your tone polite. Offer the local perspective as opposed to desk-based modelling.**

The Parsh Council feel it is fair to say that this application should not be considered any further until a valid and detailed highways survey has been completed. This is, in our view, a key point.

Discussion was had on the applicants' highways research using Crash Map etc, which is an accurate reflection of the reported road accidents but not of the road incidents. An FOI request by Gnosall resident has provided information that there were 12 Incidents in 5 years and not including things like the wall being knocked down on a property several times. This can be used as reference in any objections we put forward.

Q – In terms of accidents, are these only accidents reported to the police? Where they are not involved are not counted?

- GG - Absolutely, it is and it not accurate at all, so we say there that the applicant refers to the record on Crashmap.com which records one road traffic ACCIDENT in 5 years, however Freedom of information request to Staffordshire Police have revealed 12 incidents which the Polcie were made aware and as we know there have been many more incidents that never made it to the police. And in this way, we are building up our case with evidence. The speed of traffic recorded is unrealistic and makes no mention of nature of traffic or volume, i.e. buses, significant sizes of agricultural vehicles, very heavy HGV traffic some of which is more than one half of the very narrow road as well as cars!

Discussion was had on the exit from the planned development as shown above and mentions the old very mature ash tree which maybe at risk.

Scott Spencer SBC – myself and another councillor are trying to get an up-to-date list together on the matter of mature trees within the borough that people will require TPO – tree preservation orders on. We are putting a plan together on this with the public on this and other important habitats and forests etc so this tree could well be a part of that.

GG – this is something to consider due to the number of trees lost to ash die back, its size, its age, its prominence on the road and visual importance this is not something that should be jeopardised at all.

Q - CH – GPC – does noise levels come under highways or safety criteria, as I know there is some legislation that includes noise as a safety feature? HGV traffic has doubled along that road since 2016.

- GG - Absolutely, the question would be would the proposed development exit increase noise levels that are already there?

Q – Is the parish council's response in the public domain?

- GG – It was sent on the 18th March but is not showing on the website, but there has been a discussion that it buried within all the responses, but we will make it available on our website and chase the council to make sure they have it. Something may have gone wrong as Scott Spencer SBC was copied into it and he hadn't had it either but that's being resolved.
- Vanessa Blake – case officer was spoken to by resident for Mossley Court about another response not showing and they assure us it is there.

Q – Pavements, particularly on the field side on the A518 are so very narrow a pedestrian cannot walk on it never mind anything else, they are inadequate on both sides are they not?

- GG - Indeed that needs putting in the response, also the pavements on both sides are extremely treacherous when HGV's are coming by as the road itself is narrow, the same applies to buses, tractors and wing mirrors and you have to tuck in your elbows, and dodge the refuse bins.

Flood risk:-

It was noted that all data re the flooding situation and use of flooding maps and assessments are very much out of date and the mention of it being Zone 1 is totally inaccurate for this area. Scott Spencer said he and others were working to get this information updated.

The complaints re flooding have been brushed off for years so this is what we need to focus on along with highways reports.

Scott Spencer – SBC – we are aware that taking out the highways issue if say that was resolved and the access for example on this development was put onto Wharf Road this could massively increase the run off and exacerbate the flooding issue. So, in its current form I don't think it would or should go through, but it may come back redesigned with other issues like attenuation and detailed flood risk analysis taking place.

GG – bear in mind what you are seeking to give in your letter/response is the local perspective on the ground not a desk-based assessment taken over a week or so. This is the lived experience we need to press.

Q – I am the closest neighbouring house to this development and have had no information about this application from SBC at all. Do we have to request a highways report and why do I feel that some clerk in the council at Stafford hasn't done the job properly and why should we accept that?

- GG – Scott Spencer – the deadline for consultation is this Friday so they have two days!

GG – Q – what happens Scott if they don't get their act together? If they don't respond by then, can the committee ask for a response?

- SS – the problem is I requested a call in but it was missed by one day, but because GPC asked for an extension due to of volume and complexity of the situation, I have then asked the borough if the same extension can be applied to my call in.

Q – what is a call in?

- GG – a call in is where it goes to a planning committee as opposed to it being approved/ rejected by a planning officer. Then the planning committee will discuss the whole thing in lots more detail.
- SS – if and when it goes to committee, we need very hard robust evidence and reasoning and has to be definitive to alter a decision and I think these two main reasons, highways and flooding are definitive but again the plan could be altered and it could be deemed acceptable again.

