

**HAWSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL MEETING  
AT THE VILLAGE HALL  
on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> FEBRUARY 2025 at 7.30pm.**

**Present:** P Cllrs R Alexander (Chair), J Bulbrook, H Brewis, A Brewis, C, Carr & J West. C Hibbert (Clerk).  
Approx 40 members of the public.  
**Apologies:** P Cllr J Lomas-Farley; SC Cllr K Soons.

*The meeting started at 7.30pm.*

The filming statement was highlighted.

**1. TO RECEIVE APOLOGIES AND CONSIDER ANY APPLICATIONS FOR APPROVAL OF ABSENCE:** Apologies **NOTED**.

**Chair's Address**

The Chair welcomed those in attendance and confirmed the focus of the meeting would be the impact on Hawstead of the A134 closure to facilitate the Abbots Vale development. Other formal business would be rolled on to the next scheduled PC meeting. Copies of a letter from the Assistant Director of Highway Services at SCC dated 21 February 2025 were available in the hall. The Chair reported to the meeting on her recent contact with Hopkins Homes (HH)/SCC including her recent conversation with the HH 'pre-development manager' in which he had commented as follows;-

The new roundabout is being built largely within the boundary of the HH application site pursuant to a s278 Highways Act 1980 agreement made between HH/ SCC (Highway Authority) to cope with the additional traffic generated by the Abbots Vale development; it includes work to provide services, drainage and acceptable ground levels. A series of full road closures are required on 8 weekends over a 12 week period to deliver the authorised works.

The published diversion route is on an equivalent 'A road' (i.e. suitable for HGVs/large vehicles). There is nothing to prevent local traffic from using the local road network rather than the published diversion route.

Following a community meeting held by HH in early Feb at Southgate Community Centre the (late) decision was made to close Low Green and Rushbrooke Lane to traffic at times when the A134 is fully closed to prevent those roads from becoming rat runs; those living on these roads will be allowed access via a gateman at the closure barrier.

When the weekend closures are not in place, traffic lights control the single lane A134 which is to remain open.

HH understood that the public meeting at Nowton had been cancelled so they did not attend.

Upon challenge as to what arrangements were in place for emergency vehicles, HH asserted that; (i) emergency services had been consulted before the s278 Highways Agreement was agreed; (ii) the traffic lights on the single lane closure are phased to prevent big build-up of traffic in any one direction; (iii) gatemen are on duty when the road is fully closed to allow access to blue light vehicles.

When questioned as to what work would be done during full closure, HH indicated that; (i) works requiring access to the full width of the A134 will be required; (ii) curing time is required for some processes during which time there will be no apparent work ongoing; (iii) guidelines require complete closure where the available operating width is less than 5.5m; (iv) these works have been re-engineered to make best use of road closure time i.e. by installing pedestrian and cycle links plus services and fibre at the same time.

Upon challenge, HH confirmed that the roundabout design is suitable to manage A road traffic, includes sustainable drainage features suitable for its flood plain location and traffic calming measures designed to slow traffic; the programme of works is geared around the A134 being open (one lane) to traffic every Monday morning following the planned weekend closures.

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When challenged about the impact of the closure upon carers, HH confirmed that they are only able to publish details of the official diversion route; those with local knowledge can use other routes on smaller roads and are not obliged to follow the official diversion route.

The Chair concluded by saying that HH was willing to stay in touch with Hawstead PC to discuss any ongoing issues once the closures get fully underway. She was under the impression that if the Low Green/Rushbrooke Land closures had been put forward at an earlier stage, there would have been better/wider consultation with affected communities, but these closures were introduced late into the programme of works. The Chair noted that once the Abbots Vale development was built and occupied, the 1200 new houses with at least one car each could generate say around 6,000 additional car movements every day, highlighting the need for the upgrade to the associated highway infrastructure before the development is occupied; she expressed a hope that once Abbott Vale was constructed the traffic pressure should ease; she had been told by HH that their aim was to minimise the disruption which will inevitably flow from this significant development. She highlighted that there should be 'unsuitable for HGV signage' installed on the smaller roads within the area.

