



Minutes of Ewelme Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 13th December 2023

Present: David Solomon (DS/Chairman)
Roger Moore (RM) Barry Tindall (BT)
Sue Cooper (SC) Joanna Brock (Clerk)
16 members of the public

193/23 **Apologies for absence:** Gemma Benoliel (GB/Chairman), Sally Stockings (SS) and Nigel Layton (NL.)
Freddie VanMierlo (FVM) and Andrea Powell (AP), as SC is representing SODC.

194/23 **Declarations of interest:** None.

195/23 **Minutes of last meeting 08/11/2023:** These were agreed and signed.

196/23 **Public session:** Planning application P23/S4022/T28 was discussed. SC read out a statement from the planning officer managing the application. DS read out the questions and answers he received from Airband. AP said that this issue may be raised in the Local Plan. A discussion followed with members of the public.

197/23 **County & District Councillor reports:** FVM, SC & AP sent reports before the meeting. SC attended the meeting and mentioned the district council grants available and the drive for nature recovery

198/23 **Planning**

P23/S3605/HH: Two storey side extension. Address: 4 Downs Farm House, Ewelme, OX10 6PQ. RESOLVED EPC have no objections.

P23/S4022/T28: Installation of 11 new telegraph poles for the provision of fibre to premises (FTTP) in Ewelme, various locations. RESOLVED this is may be allowed under Permitted Development however EPC would like their comments to be taken into consideration. For full comments please see *appendix*.

199/23 **Accounts and Administration:**

- (a) RESOLVED finance report accepted.
- (b) RESOLVED new income and expenditure authorised. *See appendix.*
RESOLVED all invoices to date authorised.
- (c) RESOLVED Clerk's percentage pay increase for 2023/24 was accepted.
- (d) Clerk confirmed the precept demand has been submitted to SODC

200/23 **The Pound:** This will be discussed at the January meeting.

201/23 **Chainsaw training:** It was agreed to pay half the cost of chainsaw training to two volunteers, total cost to the Council will be £850.

202/23 **Wilding:** A. Walker attended the meeting and said new hedging will be planted on Friday. Fords Farm farmer has asked EPC to approach the Chiltern Society to fix some of the kissing gates on the Common. WREN is still in communication with Grundon regarding the change of use of their land.

203/23 **Bus shelter:** This will be discussed at the January meeting.

204/23 **Traffic:** The SIDS have been moved and DS will put a report together soon. DS is looking into installing a camera to record vehicle usage on Green Lane.

205/23 **Landslide:** RM has been in contact with OCC and they have said all funding has been approved for the drains and pipes to be improved from Fords Farm to the shop. The unstable bank is still being examined.

206/23 **Car park:** This will be added to the January agenda.

207/23 **Health & safety:** None.

208/23 **Village Maintenance including outdoor gym, pavilion, play area & the Common:** The Clerk and BT met at the playground to go through the annual playground report. The minor repairs will be actioned.

209/23 **Reports from meetings, training and other events:** None.

210/23 **Correspondence:** There will be an event to commemorate Alice Chaucer's death in 2025. EPC would like to be involved.

211/23 **Other items of interest:** A member of the public said the black and white chevrons by the bridge are covered in foliage. BT said the WREN team can clear this. The Clerk's laptop is malfunctioning. The Council agreed the Clerk could purchase a laptop up to £600 once it ceases to function.

The meeting closed at 2130

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Date of next meeting – 10th January 2024

Appendix

Planning 198/23: P23/S4022/T28

Background

1. The great majority of Ewelme residents welcome the imminent arrival of ultrafast broadband in the village, or at least recognise the importance of it for development of connectivity for the future.
2. However, many Ewelme residents were taken aback by the recent submission by Airband to SODC giving notice that they propose to erect 11 additional telegraph poles through the village, from each of which a number of properties would be supplied by overhead fibre cables. While earlier communications from Airband had indeed referred to the possible requirement for additional poles, the extent of the installation was a shock to many. As the modern trend, and indeed the stated preferred option within the regulations (see below) are to have all such connections below ground, many residents had assumed that this would be the case for most properties in Ewelme.
3. In a debate in parliament on May 15 2023, in response to a public petition regarding the unsatisfactory state of the planning process for installation of communication networks, the Minister for Data and Digital Infrastructure (Sir John Whittingdale) said, *inter alia*:-
“The 2003 regulations include a requirement for operators to share apparatus where practicable; to use underground, rather than overground, lines where reasonably practicable, with certain exceptions, and when installing apparatus, to minimise the visual amenity of properties...”
“This government also believe that apparatus sharing can significantly reduce the need for new installations and has recently introduced measures, contained in the Product Security and Telecommunications Infrastructure Act 2022, which will support and facilitate this. The relevant measures came into force on 7 February 2023 and 17 April 2023.”
4. The 2003 regulations contain the following:-
“The sharing of poles should be considered at the design stage in order to reduce unnecessary duplication and visual effect.”
“Where new poles are to be installed the Code Operator should place a site notice (coinciding with notification to the relevant authorities) in as close proximity as possible to the proposed apparatus indicating to nearby residents the intention to install a pole, and the proposed location. The location of such notices should be discussed with the relevant authorities at the initial engagement meeting. If an appropriate place to site a notice is not available, another means of informing residents may be discussed and agreed upon.....such as a mailshot. In National Parks and AONBs the Code Operator should discuss new pole locations with the National Park Authority or AONB Partnership at an early stage to identify opportunities to minimise any adverse landscape impact.”
“All new poles should be sited, as far as is practicable, so as to minimise their impact on their setting, including the landscape and any buildings. For particularly sensitive parts of Conservation Areas.... Identified in dialogue with the local planning authority, and where there is no alternative to siting a pole in a location deemed unacceptable by the planning authority, then consideration should be given to using underground service feeds.”