Q – so are we saying that regardless of what any of us do or say, they are going to build on that field?

- If we were saying that I wouldn't have spent a week doing this presentation to help us object. I have explained about the settlement boundary and how one would expect that applications within that boundary would be approved without opposition. That's the point of a settlement boundary. Bu there are issues which need to be resolved before the Parish Council could support this application.
- SS – The developer also has a certain percentage of profit margin that they need to meet, now to deal with the flood risk as the bottom of the bank which will be significant and may mean they

then lose the profit from the two houses for instance at the bottom and make it less profitable or even a no go.

Scott Spencer Specific advice given re attenuation ponds and how it works within the drainage system.

How the one that is proposed is likely to be inadequate as its based on the EA flood risk zone 1, and everyone knows is incorrect for the area and needs to be significantly bigger for that development which cuts in again to the development space for homes etc. If I am allowed to call it in, I will be all bringing this to the attention of the planning officers stating this as my job is in consultancy and very technical and I have a very good understanding on it.

Adverse environmental impact and flooding.

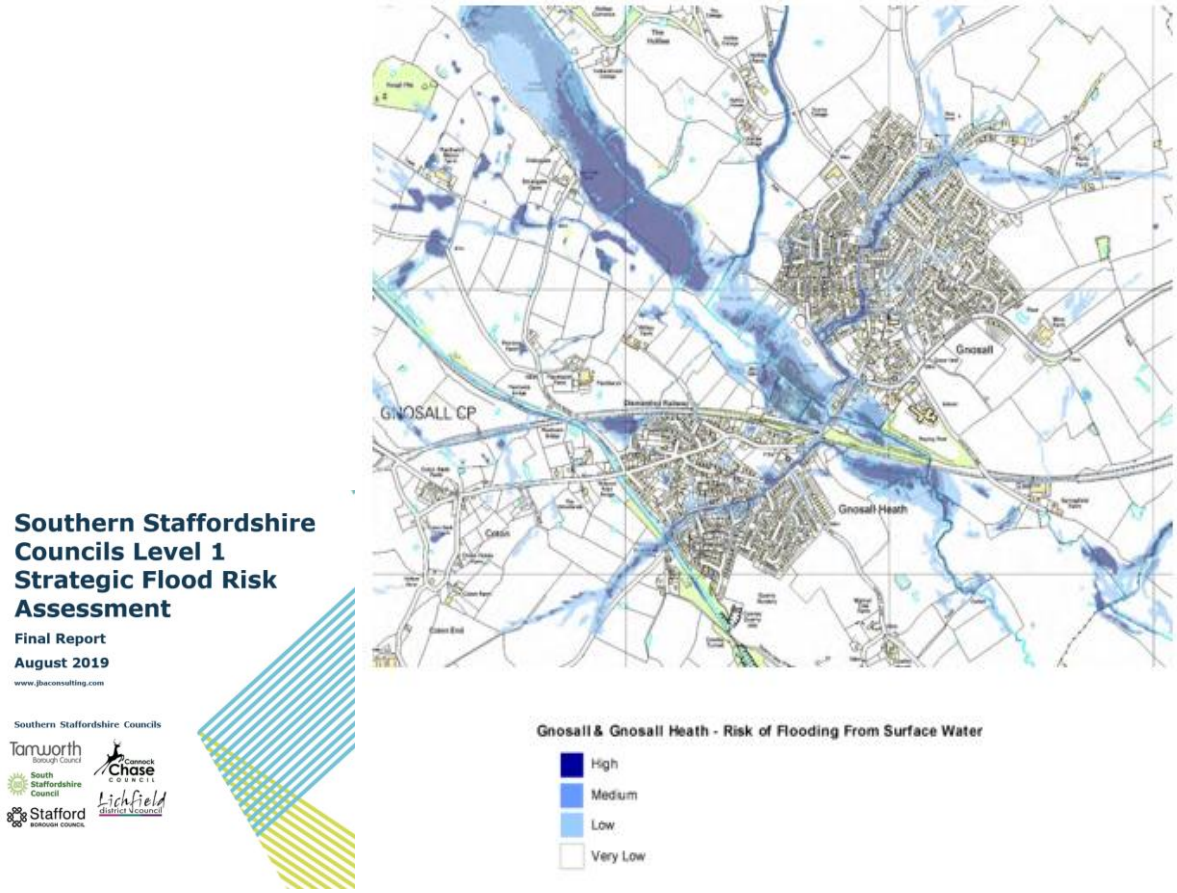
Discussion was had on the following points: -

- You have lots of hard evidence – videos, TV, photographs, eyewitness descriptions of fountaining drains etc.
- Dudley has done lots of work and is now working with Bob Johnson.
- Matter brought to council at meetings, almost every time.
- Agricultural development such as fruit farms has greatly exacerbated the flood issue – a question of attenuation ponds there.
- Attenuation at Tulip & Daffodil has been brought to the attention of Planning Enforcement by the Council – Dec/Jan and is not installed correctly.
- All that water goes into the Doley Brook, as does water here.

