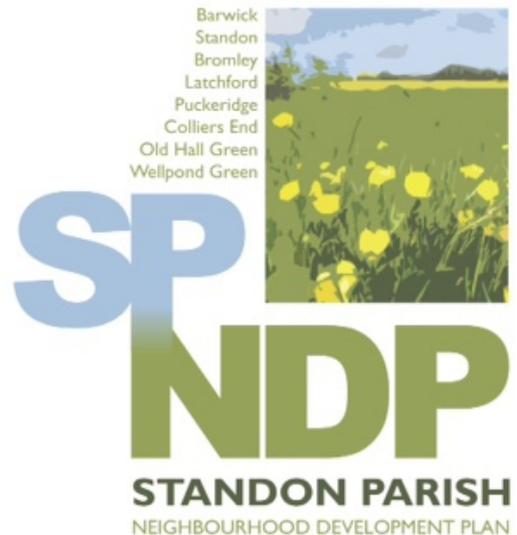


SPNDP Chronological Transcript of
Public Meeting,
11th February 2016
*(further meeting held on 13th February
2016)*



1

Q. Re the Cafe Field Sewage, does it flow from that area towards Station Rd then to Standon Sewage Works?

A. That flow direction is correct. We all know the schools and GP surgery flood with sewage because the pipes aren't big enough or they block.

The problem is two fold: insufficiency of pipe capacity. The sewer takes Colliers End, Old Hall Green and St Edmund's, goes under the new A10 bypass, then under the A10, past the Vintage, down Cambridge Rd to the junction of Station Rd and the High St from the other end. The section from Colliers End is cast iron apparently and it is rusting so badly that that this keeps blocking up. The manholes under the bypass lift and neat sewage flows out and potentially into ditches. The Water Authority know well that this happens and clean and scarify the pipes. When they do, the pipes flow very nicely into Puckeridge and at peak flow this is when Puckeridge gets the problems.

What has also become apparent is that when the Fairview development (west Puckeridge) became occupied the pipes surcharge point which happened to be around Rib Close, (when flooding occurred neat sewage went into the river). The surcharge point is now higher up and this is why the schools, surgery and community centre are subject to sewer discharge problems. We understand that where the surgery is concerned there have been occasions when two examination rooms together with their public toilet have closed.

2

Q. So who would be responsible? Let's assume they grant the Cafe Field. Someone is going to have to do something about this issue.

A. We take it for granted they will (grant permission).

It will come down ultimately to the Water Authority Watchdog making the Water Authority (it is a private water company) do something about it. Central Government has un-publicly told the Water Authority that they are not to object to housing developments on the basis that there is a problem

with the sewage. So theoretically, in the Government's eyes that is, they must do something about it if they attach a load more homes to an overflowing sewer. My understanding is there is actually nothing written down in law to make that happen. It would mean the Watchdog would have to make them do it, and we know how that very often works out.

3

Q. It sounds like if Standon Village Green was under sewage it would be a health issue?

A. It very rapidly would be. Something will have to be done about it, it's an open question.

4

Q. It sounds like you're saying it (sewage) doesn't really affect planning that much?

A. We are trying to make sure it does.

5

Q. Don't the new developments have their own mass sewage tanks that then get emptied?

A. What you are suggesting is that do they have their own mini sewage farm and pay a separate fee for (it)? I know that has happened in some areas but we suggest that any development here will try to connect to the main sewer.

We are talking in terms of an increase of 150 new houses that we are required to take under the District Plan. If a spec developer gets in and they get consent they will look at 300 houses plus! All of them will be connected to the sewer. All of that will create a problem. Until there is sewage flowing on the roads it then becomes an Environmental Health (EH) issue the EH must take action, it then lays with the Water Authority.

If anyone here is in the part of Puckeridge and Standon that is affected the thing to do (we are advised) is to notify EH not the Water Authority. They have the legal powers to then force the Water Authority to get working on it.

6

Q. I am curious how can you put together a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) when there is so much you don't know? It seems to me from your presentation about the East-West bypass that there is no scheme for that in the future, albeit maybe 20 years away. How can you do a NP when you haven't got background on road schemes in the future?

A. All we can do is where there are any bands of interest for a possible bypass is to make sure that no development is proposed in those areas. We are not aware of anything beyond that could be a major highway. The A10 has been bypassed, we only have the A120 to consider. We can't see into the future and this is only a 15 year plan.

