



Abbots Ann Parish Assembly

Held at the War Memorial Hall on Wednesday 22nd May 2024 at 19:00

Present:

Councillor Jordan (Chair), Councillor Howard (Vice Chair), Councillor Heather, Councillor Wallis, Councillor Mitchell, Amanda Owen (Clerk) & fourteen members of the public.

Apologies for absence:

Apologies for absence were received from Borough Councillors Maureen Flood & Susanne Hasselmann.

1. Pre-meeting refreshments & opportunity to review information stands.

2. Introduction and welcome by the Parish Council Chair.

Councillor Jordan welcomed everyone to the meeting and advised that this is one of the legal requirements of the Parish Council. There is no official format, a fairly relaxed session.

The minutes of the 2023 Parish Assembly were signed as a correct record of the meeting.

1. AAPC is now back up to 6 Cllrs, with Patricia Mitchel and Annabel Rous having joined us a few months ago. As in previous years we have updated and maintained our portfolio approach to Council business with volunteer leads for various portfolios, although in reality we all help out where required. We do still have 1 vacancy and any willing or curious volunteers wanting to know more are welcome to reach out to any of us to find out what is involved.

Finance

2. Financially we are now on a really even keel. Our budgeting approach, the use of earmarked reserves for specific projects and a determination to avoid any 'boom and bust' approach to spending has really served us well and is one of the reasons we can now drive the Bulbery Community Pavilion project forward despite the CLT still having not finalised the services of a main contractor.

Bulbery

3. Whilst the main project is totally dependent upon the CLT project coming to fruition, we have decided to drive forward with the initial consultations and planning applications with Test Valley. For those familiar with the planning process, we aim to conduct pre-planning consultations, conduct whatever surveys Test Valley insist upon and move the project forward to a full planning application. Once we secure this, and assuming the CLT are on track with builder to deliver Their project we will immediately proceed to the next stage of producing detailed drawings and designs that can be used for tender purposes to select a contractor to deliver the works.

4. We've employed Luke Rose, who many of you may know, to act as our architect and help us make this project become a reality. Luke is here this evening and has been asked to give you an insight to his initial thoughts – please remember neither he nor we have all the answers, but I feel we do have a really clear way forward.

5. You will all see a change of emphasis as we go forward; we want to deliver facilities for the entire community that are not just focussed on sport. As we firm up the designs and plans, we will ensure that they are

freely available and community views are listened to. By moving ahead of the CLT there is a degree of financial risk, but one worth taking. We have budgeted well in recent years and I am confident that given some help from other stakeholders we can now start to deliver the amenities the community has long wanted to see.

A lot of people have invested a lot of their time, over many years, to try and get this project off the ground and they should all be commended for their determination and support. In particular I want to call out FOTAAS, who under Jane Wiggs stewardship continue to raise community funds to support the project – Thank you!

EMRs and the Church

6. Whilst we have funds set aside for various works in and around the Church yard and burial grounds, finding contractors prepared to undertake the work is proving incredibly problematic. I am concerned that the inflation we are seeing in the building sector will quickly erode the EMR we have established. Despite our obligations to conduct works and maintenance I have to balance what we spend against the value for money it delivers and the benefit the community derives. I will not support an open check book approach to complete works where the benefit is not felt by the entire community.

7. Many of you will be aware that the wooden post and rail fence along the side of the church path is in poor condition, in parts derelict and in others in danger of collapsing into the path. It is not owned by AAPC and we are powerless to compel the owners to repair it. We have tried contacting them on several occasions to no avail. We have also notified the owners that in not conducting repairs they must accept all liability for any injuries caused to members of the public as their fence continues to collapse and more barbed wire becomes expose. It is rather disappointing that members of community neglect their responsibility to maintain their property to detriment of the wider community.

Tree Works

8. Some of you may be aware that we have recently had tree surgeons working across the village carrying out some 'preventative maintenance' on a range of trees for which we are responsible. The work was not without its issues! We deferred payment and instructed our arboriculturist to check the works conducted and the contractor has had to return several times to meet their contractual obligations; The arboriculturist's fee is probably the best £90 we will spend this year! We also owe the WMH an apology, having promised then we would sell the wood from the trees that were felled / pruned back – the contractor removed it despite instructions to the contrary.