The Chair suggested that residents could;-

- Monitor signage – i.e. is an 'unsuitable for HGV' sign at the junction A134/Hawstead Lane at all times. If there is not, please send the PC photographic evidence ([clerk@hawstead-pc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@hawstead-pc.gov.uk) or [ros.alexander@hawstead-pc.gov.uk](mailto:ros.alexander@hawstead-pc.gov.uk));
- Consider reporting any traffic incidents flowing from A134 closure to SCC (via the SCC highways reporting tool <https://highwaysreporting.suffolk.gov.uk/>).
- Reassure carers etc. that they are still able to use the local road network to reach clients without suffering any penalty for failure to use the official diversion route.
- Forward any specific details of incidents linked to the A134 closure by Sunday 23 Feb ([ros.alexander@hawstead-pc.gov.uk](mailto:ros.alexander@hawstead-pc.gov.uk)); in order that this material can be collated and forwarded to HH/SCC before their monitoring meeting fixed for 24<sup>th</sup> Feb.

## 2. PUBLIC FORUM

### 2.1 Public participation.

Residents made the following comments:-

- HH should use its resources to introduce traffic calming measures in those villages which will be used as a rat run during the A134 highway works.
- Concern that the proposed highway works will take longer than the scheduled 8 weekends; the machinery on site has been observed with no workers/drivers operating the machinery leading to concern that the A134 will be kept closed at times when there is no work being undertaken.
- Concern that HH are unable to recruit sufficient contractors to undertake the proposed programme of works.
- Concern about the likely increase in traffic on minor roads, such as Bells Lane /Fox and Pin Lane; these roads are already in poor condition and will be damaged further by additional traffic. These roads should be restored after the A134 is fully opened.
- Concern that when the A14 was recently closed between BSE/Stowmarket local roads in the Haughley area became rat runs and suffered damage; they remain unrestored after completion of the relevant works some time ago.
- Will there be speed cameras in the village?
- Reporting problems to SCC is a reactive response; what preventative/ proactive measures are being taken by HH to prevent further deterioration to the local road network?
- Was an impact assessment undertaken prior to the A134 closures?
- Why are Hawstead roads being sacrificed for the benefit of the HH development?
- Use of the SCC highways reporting tool is a waste of time – why should residents be expected to take on the SCC's obligation to monitor public highways in Suffolk and report issues?
- Desire to join forces with other affected villages/communities to present a collective complaint about the way these proposals will impact Hawstead.

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- Concern that no drivers will follow the official diversion leading to increased traffic through Hawstead.
- Concern about the decision to close Low Green; who made this decision – why was there no consultation? This was a poor decision given the impact of traffic on surrounding villages.
- Disappointment that neither HH nor SCC chose to attend the Nowton public meeting.
- Request that Hawstead PC make representations to HH/SCC seeking to reduce/mitigate impacts on Hawstead.
- Hawstead needs assurance from SCC/HH as to what action will be taken to remediate the condition of the local roads.
- Hawstead PC have been asking SCC for years to address the poor condition of the village roads, and in particular Bells Lane; this has never happened due to lack of funding; the extra traffic will only make the condition worse; as evidenced by the strength of feeling at the public meeting at Nowton on Weds 19 Feb, the 6-7 villages to the south west of BSE are hugely frustrated by the lack of any consultation with them about these proposals – why were these communities not consulted? Recommendation that the Council should lobby SCC leader M Hicks/ The Department of Transport /the CEO of HH to highlight the impacts/lack of consultation and seek to limit the volume of unsuitable traffic coming down Bells Lane, secure restoration of verges, install unsuitable for HGV/weak bridge signage. Concern about village roads becoming a rat run in both the short and long term.
- Concern about the impact of the additional traffic on the protected green and verges – what preventative measures can be taken?
- If the traffic cannot be reduced, then mitigations are required to reduce impacts; for example signage to tell drivers to stay off the County Wildlife Site protected village green; if the village green gets damaged as a result of these works then potentially the Council will be put in breach of its obligations under the terms of the Countryside Stewardship agreement agreed with DEFRA.
- SCC should re-open Low Green.
- The owner of the Bakery Business at Low Green raised concerns about the impact of the closure of Low Green on their business.
- Concern about the safety risk to residents/cyclists as a result of speeding traffic through Hawstead.
- There is no signage at the Bells Lane/ Bury Road split junction warning vehicles to stay left which is dangerous.
- Businesses in Hawstead/ BSE will suffer through the A134 closure; drivers will head for Sudbury/stay home. Local businesses are losing income at the expense of profit being made by HH.
- Request for speed camera/flashing sign to be installed in the village to keep speed down.
- Report that the traffic lights on the A134 are unmanned – what assistance is there for emergency vehicles? The ambulance control centre is apparently unaware of the roadworks/ access protocols.
- Concern that Low Green is not suitable to accommodate diverted buses on road closure weekends.
- The desire for a joined up approach with other affected Parish Councils – despite each Council having its own particular pinch points; there should be speed warning signs/ 20mph limits/ restoration of verges etc across all affected villages.
- Concern re lost vehicles.
- Concern that the traffic calming effect of the new roundabout will permanently generate more queuing traffic along the A134 which will lead to the ongoing use of the local roads through the village as a permanent rat run, in which case permanent traffic calming measures for Hawstead are required.
- There needs to be a weight restriction on the bridge at Bells Lane to prevent damage from the increased traffic; this bridge is already in a poor condition.