7

Q. You indicated that the possible bypass will be post 2030. I think we are having this so called consultation this year. So if everyone sits on their backsides it could be 15 years before they do anything?

A. No, it's going to TAKE 15 years County Council as Highway Authority to go through various procedures necessary in order to get to the point of building something. That is why we are endeavouring to push things along. We have to have a meeting with the Highway Authority with regard to existing conditions and how they will be worsened as far as access and egress on to the A120 from Puckeridge and Standon especially with the extra 150 or however many houses come but also with regards to the 15 year period beyond 2031 which is the next roll forward of any NP. We will again have to take more housing in this area, perhaps another 150-200, and that's where we really have to put pressure on.

There is no doubt in the NP how essential it is from now how planning, design and various procedures are thought through in order to get to the point 2030 and onwards where they can say this is the time scale we can work to and this is where the money is coming from to do it.

The Highways people have said that they don't really want to think seriously about Standon bypass until the Hadham bypass has been up and running for a couple of years so they can really assess what the impact is.

8

Q. So will they do a study of the complete gridlock through Standon and Puckeridge, of people who can't get out of their drives, on to the High Street because traffic flow will be continuous? There has to be some interim arrangement, traffic lights at either end of the village, to stop the flow of traffic so the village can actually get out of their homes.

A. That's what the bypass document talks about. They recognise it will move the problem and it will need some mitigation. We did discuss the possibility of the site to the east of Standon there could be a roundabout for access to that site. That could give some break to the traffic. The obvious solution is a bypass. As Neighbourhood Planners we can't make these decisions, we can only put it in the Plan how necessary it is.

9

Q. All a roundabout will do is back up the traffic. It's hard getting out of South Road. A roundabout at the east end of Standon will make the whole road a traffic jam.

A. There is no doubt we need a bypass. The NP group can only put in the Plan the problems we face, the results of the survey and the need for a bypass, it's not our decision.

10

Q. I am an ex Parish Councillor. I was always led to believe Burrs Meadow was given to the Parish as an open space. I just wondered how much work you had done on its history?

A. The County Council (the owners) have put Burrs meadow up as a SLAA site for development in the call for sites from the District Council. They have an agreement with the Parish Council as far as its use as an open space is concerned.

11

Q. You talked earlier about 40% rented properties? To what extent does the NP include things like this and does it include how much should be social and affordable housing?

A. The 40% was the feedback from the survey. This is an integral part of the NP, it dictates the type, density, character and is fundamental.

12

Q. So have you proposed (Q11) this at this stage?

A. No, that will come in the detailed drafting from feedback at our meetings. We may get feedback that actually 40% should be 20%. Our initial survey suggested a high proportion of affordable housing was needed specifically for local people. Please check our survey online for results.

13

Q. Is there anything you can put in the NP re Haringey Council having purchased housing for London people on the Fairview site (west Puckeridge)? Is there anything that can be put in place for Hertfordshire people?

A. Once houses are developed and put on the market it is hard to control who buys them. We can put a caveat in but developers will always find a way around these sorts of things. There are some affordable housing to supply to needy people whether they come from this area or not.

More affordable housing is an aspiration that everybody has but the actual take-up is relatively small in proportion to the actual amount perceived that we require. Living in our village is realistically expensive. If we had buses, trains etc to sustain living for less well off people the requirement for affordable housing would be greater. This is still open to debate and we will have to let the statistics speak (see our survey). There is a compromise here that needs to be struck. Please

bear that in mind.

14

Q. Of the 150 houses that are required is that just in Standon and Puckeridge?

A. Yes. In the hamlets we have to accept infill. We cannot put large developments in the hamlets of say 100 houses.

15

Q. So what is the number (of houses) for the overall Parish?

A. 150 plus infill. Infill isn't defined by a number, it could be 3 or 4 houses here or there.

16

Q. How many houses are proposed in the old wood yard in Colliers End?

A. None, because that site is considered by EHDC to be too large and to put a big development on there would change the whole character of Colliers End. For that reason places like Colliers End should have infill only so that they remain a hamlet, rather than just extend to meet Standon and Puckeridge.

17

Q. But it's (the site) still in the plan isn't it?

A. It's in as a SLAA site but we would advise it's not considered anything other than infill.

18

Q. Going back to talking about the rent side of things, I have just pulled it up on my phone; private rent is 3%, other rent is 7%.