5. On December 13, there was an exchange of emails between Ewelme Parish Council (EPC) and Airband, in which EPC attempted to obtain some answers to specific questions regarding the proposed installation. The questions are shown below in blue, and the Airband responses in red.
1. In how many properties in Ewelme are you installing equipment in this tranche? We only install equipment IN the property when an order is placed. But if you mean how many premises are we hoping to be able to offer a connection to then the majority of homes. We hope to be able to install as many properties as possible but this is dependant on wayleaves and of course restrictions to where we can put poles and also cost.
 2. How many (or what proportion) of the properties in Ewelme in which you are installing equipment will have underground supply right to the property? Presumably the balance will have an overhead supply from an existing or new pole. If a property already has a duct to the premise we would use the duct otherwise we would install a pole or use an existing pole. The vast majority will be from existing duct or existing poles.
 3. Presumably it would be technically feasible to install underground connections to all houses; I assume though that the cost is a major consideration. Are you able to tell us how a decision was reached for individual properties? If the properties have duct to the premises already in place we would use that duct, otherwise the cost is too high for us to install duct to every premise.
 4. What would the approximate cost have been to make an underground connection compared to the overhead option? Costs depend on the nature of the installation, whether we go in a footpath a road, a soft verge etc and the distance of course, the underground option is considerable higher than overhead.
 5. Would retrofitting an underground connection be feasible for those properties now being fitted with an overhead connection? What might this cost? It wouldn't be cost effective for us, where we can go underground we have done so. As above the costs a dependant on a few factors.
 6. According to an answer given in Parliament by Sir John Whittingdale, Minister for Data and Digital Infrastructure, on March 8 2023, "The 2003 regulations include the requirements for operators to share apparatus where practicable". You mention in earlier documents that it has not been possible to use the existing electricity supply poles (even though earlier telecoms equipment has used them) because of stringent conditions applied by the electricity company. Are you able to tell us what these conditions are, and why they render sharing impractical. At this moment we do not have a framework agreement in place with the power company so we cannot use their infrastructure we are working on this but it is very time consuming, it is also very expensive for us to rent the space on a power pole much more than a BT pole so it would not always be a cost effective option.

Concerns of Ewelme Parish Council

6. At least two of the pole locations, #3 and #11, appear to be on land belonging to the Chiltern Society. We believe that they have not been approached to negotiate permission to site the poles. Are any other proposed pole sites on private land?
7. The 2003 regulations (para 4 above) require the promoter to consult with the Chilterns AONB Partnership to "identify opportunities to minimise landscape impact". Has this been done; if so; are notes available regarding the outcome of this consultation?

8. As many of the pole locations are within a Conservation Area, has dialogue taken place with the “local planning authority” to establish any pole locations that the authority might deem unacceptable?
9. Posting of notices at the proposed location of each pole, or some alternative communication with nearby residents coinciding with the notification of the relevant authorities, required by the 2003 regulations, has not taken place.
10. Where the proposed poles are located within a Conservation Area and AONB, we are concerned that the option of underground routing may not have been fully explored; our attempt to gain an insight into the relative costs and mechanism used to arrive at a decision to reject the preferred option were unsuccessful (email exchange dated December 13, para 5 above). We would appreciate a dialogue on this.
11. The proposal to erect poles at each end of Eyres Close was a surprise, and unwelcome to the residents. The properties in the Close are all of relatively recent construction and there appear to be no overhead cables at present (electricity or telecoms). Surely there is not the intention to make the fibre supply overhead here?
12. The situation where Airband claims that use of other operators’ poles has not been feasible has caused some dismay in the village. For many of the proposed poles there is an electricity or other pole nearby; the great majority of houses in the village are currently connected to a telecom system via an underground cable (very few) or an overhead wire from an existing pole (the great majority). The fact that even a single additional pole is deemed necessary represents a failure to achieve the second preferred option of using a third party pole.
13. The fact that a significant proportion of the Ewelme population were surprised and dismayed by the current proposals involving very few underground connections and eleven additional poles, indicates that communication between Airband and the village residents has been less than perfect. Ewelme is by no means alone in considering that it has been kept poorly informed by promoters of ultrafast broadband schemes. The answers provided by Airband in the December 13 exchange of emails were very non-specific and only addressed the questions posed in a very general way. We consider the consultation process far from complete and would welcome an early and detailed dialogue to resolve some of our concerns.
14. Ewelme is a picturesque village, much of which is both a Conservation Area and AONB. It is already blighted by the presence of dozens of poles carrying electricity and telephone cables and wires, and is criss-crossed by hundreds of wires running from these poles to individual properties. The current proposal, involving 11 new poles, and possibly up to 200 additional wires (or fibre cables) from poles, both existing and new, to houses. (This figure of 200 is based upon Airband’s stated hope that most properties in the village will be connected to their system, and their inability or unwillingness to state what proportion would be supplied by underground connections). At a time when we should be seeking to reduce the overhead clutter in our village, this increase is considered anachronistic and quite at odds with the exciting rollout of new technology.

**Ewelme PC Payments & Receipts December
2023**

Ref no:	Payments for authorisation:	
	Administration costs	1,509.48
DD	Grundon	36.85
13.12.23.02	HMRC	233.79
13.12.23.03	PATA payroll services	35.80
13.12.23.04	SLCC subscription	183.00
13.12.23.05	NP Design & Print	515.00
13.12.23.06	VHM hall hire - 11/11/23	45.00
13.12.23.07	SODC - election	1,500.27
	EN	75.00
	PC debit card payments (below)	88.78
		4,222.97

Date	Receipts since last meeting:	
21/11/2023	Ewelme news advert	45.00
		45.00