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The Chair thanked members of the public for attending and for expressing views in a good tempered way - despite the anxiety and frustration created by the closures.

### 3. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

**3.1 To receive disclosures of personal and prejudicial interests from Councillors on matters to be considered at the meeting.** None received.

**3.2 To consider any applications for dispensations in relation to declared pecuniary interests:** no dispensation applications were received.

### 4. MINUTES FROM THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING DATED 9<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2025.

Roll onto next meeting.

### 5. TO CONSIDER

#### 5.1 Response to proposed closure of A134 in connection with Hopkins Homes proposals

Following discussion it was **UNANIMOUSLY AGREED** that the Council would aim to; (1) secure preventative measures to protect the village green, verges and roads in the village; (2) secure mitigations to reduce negative impacts on Hawstead flowing from the proposed A134 closures; and (3) secure restoration to the village green, verges and roads where appropriate (together the Aims). In this regard it was **AGREED** that;-

A Hawstead PC would agree in principle to sign the joint letter being prepared by Great Whelmetham PC from local parish councils, whilst noting that Hawstead PC would separately prepare a letter setting out its own specific position.

B An A134 working party (HB/AB/JB) would be established to gather evidence about impacts on Hawstead/ the conduct of the A134 roadworks and associated traffic control measures, liaise with stakeholders to gather further information and generally progress the Aims, noting that the working party would report back periodically to the Council and that any formal correspondence should be sent via the clerk. The operation of the working party would be reviewed at the next scheduled PC meeting. Discussion followed about the preparation of a condition report for Bells Lane (pre A134 closure) for comparison purposes.

C A letter would be prepared by Hawstead PC to put on record disappointment at the lack of consultation/consideration given to the local community leading up to these works and requesting; (i) reconsideration as to the closure of Low Green/Rushbrooke Lane; (ii) signage - namely (a) 4 x signs "County Wildlife Site. Please do not drive on the Green"; (b) Keep left sign for Bury Road/Bells Lane Junction; and (iii) assurance as to remediation of verges/green post completion.

D The Council would seek the support of SC Cllr K Soons in helping to secure remediation works/ permanent 'unsuitable for HGV' signage on Bells Lane.

It was **NOTED** that;-

E consideration should be given to inviting an SCC rep to come to Hawstead to assess the condition of the local roads prior to the A134 diversion.

F the SCC ANPR equipment is scheduled to be in Hawstead 25/2-3/3/25; it was hoped this may help keep traffic speed down; it was **AGREED** to request that SCC allow Hawstead to keep this equipment for a longer period to address potential traffic speeding over the coming weeks.

Discussion followed about reviving the Speedwatch scheme in Hawstead; this had ceased to operate some time ago through lack of volunteers and the Council no longer holds the relevant equipment.

G The A134 Working Party shall prepare a report over the weekend as to traffic impacts/ road conditions/ operation of road closure etc for the initial closure weekend.

H The Chair had agreed to forward a report (comprising these minutes, any A134 Working Party report and any additional feedback received from villagers over the weekend) to the HH/SCC monitoring meeting scheduled for Monday 25/2/25.

I Clerk to check arrangements for a proposed online meeting with HH/SCC.

### 6. DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS Thursday 13th March 2025.

*The meeting closed at 9.20pm.*

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Signature.....