A. So about 10% rented homes.

19

Q. How do you get your Plan to be MADE?

A. Chapter 2 of the draft is done so far. I would say 5 or 6 months, but it depends on the pace of getting the Plan drafted, the next set of public meetings, when we consult with EHDC. I think we will be there in the Autumn period. Another thing that is happening, EHDC will release a draft District Plan late summer 2016. We need to move fast, we will be there before RHDC have their Examination early 2017.

One thing we gathered from EHDC planning people is once we've submitted the plan, even before it's gone for referendum, it carries a little bit of weight. Once it's on paper they may take it into account on planning decisions. The sooner we draft the better.

20

Q. What is the time line for a decision on the Cafe Field then?

A. The latest we have heard there is going to be a meeting April/May to discuss. After that it depends on if it's been rejected. If it goes to appeal the time scale is longer.

We had a meeting with the officer involved before this Public Meeting. He said it was his intention to put it in front of the Planning Committee for a vote April/May. We are of the opinion - we could be wrong - the Councillors will probably reject. If it is rejected it will be immediately appealed to the inspectors, who are backed up at the moment but we don't expect them to get in front of it probably until possibly November time. They will take a couple of weeks to look at it, so the decision will come at the very end of the year.

We could well have our NP in place and it's our understanding that if the Plan is MADE by that time the Inspector is duty bound to take that into account.

If, however, the Councillors in April/May grant planning permission, which is well within their power (and we are getting noises that the planning committee will recommend for approval) we are then in a much more difficult situation. If it is granted then our NP won't be empowered. A coach and horses will be driven through it and we will have to reassess.

It's still very important that we carry on the NP, even if it has to incorporate what is imposed on us, because if we don't, there will be another application in another big field and that will be allowed.

If we get to that stage it will be damage limitation, but WE will be limiting the damage.

So we just have to hope for the best.

21

Q. Do they know if Cafe Field is for sale?

A. There is no developer on the books at present. The Bond family owned the field for many years (based in Australia and here). They are selling simply to make money because they see an opportunity. We can only suppose why they are doing it right now. The fact that the law has changed and the NP is coming in all over the country may have influenced their decision to bring it

forward now. Who knows?

The sites we assessed, which we talked about earlier as SLAA sites, they are all sites where the owners have said this land is available. So everything we have considered has either been put forward (one or two are put forward as opportunity sites) but generally they are all available.

22

Q. I am interested to know why the Cafe Field area is of rural interest (based on the hotspots slide) but the Lilymeads and the site adjacent next to Town Farm Crescent is not considered rural? Why is it not denoted as green on the slide?

A. There is rural impact on both. The slope/landscape of the Cafe Field is a big factor but remember our biggest objections are flooding, sewage and access on to the A120. Those three things don't occur on the other side.

23

Q. They definitely will have an impact on the traffic! I am just a little bit concerned that the impact may not have been assessed quite as well as it could because I see rural and traffic impact just as much. Also another point, this is outside the boundary of the village, as it is at the moment!

A. It is indeed.

24

Q. So if you are allowing our village to get bigger and bigger, which I think you said you were going to preserve the scale of the village, if you are going to open the floodgates now, what's going to happen in the future? It's short sighted! In the future people will see Cafe Field as infill and that will get filled in anyway, so there will be even more housing!

A. Both Cafe Field and the site higher in Standon are outside the village boundary. We have the ability to change the village boundary to suit the community.

With the Standon (Livings) site we don't have the sewage problem for one reason and another. We don't have a flood problem. The traffic problem that is perceived with the Cafe Field is that the junction with the A120 will be impossible. The average car/home ratio in the village is 1.9 cars. Everyone effectively has cars! So 200 houses on Cafe Field = 400 cars! Most people will get in those cars and drive them away between 7:30-8:30am. That will cause a big backup of traffic on to the A120 simply because it takes so long.

Now, some people will turn left but a lot will turn right and go to London (one would suppose a majority). Now that's going to cause a massive backup in traffic, which means they'll go the other way, through the village. That will cause havoc in the middle of the village (more havoc, because it's already havoc!).

There will be disturbance in traffic when we talk about Lilymeads and the other site but the impact on the village community itself will be far less. The impact will be on the A120 and the people using the A120 but most of them don't come from our village!

We have to consider the good of the community. Obviously it would be good to accommodate everyone, but it's for us.