9. Finally, and very sadly, there was no interest in the community to mark the D-Day 80 commemorations on 6th June. As the Second World War fast approaches the point when it will pass from living memory in to history as the last of the veterans dies perhaps it is worth remembering the words on the memorial of the British Army's 2nd Division at Kohima (North East India): **"When you go home, Tell them of us and say, For your tomorrow, We gave our today"**. I was the last Provost Marshall of the Division, which served at various times for 203 years in the order of battle and was finally disbanded in 2012. We live in a community with very strong ties to the military and so to my fellow veterans I simply say: We will remember them.

10. We will now receive a number of updates from Cllrs and Community groups for which I am most grateful. Before we do so, if there are any questions I am happy to try and answer them.

No questions were received.

3. Reports by Portfolio Holders

Councillor Mitchell introduced herself to members present and updated visitors with regards to the Wellbeing portfolio, in terms of bringing the community together.

Councillor Wallis addressed the meeting and advised that he looks after the Pavilion including bookings. The football pitches have been used well this season by Anton FC, Shooters FC and a few other local groups. Hoping with the new community clubhouse and configuration of the Sportsfield facilities it will open the doors to more hirers.

Councillor Jordan asked visitors to remember that in terms of team sports, we do not have a home-grown team of any description within the Parish. However, a solution can still be met where there are pitches available, whether it is multi use and hired out. The drive for the new project is not sport, it is for community benefit. How can the best location be utilised to encourage parishioners to use it, whether it be a diverse range of activities or within the Parish. Councillor Jordan noted that Councillor Wallis has done a sterling job of maintaining the Pavilion / Sportsfield bookings.

John Deacon (Sportsfield Group) addressed the meeting and advised that we cannot charge market rate for current facilities due to the current standard of the available facilities. Noting that if we were able to charge market rate, the Pavilion and Sportsfield would be self-sufficient.

Councillor Jordan agreed with the comment and noted that a series of mini upgrades had been done to help increase usage.

Anne Cunningham addressed the meeting and advised that Littleton had a vast network of community groups and hopes that this can be achieved in Abbots Ann with the new Community Clubhouse.

Councillor Jordan agreed and advised that a diverse range of activities would be considered, working alongside our Architect. The new space must be multi use, and still be able support events like the Fete and bonfire night.

Councillor Heather addressed the meeting and provided an overview of his Portfolio. The main item being maintaining the public footpaths as Footpath Warden with two other volunteers. Which sees regular cutting and general maintenance. All footpaths have been visited three times this year, these visits will continue until September. John also oversees the Green, noting that it is cut by TVBC but he trims around gates and benches. Curator of the telephone box / information centre, making sure it is clean and doing housework, with yearly repainting. Oversees, the highways and pavements around the village reporting issues to Hampshire County Council. This week visit from Highways Manager to check on blocked drains, conducting a survey and reporting back to HCC. Works alongside Janet from the Pill Hill Brook Association reporting back to the PC and Pill Hill Pan Parish Forum meeting quarterly with Southern Water. Southern Water have been working sealing pipe joints and man hole covers. Noted a few years ago there were approximately 30 tankers pumping water, recently when the water level has been the highest there have thankfully been no tankers. They are only seen when there is an emergency.

Councillor Jordan advised that Ofwat are about to publish figures of what Southern Water asked for in terms of budget and how they are planning to allocate it and how it will affect their budget in the next five years.

Amenities Portfolio Report – for 22 May 2024

Civil Burial Ground (BG)

The project to replace the BG fence from Church Path boundary with the Churchyard to the boundary with the Old Manor on Church Road is to go ahead this Summer. Funding for this project requires the use of Earmarked reserves to ensure monies are available in year 24/25. In addition we have part funding by a grant from the Borough.

Maintenance of St Mary's Churchyard

The refurbishment of the internal Churchyard Footpaths has also seen difficulties with lack of interest from possible contractors and a complicated specification. Ray Lucas has assisted the Clerk with this project and it went out to tender action, but with no success. Again, Funding requires the use of Earmarked reserves to ensure monies are available in year 24/25. The PCC has been informed of the likely shortage of funding and advised that they will need to apply for a grant as AAPC grants will not be available to benefit the Church.

