

# ST MARTHA PARISH COUNCIL

## Minutes of the Extra- Ordinary Meeting held on Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2025 at 7:45 p.m. in Chilworth Village Hall

### 2025–17 - Present:

#### Councillors:

CLLr Mrs. P Allen (Chair), CLLr Mrs. Osman, CLLr J. Peake, CLLr Mrs. Tantram and CLLr Miss Toynbee  
Surrey County Councillor and Guildford Borough Councillor Robert Hughes  
Shalford Community Councillor Adrian Cansell  
Two members of the public

In attendance: Parish Clerk - Anne Tait

### 2025-18 - To accept apologies and reason for absence in accordance with the LGA 1972, Sch 1 para 40.

Parish Councillors: G. Brown (Vice-Chair), D. Toynbee, Shalford Community Councillor A. Cansell and Guildford Borough Councillor Danielle Newson.

### 2025–19 - Declaration of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests (DPIs) - by Councillors on any of the agenda items below in accordance with The Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012. (SI 2012 No. 1464)

No declarations were made.

### 2025–20 - Declaration of Non-Pecuniary Interests

No declarations were made.

### 2025-21 -Register of Interests

The Chairman reported that the applicant of p/application 24/P/01821 was a Parish Councillor and Chairman of the Parish Council from June 2020 to July 2024.

### 2025-22 -Policies, Financial and Regulation Approvals

#### (a) Proposed list of payments and transfers to be tabled at the meeting for approval:

The payment list was presented to the meeting a copy of which had been issued to all Members via email in advance of the meeting – ref Table 1. It was proposed by CLLr Peake, seconded by CLLr Mrs Tantram and unanimously **RESOLVED** that the payments to the value of £3,853.12 approved. The be payment list was duly signed by Councillors Peake and Tantram, during the meeting.

Table 1: Proposed list of payments 21<sup>st</sup> January 2025

Budget Head	Date	Description	Supplier	Net	VAT	Total
Staff Salary	31/01/25	Net Payroll oct/Nov/Dec 2024	Hazelford Ltd	2,349.97	0	2,349.97

## ST MARTHA PARISH COUNCIL

Staff Salary	13/01/25	PAYE and NIC 2024/25 Q3	Hazelford Ltd	677.12	0	677.12
IT Expenses	16/01/25	Laptop	Currys	643.36	128.67	772.03
Training	15/01/25	Cllr Miss Toynbee to attend 'Councillors, Roles, Responsibilities and Working Relationships' training session on 10/02/25	Mulberry LAS Ltd	45.00	9.00	54.00
<b>Totals</b>				<b>3,715.45</b>	<b>137.67</b>	<b>£3,853.12</b>

**2025-23 - Public Participation Session** – no points were raised other than relating to the planning application at Old Manor Farm.

### 2025-24 - Planning

#### Planning Application 24/P/01821 [Old Manor Farm, Old Manor Lane, Chilworth, GU4 8NE](#)

**Proposal:** Erection of 4no. 4-bed dwellings and associated landscaping with access from Old Manor Lane.

A vote was taken by a show of hands - this was unanimous for the recommendation to GBC to oppose the application as submitted. **RESOLVED:** that St Martha Parish Council object to this planning application on the following grounds:

#### Comments from St Martha Parish Council

Though St Martha Parish Council understands the national and local need for increased housing, and this site has been identified in the Guildford Borough Council Local Plan Land Availability Assessment as a suitable site, St Martha Parish Council wishes to object to this proposed development for the following reasons:

#### Access

Access to the site is via a single-track unmade lane of loose gravel. It has no passing, or refuge points. It is also a Public Footpath (260a) which is well used for access to the fields and countryside beyond. The ownership of the track appears to be unknown, but the adjacent residents maintain it at their own expense. The track is vulnerable to water leaks and Thames Water was called out 4 times in the past six months.