There is some credence in what you say about the rural aspect. With the Cafe Field site, the top half of the field, which flies against policy, because it's building on the ridge of a hill which you are not allowed to do by current planning policy in the District Plan.

In Lilymeads there is a question of that and of views but the damage and impact on the community on the whole is far less. As we have said we were stuck between a rock and a hard place for finding a place that affected the least number of people and did the least amount of damage because wherever we build it's going to cause a problem, but we have looked hard at what can cause the least problems.

25

Q. But what if one day you find that Cafe Field will be built on anyway?

A. Well, all we can do is legislate for the next 15 years, that's all we can do.

I don't know what you are doing in 15 years but I've got no idea! That's the way you have to look at it.

26

Q. Two of your sites have been designated as areas of work towards the centre of the village. Why not have those as housing and the employment areas on the outside of the village?

A. We have wrestled with this. One of the things we decided early on (maybe it was a mistake) was that we should try and preserve the employment in the village. We wanted to support them and have them grow.

Rather than demolish those sites and have more housing we would have even less jobs here. And we would have even more people on the A120 and A10 every day. That was our thinking. We may be wrong. That's why we value this input.

27

Q. How occupied is the Standon Business Park?

A. I don't think it is fully occupied, but it does OK. Our thinking was if we build on the employment land the chances of finding employment land and replacing that was minimal. The value of

industrial land compared to residential land is minuscule and developers, realistically, aren't interested. We have had overtures from nearly every employment site to build houses on, so once we've lost them, we've lost them.

It's also worth mentioning that both employment sites are Zone 1 flood risks.

When you look at all the hotspots on the plan, finding places for 50 houses, let alone 150 is not easy. The hotspots aren't accurate to show precise locations. They are done to give you an idea of the parts of the village that are affected by flood or sewage problems.

28

Q. Are the sewage works themselves capacity limited?

A. We presume not. It would be easier to increase the capability of the sewage works than put a new pipe in the ground, I would think.

29

Q. Presumably the wood site in Colliers Ends is an employment site?

A. One thing we have discussed is that although this site would be acceptable for housing it may well be an employment site because it is very much a brownfield site. So that could be a potential in the future. It's difficult to encourage businesses to break new ground.

If anyone has any ideas with what we can do with that particular site we would be very interested. We are very interested in finding a use for that land.

30

Q. Who owns it?

We think it's still the Wood brothers.

31

Q. Can you talk to them?

A. It's not our place to talk to them. It was put up as a SLAA site, so they are willing. We didn't pursue it because the District Council said it could be infill only in terms of housing in Colliers End and that the site was way too big to be classed as infill. So we didn't pursue it further. It might have made a good site for employment. The local council see it as agricultural land (which it certainly isn't). It was supposed to be returned to agricultural use but it never happened. It's covered in

concrete.

32

Q. It would be ideal (if you consider the little household waste site in Buntingford) and had a few small businesses and services, things like that for this site?

A. That would be ideal, we wouldn't object to that.

33

Q. With the bypass consideration what is the NP group's feelings on the Northern or the Southern route, because personally I think it seems awful if it's going through the Lordship and Water Meadows.

A. I am not sure if we have a preferred route. What we have tried to make sure is we don't obstruct any of those possible routes in our thinking.

(Personal views were then put by the public about use by dog walkers)

I think you have to understand, the routes (2 on the South - which were put before the County Council in 2006 and 2 on the North - which were within the band of interest which was protected up to presumably 1994). You have to look at them in terms of what are the cost implications of constructing it, let alone their position in relation to existing property and what it would do to the landscape.

You would have enormous excavation involved in the Southern routes. They would be very close to the Lordship and you would have all sorts of various problems with them.

The northern routes are much clearer and in fact the southerly of the northern routes is likely to be far more expensive because it's across the wider flood plain area, whereas the northerly of the Northern routes goes over an area where the river is quite confined in much more of a valley shape. So the structures and the impact of the northerly route of the Northern section would likely be less cost.

Now, you have got to take into account what is going to be the cheapest solution.

So we can only be realistic about the cost implications of those routes, the impact implications on the environment of them, to wait and to see what the County Council eventually come up with.

