

## **Agenda item 21/80**

### **Update on Wethersfield Airfield Scrutiny Committee**

There is now a total of 11 parish councils belonging to WASC, Finchingfield, Wethersfield, Gt Bardfield, Great Yeldham, Gosfield, Little Bardfield, Panfield, Salings, Shalford, Toppesfield and Castle Hedingham.

Leaflets on behalf of SWAP have now been printed for distribution to residents in all 11 PCs, alerting them to the resistance of the prison and inviting financial contributions.

A more extensive 16 page A4 booklet has been printed which will be handed out on a one to one basis by SWAP seeking financial contributions to high net worth individuals

SWAP, together with Rosie Pearson, had a meeting with Defence Infrastructure Organisation on 7 March to discuss ecology.

Three WASC parish councillor representatives with two members of the Technical sub committee had a constructive meeting with two representatives of DIO on 21<sup>st</sup> March. Unfortunately the senior person from DIO (and who apparently has some knowledge of the area) was unable to attend due to Covid. However we have since received an email saying that he is pleased to see there is agreement to collaborate and whilst they have to get best returns from the disposal of MOD land, there are also "a number of social, environmental and other considerations within the definitions of the Govt's Social Value Model which we take into account."

He hopes to attend the next meeting in person.

The DIO's position is that they are neutral in the application to build a prison which is being made by MOJ. They are obliged to give first option for use of ministry property to other government departments and so this will run its course. Their goal is to sell the site by 2024/5.

DIO advised that WASC will have full access to MOJs consultants reports on ecology, environment and others, we are asking again for access for WASCs consultants to the airbase so that they can conduct their own research.

We understand that Natural England will be taking up the ecological interests of the site and resisting the building of a prison and that English Heritage and Historic England are taking an interest in the site.

The DIO have agreed to meet representatives of WASC to consider uses for the remainder of the airfield, we await confirmation of dates.

The BDC Scoping Report has been released and there is a lot more work for the MOJ to do in support of their planning application.

We await the application for PP.

FOI requests have revealed quite a lot of information which is being assessed. There is an internal BDC email (author redacted) dated 16<sup>th</sup> September 2021 which states " We held a productive meeting with Cllr Peter Tattersley this morning. He was very positive about the scheme and was keen to keep in touch regularly." Also "Cllr Tattersley suggested the local parish councils 'already

know' about the plans but are very positive as they prefer the delivery of new prisons to housing in this area."

There is an email from Peter Tattersley also dated 16<sup>th</sup> September 2021 confirming that representatives of the MOJ are very pleased "that the scheme is so far being positively received by the council". This I believe refers to BDC.

WASC wrote to our District Councillor (he represents 4 other members of WASC) explaining that amongst many other things recent FOIs had shown that he had been feeding back to BDC and to Cushman Wakefield (the government's agents) that the parish councils were supportive of the prisons. WASC asked quite reasonably for this to be corrected. I have attached the email and his response which people can make their own minds up about.

Next full WASC meeting is 25<sup>th</sup> April.

Any residents wishing to get involved should contact the WASC Clerk [Deputyclerk@wethersfield-pc.gov.uk](mailto:Deputyclerk@wethersfield-pc.gov.uk)