Apart from a short part of the entrance, which is adopted and maintained by SCC, Old Manor Lane is single track dropping to 3.1metres wide in places. At no point can two vehicles pass. Vehicles are required to pull into short drives to let others past. This is even more problematic at weekends and evenings when the very short driveways are full of cars. Delivery vans struggle to navigate the track, which has led to accidents with parked vehicles on driveways and bin lorries have learnt to reverse down it. As the track can easily become blocked, it is difficult to see how construction of the proposed site can safely be carried out. In the longer term, the greater number of traffic movements will impact the residents, those wanting to use the footpath and the track itself which is in a vulnerable state. As access to the site is also along a Public Footpath, the development will not support the goals set out in Policy D1 (6) *Safe, connected and efficient streets* of GBC's Local Plan, nor will it support Paragraph 105 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) which states that planning decisions '*should*

## ST MARTHA PARISH COUNCIL

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*improve and protect public access and rights of way*'. The safety of the public using this Footpath is of concern and it is hard to see how the aims of paragraph 105 will be met by this application.

### **Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment**

The application fails to include a Landscape and Visual Assessment, a critical omission given the site's location within the Area of Great Landscape Value, and within Natural England's area known as *Cranleigh Water*, which is part of the proposed Surrey Hills (AONB) boundary extension.

### **Biodiversity Net Gain Report and lack of a Preliminary Ecological Assessment**

Though the applicant has commissioned a biodiversity net gain report, the report appears fundamentally flawed.

The desktop survey included a "search for local plans, wildlife strategies, or local policy which may inform strategic significance of the habitats in this assessment", yet none of the following local plans, wildlife strategies or local policies are referenced:

- Surrey's Local Nature Recovery Strategy, which despite not being finished has identified the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs) across Surrey, along with their associated priority habitats and species. This includes the River Wey (& tributaries) BOA, along with the associated priority habitats and species.
- Guildford Borough Council's SPD Green and Blue Infrastructure webpage, which references P6 and P7 and states that they 'protect important habitats, including BOA priority habitats'
- Guildford Borough Council's Policy P6 Protecting Important Habitats and Species, along with Policy P7 for mitigation measures where appropriate
- Surrey Nature Partnership Irreplaceable Habitats Guidance.

Perhaps as a consequence of not identifying the relevant local plans, wildlife strategies and local policies, the report, (under the heading "Strategic Areas and Priority/Irreplaceable Habitats", pg. 12), states that "the site is not located within any strategic area and as such, all of the habitats within this assessment have been input as being of low strategic significance."

In fact, the site is in very close proximity to the ***River Wey (& tributaries) BOA***.

The western edge of the site, at its closest point is estimated to be only 30m from the BOA (based on footpath 260a being less than 20m from the BOA at this point). The southern perimeter appears to be less than 10m in distance from the marked ditch that feeds directly into the river BOA.

Priority habitats under this BOA include the river itself along with meadows, rush pastures and hedgerows, with a significant amount of associated priority species.

Although Guildford Borough Council have not produced a Green and Blue Infrastructure SPD, the associated webpage states that policy P6 and P7 protect important habitats, including BOA priority habitats.

### **Policy P6**

Policy P6 of the Local Plan identifies development proposals for sites that contain or are adjacent to: irreplaceable habitats, priority habitats, habitats hosting priority species, sites designated for their biodiversity value and all aquatic habitats as requiring the protections set out in Policy P7.

Furthermore, Policy P6 states that irreplaceable habitats will be protected; specifically, not allowing any loss, damage or deterioration to irreplaceable habitats unless "wholly exceptional reasons have been demonstrated".

Irreplaceable habitats are defined as such if they meet the definition of the NPPF glossary or Surrey Nature Partnership guidance (*Irreplaceable Habitats' Guidance for Surrey*).

Although the Local Nature Recovery Strategy will also identify irreplaceable habitats, this has not yet been finished, therefore the only guidance currently available are the NPPF and the Surrey Nature Partnership guidance.

## ST MARTHA PARISH COUNCIL

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Finally, P6 states that development proposals are required to protect and enhance priority species and habitats, which include species and habitats identified as priorities in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, including wildlife corridors and stepping stones ((i.e. the BOAs listed including the River Wey (& tributaries) BOA)).

### **Irreplaceable Habitats' Guidance for Surrey, Surrey Nature Partnership:**

Policy P6 states that irreplaceable habitats will be defined as such if they meet the definition of the Surrey Nature Partnerships guidance.