34

Q. The Little Hadham route is to the North, isn't it?

A. Little Hadham historically had 2 bands of interest, to the North and South. There was quite a bit of work done on those by the County Council by the late 1960's because the County Councillor for Much Hadham was most concerned about the impact of the southern routes. They have looked again and obviously the Little Hadham bypass has come out on the North very much because of the benefits that can be gained by a partnership with the Environment Agency (EA), such that the embankment for the Northern route is built as a dam. Therefore it would be capable of holding back a flood situation on that river and only allowing a certain amount to go through the embankment, down into Little Hadham to avoid them being flooded as viciously as it has on previous occasions.

The document (Little Hadham Bypass) shows it very well.

I am very disappointed that a lot of people don't recall receiving this (A120 Standon Consultation).

35

Q. Where would we be able to get a hold of this document?

A. Hertfordshire Highways. This document can be viewed at the end of the meeting.

36

Q. If development was to take place on the Eastern side of Standon, there would still be sewage produced, wouldn't there? And that would finish up in the same sewer at the bottom. It would arrive earlier, so it would back up to Puckeridge just the same?

A. Our understanding is that the sewer that goes down Standon High Street is larger.

It doesn't go down the High Street.

From that point onward it is bigger and that's why we have done what we have done.

37

Q. Regarding that example, with the cost of new housing in Standon and the cost of upgrading the sewage scheme has got to be trivial in relation to the other area (Cafe Field).

A. It won't be trivial. The problem is that how the system works is the people that build the housing are not responsible for that sewer. There is a possibility of getting Section 106 money from the people that build those houses but it won't necessarily be spent on upgrading that sewer. It's the Water Board who are responsible. They are a profit making company who make their money by charging people who live in houses to take their sewage away and supply them with clean water. For them to build the infrastructure and pay for it, that is their business model but the trouble is you have to get all sorts of angles on them to make them do it.

The public health issue is probably the strongest one.

It is really out of our hands and all we can really do is apply all the pressure we can.

They told us, all this is nonsense, if they build those houses there, this WILL probably get looked at. It's only AFTER the fact, AFTER Station Road is running in poo that they will act. We don't really want to get THERE!

WE, can, for some reason, see this coming but the planners can't; the uni graduates who are so professional, they can't see this coming along. NO COMMON SENSE!

You have got to understand that we are at a point now where we're seeking to arrange a meeting with the County Council with regard to Highway issues and flood mitigation issues because they have just taken over that responsibility from the EA. And meeting with the Water Authority, with regard to what exactly are the details of the sewer because we have had various bits of information, some of which are conflicting.

We wish to appoint an expert to actually assess the sewer situation and produce a report for the NP group.

So, if you like, we can hang our hats on that and what we say in the NP itself and how we deal with the planning authority with regard to what final options we have to consider are reasonable to go forward with.

Please remember, we are volunteers, we have no authority and limited funds. We are working hard to get these things resolved for all of you, but we really are simply a group of volunteers trying to represent your best interests.

38

Q. If the Planning Officers are minded to recommend Cafe Field, if it is accepted at 200 houses then can we forget any other developments until 2030?

A. Effectively yes.

If we don't have a NP pulled together as quickly as possible then what is going to stop other spec developers coming along and developing elsewhere?

Obviously this is an issue which has happened in Buntingford. This is why it is so important for us to drive ahead, to know as much as possible about the views of the parishioners so that we can produce a NP that covers the issues of where houses would be least likely to cause a problem.

If Cafe Field comes in we have got to go back several squares, not necessarily to square 1! To say: "right", how will we now frame the NP? We could produce a NP because it will have so much information in it. It will become part of a statutory document that the planners must take into account in every application. There could be more houses, we could find we are fighting more than a Cafe Field situation, but we NEED a NP.

Hopefully the NP will enable the Parish to have not many more than 150 houses for Standon and Puckeridge for the period up to 2031.

Q. What do you need to give your group support? Paper? Money? What do you need?

A. Your comments are all we need! We want your input!

We are capable of getting grants from the local Council to employ any specialists we need. We are funded by Parish Council grants indirectly by the District Council and we are able to get grants from central Government. We are getting towards the end of that money. We are not really here to ask you for money.

One of the big problems is finding out what we can do with the money. We are pretty much here now and have formulated a Plan and are colouring it in.

We come to you tonight with what we think is the least damaging, the least disadvantageous plan we can come up with under the circumstances.

We want you to pull it apart, if you like and to tell us where we are going wrong or right. We are doing this for you because it's our village.

