

Willoughby Parish

Minutes of the Willoughby Annual Community Meeting held on 29th April 2025 at
7.00pm in the Village Hall

Present

Cllr Beech – Chair of Willoughby Parish Council
Parish councillors Ash, Honess, Lewis and Sheppard
John Tautu – leader of SALFV
Jo Jarman - minute taker
Members of the public – 65

Cllr Beech welcomed everyone to the meeting and reiterated that the meeting is a legal requirement that must be held between 1st March and 1st June annually. This meeting for the village has been facilitated by the Parish Council this year. Residents can organise the meeting in the future, if they so wish.

Apologies

Andrew Palmer, Betty Oates, Norman Oates and Elizabeth Woolf

Minutes of the last meeting

Rod Honess proposed that the minutes of the Annual Community Meeting held on 7 May 2024 be approved, seconded by Tony Gasser. **Approved.**

Matters arising

None

RBC Preferred Option Local Plan Consultation and Lodge Farm

John Tautu (JT), leader of the Stand Against Lodge Farm (SALFV) campaign group, gave a presentation on the risks should Lodge Farm (a housing estate of 2,650 homes, one field away from Willoughby) be included in the next version of the Local Plan.

JT gave the background to the previous proposal in 2016 and reiterated that getting the latest proposal taken out of the Plan at this stage (Reg 18) will be more straightforward than if it goes through to Reg 19. The last objection cost £250k and 3 years of campaigning. RBC refused to remove Lodge Farm until the Planning Inspector removed the site for the following reasons:

1. Traffic – remote area so a car would be needed to access the proposed village.
2. Landscape – harm to intrinsic beauty and character of the countryside.
3. Heritage – less than substantial harm to heritage assets – “less than substantial” is significant when there is no benefit to offset the harm.
4. Not required to deliver land supply for housing and employment. The land supply has already been identified to support housing and employment.

The above points are applicable to the latest proposal.

This proposal differs from the last proposal in the following respects:

- Site area has increased significantly to 256 hectares
- Number of homes has increased significantly from 1,500 to 2,650
- 4 hectares of employment land is included
- Community facilities – 2 x primary schools, 1 x secondary, retail/health, village centre, sports pitches and mobility hub

- Public transport – progressive public transport solution with frequent attractive bus services
- Green infrastructure – “Active Travel Network”, internal walking/cycling routes, highly sustainable footpaths to village centre and beyond
- Access and movement – green and blue corridors, enhanced landscape corridors, focus on Rains Brook valley corridor enhancement
- Landscape strategy - green and blue corridors, enhanced landscape corridors, focus on Rains Brook valley corridor enhancement

Summary of key changes from the 2016 plan:

- Traffic will get MUCH worse – the village would become a destination, not just a departure point. Between 19,600 and 22,400 car trips per day would be expected.
- Landscape will still be harmed – including biodiversity loss, fragmented landscapes and visual intrusion.
- The site is not needed – RBC preferred option indicates 9% over allowance of housing. Many villages will get new homes but not on this scale. The Local Plan is robust without Lodge Farm.

Property values will be impacted. House prices have already fallen due to overdevelopment in Rugby and the lack of infrastructure. Nationally, house prices have increased.

The proposed village is not inevitable.

Consultation on the Local Plan closes on 19th May. Two options contain Lodge Farm, three do not. RBC preferred option does not include Lodge Farm. RBC must follow the proper process to ensure they cannot be challenged by developers.

Overspill from Coventry is not given as a reason for the development as it was last time.

RBC leaders and officers need our support to avoid including Lodge Farm in the plan.

SALFV has drawn up three letters of objection based on the following grounds:

- Transport Infrastructure and Safety
- Environmental and Landscape
- Community Sustainability and Infrastructure

Highways already have concerns.

Every signature matters. Everyone at each house can object, people working in or visiting the area can also object.

Anyone wanting to take the letters can post the signed copies through Malcolm Lewis's letterbox at 5 White Barn Close; he will collect them on behalf of SALFV for submission to RBC.

Anyone wanting an electronic copy of the letters can email the Clerk at clerk@willoughbyparishcouncil.org or Maggie Beech at maggie.beech@gmail.com

Results of the consultation will be published in Q4.

Maggie Beech thanked JT for all his work on SALFV and the hours that he has put in.

Community Action Report 2025

The report celebrates community volunteers and their successes over the past year or so. The report is available in hard copy and will also be posted on the Parish Council website.

Five projects are highlighted in the report:

- Pop Up Café
- Village Pond
- Flood Action Group
- Streetlight upgrade and resulting savings
- Church

Residents showed their appreciation to the projects and all volunteers in the village, including the unsung heroes.

Issues residents would like to raise

The following were raised:

- Potholes and erosion of the side of the verges on Sawbridge Road – this has been raised with Cllr Dale Keeling, but is the responsibility of WCC Highways which has a limited budget.
- Shrubbery footpath – resident has said he will obtain a quote.
- Landscape - English Heritage has said that the historic landscape around Willoughby and the surrounding villages is of national importance. RBC should be informed about this as part of the objections.

Residents thanked Maggie Beech and the Parish Councillors for their hard work on behalf of the village.

The meeting closed at 8pm.