Further discussions have been and are ongoing with Dudley who has done years of work on the flooding and problems with drainage and culverts etc along the whole stretch of Wharf Road. He should be commended and we will be working closely with him.

We have a significant amount of evidence from all of this that shows that the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing as Severn Trent Water have recommended connection in this application to the culvert which they have said they know nothing about in different correspondence and we will be using that evidence.

Discussion was had re the Neighbourhood Plan Map 7 Surface Water Flood Risk and what it really shows is high and medium risk in many areas. This will be published to view by public as was hard to locate and details given where to find it if needed.



It is said that various issues of run off from development, attenuation ponds not working correcting, fruit farms and the like ends up in Doley Brook which causes flooding on the acres.

The risk map was compiled in August 2019 and compiled by many surrounding councils and is one of the most important pieces of evidence we have. SBC have ownership of this document and they have contributed to it. The same map has been used in our neighbourhood plan map 7. Now that data has not been updated since 2015 and it showed then all medium risk with significant patches of high risk of surface water flooding. The evidence is there in blue and white and we should use it. If that is what it was then it's much worse now, we have extra fruit farms with adequate attenuation, there is an estate with attenuation ponds that don't work.

Q – The acres have never ever been so wet!

- Absolutely, we have had to take 30% of the allotments out of use due to the flooding and the grassed area can be under water for many parts of the year and sometimes never dry out and they are all in the same direction.

Its not just the 19 houses that will make a different its that this space acts as a green sponge, if it is built to the highest permeability standards must be less permeable than grass and is not going to hold the water as it does now.

Discussions were had about the potential but not yet planned development on Knightley Road, in brief and the plans for over and above attenuation ponds if such a development takes place. We are working closely on a pre-project board with Wrekin Housing Group and will keep everyone up to date as we go.

The slide re appendix D4 flood risk assessment was shown and discussed in detail about the mention of a 30-year event which as we know now happens more often than every 30 years. This document clearly states the situation in 2019 and remember SBC signed off on this report and we have had two incidents in the last few months alone.

Appendix D4 – Summary of flood risk in Stafford Borough

A summary of the flood risk is Stafford Borough is shown in the table below. Due to its size, Stafford town has been split into its wards.

Settlement	Fluvial flood risk	Existing defences	Surface water flood risk
Eccleshall	Eccleshall lies on the right bank of the River Sow, which flows past the north of the town. While the floodplain of the River Sow is wide in places, it is not seen to affect much of Eccleshall, with Flood Zones 2 and 3 not affecting any properties in the town.	None	Surface water runoff follows topography from high ground in the south, to the lower ground of the floodplain in the north. Flow paths in all events exist along the A5013 and the A519. Gaol Butts and Southwell Estate are part of this flow path in the 100-year event, with a number of other roads forming overland flow routes in the 1,000-year event. There are large areas of ponding across all events to the west of Castle Street and where The Burgage and Badgers Croft meet the B5026. Eccleshall was identified in the 2010 SWMP as being at high-risk of surface water flooding.
Gnosall and Gnosall Heath	The Doley Brook flows from north-west to south-east between the two villages, with Gnosall on the left bank and Gnosall Heath on the right bank. The Hollies Brook flows towards the Doley Brook past the western edge of Gnosall, and an unnamed drain flows partially culverted through the centre of Gnosall. This unnamed drain is not included in the Flood Zones but could pose a fluvial flood risk to Gnosall, particularly if the culvert was to become blocked. The Flood Zones affect buildings on Station Road, Daffodil Drive and Forresters Lane in Gnosall.	None	Surface water follows the topography of the villages, flowing from higher ground towards the channel of the Doley Brook. Wharf Road in Gnosall Heath, and The Flashes, Audmore Road, High Street, Ashbrook Close, Sellman Street, Norbury Close, Brookhouse Road and Station Road are major overland flow routes in the 30-year event. Large areas of ponding are present on low-lying land around the Doley Brook and the drains, notably to the west of Gnosall. These areas of ponding and flow routes become larger in the 100-year and 1,000-year events. Gnosall was identified in the 2015 LFRMS as the rural area at the 2nd highest risk of surface water flooding in Staffordshire, with 129 properties at risk.