We mostly want your input, support and ongoing interest.

There are a large number of people living in Standon and Puckeridge. We got a pretty good response to our survey.

Public meetings almost always have poor support but those of you that are here (50), that's great. We want your input and that of others please; get their input, get them to talk to us, feedback any comments.

You can go to our website or email us. There's lots of ways of getting in touch with us. Let us know, preferably as soon as you can. Go away and think about this for a few days and within the next couple of weeks give us your thoughts, pages or just a paragraph! Just tell us what you think, tell us what you like because we are all fairly thick skinned.

Also you need to bear in mind what Mike said very early on - we have got to look at the information we have at the point of where we are drafting the body of the NP. At that stage we should have had our meetings with the County Council and the Water Authority. We should have an indication by then as to what may well happen with the Cafe Field and we have to accept that we could then have to go back a few squares.

Think again about how we move forwards particularly if Cafe Field is given consent for 200+ dwellings. So you must bear that in mind.

That's why it's so important that we have continual dialogue with YOU.

We will be coming back to you again at some point with a couple of Public Meetings in order to put the harder facts we have been able to draw together.

Q. Is there any indication of what may happen on the land behind Fishers Mead?

A. Leach put in the land of Wickham Hill. It's still owned by Jest and Ruskin. Leach has got an Option, what they are doing about it we don't know. Paul Leach died since approaching the Council to advise the Parish Council that they intended putting in a planning application to build somewhere between 300-400 houses on the Wickham Hill site, which goes down to the charity land. They would somehow have to get access on to the B1368.

The planners have looked at this and because it is on rising ground the principle for years has been to keep developments off the skyline. They think that something like 30 houses, thereabouts, on the boundary of the northern edge of the Fishers Mead development could be acceptable. They have said that in their comments with regards to the SLAA sites. There has been no reaction to that by Leach at all. They obviously have to find a way to get into the sewer, to get access to it because, as far as I am concerned, there is no access from any of the cul-de-sacs. Every one of these roads are now substandard in width.

In the 1970's all the verges had to be paved with grasscrete to allow cars to park half up on the verge so fire engines could get up the road. That is the situation with regards to any development on Wickham Hill.

Wickham Hill is also in a band of interest for the Northern bypass that's why the NP have very much kept clear of that. In the assessments, Wickham Hill ended up, for a variety of reasons at the bottom of the list for acceptability for development.

Q. We were asked to review the Options Maps 1 and 2 and the original SLAA maps with an explanation of SLAA.

A. Strategic Land Availability Assessment

Q. Why was part of the Cafe Field site shown coloured only on the left half?

A. Because it is a hybrid (2 part) application.

The whole site has to stand up to scrutiny in one application. If the application goes to appeal the inspector can make the decision they can't have the top half but they can have the bottom half.

The top half is far more controversial on traditional planning grounds because it's on rising ground, classic you can't build on top of a hill. That doesn't apply to the lower half. The only objection would be flooding, sewage and traffic.

43

Q. So Cafe Field is not on your plan?

A. We do not propose Cafe Field in any way, shape or form. We have opposed it as many of you have but we have to accept it as a possibility.

44

Q. One of my concerns is you mentioned the ridge. The other side of the ridge is the top end of Gauldie Way. So the idea that it's a ridge doesn't really apply?

A. In actual fact this (points to housing) is just the other side of the ridge, same with the gated development.

45

Q. What about from the East looking West though?

A. We agree with you, it shouldn't have been allowed but they were. There was an existing house on that site anyway.

46

Q. Where would the access be to Lilymeads?

A. Through the next site (Livings) from the proposed roundabout because we don't want to put more pressure on the crossroads at the High Street.

47

Q. If you have more development that side (East of Standon) you could have a bigger roundabout?

A. True.

48

Q. How could trees stop development? (asked after looking at the plan of the Livings site)

A. There is a proposal of the owner to put a 15m tree band in before the development took place. That band would be 50 yr leased to the Parish Council who would secure and maintain it. It would

be another pathway route to join the existing path. By doing that you can have a barrier to development going any further. The aim was to end up with a boundary following the contours with building as low down as possible.

49

Q. If you prevent development with a barrier of trees, in the next 30 years where are the next houses going to go?

A. In the next 15 years the sewer has got to be addressed. You would have to look at the other sites than in Puckeridge.

Questions end and general chat.

(END)