Page 6, point 2 of this guidance states:

*"Habitats of Principal Importance (HPI/Priority habitats) present in Surrey, for which irreplaceability should always be considered"* include:

Rivers

Lowland meadows (= dry neutral grassland, as 1.1 above).

Point 1.1 sets out the key criteria for "irreplaceability" for dry neutral lowland grassland. These include being an established permanent grassland of more than 20-30 years old, with no disturbance and appropriate management and presence of species-rich characteristic.

Given the Biodiversity Net Gain Report fails to identify the relevant local plans, wildlife strategies it is difficult to see how it assesses this site appropriately.

The Surrey Nature Partnership Irreplaceable Habitats guidance states that "rivers" are a Habitat of Principal Importance, for which irreplaceability should always be considered.

Based on local information and the Biodiversity Net Gain Report, it does appear that at least two of the dry neutral lowland grassland are met because the site has not been disturbed for over 30 years and the neutral grassland is of good quality (minimum of 10 vascular plant species per m<sup>2</sup>).

### **Preliminary Ecology Assessment**

Not only is the site in very close proximity to the River Wey (& tributaries) BOA, which raises the likelihood of there being protected species on site, but as will be noted in one of the nearby residents' comments, protected species, such as adders and grass snakes have been observed in their garden. St Martha Parish Council considers that a Preliminary Ecological Assessment would provide essential information to help consider whether the site is suitable for development and, if so, what mitigation measures, as set out in P7, would be necessary to not only protect the two protected habitats and potential species, but also ensure that the river itself does not become polluted by both the surface water run off if the site was developed, but also from the residents potentially using fertilisers in their gardens.

Although there does not appear to be definitive guidance regarding when a Preliminary Ecological Assessment takes place, we note that Surrey County Council, when considering their own development, use the following criteria to determine when a Preliminary Ecological Assessment should occur.

If a development is:

- likely to affect a designated site,
- 0.4h or larger, or
- Within 100m of, or is likely to affect, a priority habitat or priority species

The document also states: "For all but the most minor applications, the PEA should include the results of a search from the Surrey Biodiversity Information Centre."

(See Annex 3 County Development Regulation January 2024)

### **Mixture of housing types, density and size of properties**

Paragraph 2 (b) of the NPPF **Social objective**, '*sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations.*' Sadly, this proposal does not meet that need as no small, affordable housing is included in the development.

Though of good quality, the density and size are more than we would wish to see.

## ST MARTHA PARISH COUNCIL

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### **Fenestration**

There is concern about light spillage across the AGLV, and the AONB beyond, due to the amount of glazing at the rear of the properties.

### **Parking and Turning Area**

The turning areas and parking for cars is not deemed adequate. This is especially important given that Refuse vehicles currently must reverse into Old Manor Lane. A dedicated turning circle would resolve this issue and without it the reversing distance would be entirely unreasonable.

### **Highways**

Noting what SCC Highways says in its report, the Parish Council still has concerns about access onto and off the A248 as it is on a bend, next to a railway crossing and near the junction with Blacksmith Lane. At busy times of day children and families cross this access point from one section of pavement to another on their way to and from Chilworth School. This safety concern will be greatly increased during construction.

### **Rights of Way**

As stated, Old Manor Lane is a right of way, and the current residents are struggling to maintain it to a sufficiently safe standard. Notwithstanding the main issue, which is how narrow the lane is, so that pedestrians have to stop and squeeze themselves to the side whenever large vehicles appear, the other matter relates to how the right of way can be maintained to a satisfactory standard with the two years of works and then ongoing traffic that will inevitably occur with 4 houses, each with 4 bedrooms. The nature of the site indicates that further development could take place and for the access road and footpath this should be an additional consideration.

### **2025-25 - Items for the next meeting**

To receive suggestions from Members for items for inclusion on future agendas.

- The 2025 Annual Assembly of St Martha Parish
- Council Policies
- Meeting with Anne-Marie Hannam re the A248
- Update on the Defibrillator
- The Personnel Committee to agree a date for the Clerk's Appraisal

**2025-26 - Date of the next meeting:** 13<sup>th</sup> February 2025