Discussion re Gnosall – identified in the local flood risk management survey? As the rural area at the second highest risk of surface water flooding in Staffordshire with 139 properties effected, which was identified in 2015 how much worse is it now.

If we are going to make comments about infrastructure and flooding this is how we do it as it cannot be denied.

We have suggested to SBC that is they were minded to permit this development on this site should impose the following; -

Suggest SBC impose conditions, such as:

Highways report (as earlier)

Survey of condition and capacity of culverts and drains along Wharf Road

They consider alternative access arrangement

That this be not dealt with as Reserved Matters (i.e. these details left until later) because the findings need to be taken account of BEFORE a decision is made

Request that the Form be amended to "for residential development" NOT a specific number

They can ease the access by moving it to Wharf Road – but that will reduce numbers. If 19 are permissioned, 19 will be built. Hence final point to encourage flexibility

An enlarged plan was shown of the detailed proposed development as shown on the SBC planning portal.

Mossley Court – Specific

Detailed discussion about Mossley court on the following points.

Length of garden and banking.

Height of properties

Prejudice to elevated ground

Seek surveys to determine safety

Seek imposition of conditions to ensure: -

- You have documents which acknowledge that your gardens are below the recommended length but this was approved because of your view. Produce that evidence and quote it. If development goes ahead, that will no longer be the case.
- So, request conditions to impose a buffer which would give a length of separation equivalent to the length of garden that would otherwise have been necessary i.e. buildings should not be erected within that buffer zone
- Some of you have rightly observed that the plan indicates properties with gardens encroaching on the toe of your banking. Request a Ground Investigation and Slope Stability Assessment so that all can be assured of the safety of their properties – encroaching upon the toe of a slope jeopardises its integrity
- Then request that only single storey buildings be erected along that edge so that you are not placed level with first floor windows or rooflines.

General questions were raised on: -

Previous industrial use and contamination – always carried out via surveys and at the cost of the developer.

The borough councils' conditions need to cover all of this.

Q – How do we know that correct enforcement will be carried out with things put in palace i.e. attenuation not functioning –

- GG – it has been inspected by two sperate persons and reported back to SBC for enforcement officers to address with developers and I have written to various member of the council and Scott is following this up as he has seen it for himself also. Unfortunately, enforcement is greatly understaffed at present.

Q – Can we not stipulate that the attenuation goes in first if it's that important?

- GG - It would be proper to say that should the brough be minded to permit development on this site we would request that attenuation measures exceed the national standards in anticipation of the frequency now of the 30-year event! As the national standard, whilst legal is no longer the satisfactory response.
- SP – the building is normally done under phases and the attenuation creates no profit and is therefore done last sadly.

Q – WT – GPC – can I bring to the attention of the general public here – the 'material considerations' that is via a portal that lists other things for example, endangered species, newts, bats etc.

- GG – the reasons this is not mentioned on the portal for this application yet is that it is a 'reserved matters application' and not a 'full application' as yet. Which means they will come but later down the line.

Q – What happens if it goes to self-build etc, if the current developer goes this way?

- SS – this can happen and has happened and have the same stringent conditions and framework for flooding etc as a big developer.

Q – CH – GPC – its clear there is a lot of work gone on in the background, but can we make all the information available in short bullet points to the public to help them compile their own points.

- GG – Definitely and this will be done.

- SS – three concerns to concentrate on: - flooding, highways, and the shortened gardens in Mossley Court.

Q – Is there a benefit to bombarding the application portal with concerns, opinions, and letters from as many people as possible?

- GG & SS – absolutely yes. Each person in a household has a right to comment and we encourage you to do so, don't put in the same letter, alter it slightly and send them in, my aim and our aim is to address long standing issues which will be affected by this application.

Q – The bullet points is a good idea, it seems to me the way to go to show that remedial works for the developer would make it unaffordable to build on? May this end up in them relinquishing their plans?

- GG – as I said initially, I believe there will eventually at some point be permission granted to build on there as it's within the development boundary. Our aim is to make it the best application that it can be for the village and use it to get things done on the areas which we have been complaining about for many, many years!

General discussion re other planning matters that had already been discussed and meeting brough to an end. 21.41 hours.