Village Telephone kiosk

John Heather continues to do a splendid job and will update us on this.

Play Areas and skate Park

With the loss of Councillors responsible for these as portfolio holders the Parish Clerk continues to look after this area without support and has obtained funding for several repairs and replacements. Someone willing to take this task on would be much appreciated.

Amenities in the Parish for which other Organisations or Persons are Responsible

There have been no major problems with liaising with other amenities in the Parish.

Gordon Howard

Amenities Portfolio Lead

4. Reports by Borough and County Councillors.

TVBC Councillors Report - Abbotts Ann Annual Parish Meeting – 22 May 2024

Cllr Maureen Flood & Cllr Susanne Hasselmann

Our thanks and appreciation to our Abbotts Ann Parish Councillors and to the many groups and individuals in our community who give their time, effort and expertise contributing to village parish life.

Test Valley Borough Council continues to progress the regeneration projects in Andover and Romsey. The headline news was securing £18.3m from the Government's Levelling Up Fund to build a brand-new multi-purpose theatre in the heart of Andover town centre accelerating the masterplan.

Earlier this year, the Borough Council undertook consultation on the Regulation 18 Stage 2 phase of the Local Plan 2040. The Local Plan allocates strategic development sites for both new homes and employment. Test Valley are required by Central Government to provide sites for 11,000 new dwellings across the borough by 2040. It is anticipated that the next public consultation, Regulation 19 on the Local Plan will open early in 2025.

There is a delay in the rollout of a new waste service. TVBC had previously agreed plans to introduce weekly food waste collections from 2024, as well as the introduction of a new 1,2,3 Weekly, waste and recycling collection system. However last year, the Government announced 'Simpler Recycling'. This unexpected change in policy direction at a national level meant that the new county-wide twin stream system was no longer an absolute requirement and other options could be considered. A Government consultation followed and the Council awaits the outcome. However, as a result of 'Simpler Recycling', it is likely the Borough Council will be able to introduce a fully comingled waste collection system i.e. all recyclable materials, including glass will be contained within one bin, making recycling much easier for residents. TVBC does have to wait for the results of the Government's Consultation before Hampshire District/Borough Councils and the County Council can develop a waste collection and disposal system that meets the legislative requirements.

Turning to TVBC finances. You will be aware of parts of the country where councils have had to declare a section 114 (bankruptcy notice). Against a backdrop of severe financial pressure for local government: Test Valley is in a relatively good position. Our below inflation council tax rise of 3.1% this year protects front line services. That means an average bill of £163.91 for a year of Test Valley Borough Council services: £43 lower than the average charge for the rest of England.

More locally the Anna ward Borough Councillor Community Grant Scheme contributed to new fencing for the Burial Ground, laptops for the Nursery School and to the new awning for the Village Shop

Your Anna ward Councillors are privileged to have been able to assist a number of residents with their individual cases and continue to support our village initiatives including the Abbotts Ann Community Land Trust and the Pill Hill Pan Parish/Southern Water forum.

5. Reports from Community Groups

Luke Rose – Community Clubhouse Architect

Test Valley Borough Council planning service will want to see a clear public benefit, which will be the core of their considerations. Although the project is clearly a community project it has to be clear how the public will benefit. Key

points are 'Can we demonstrate it will be used' and the broadening of the plans to support the viability. The visual impact of the building is important.

The rewilding of the outdoors space will help with walking, accessing the area, wild flower meadows. Rewilding will also soften any potential MUGA areas. The building in its own right has to demonstrate its purpose.

In design terms, to have a good reflection the building has to fit in with the concept of the natural environment. The building must fit with the landscape rather than dominating the landscape.

Monxton Village Hall have been successful with producing a suitable building. An Oak frame building with large glass windows allows the building to be permeable, visitors inside can enjoy outside from inside. A barn type building allows multi functional, simple building. A high vaulted ceiling allows film screening, indoors sports and screening so the space can be successfully divided with the crooked oak frame. The vision is to achieve the same with the Community Clubhouse.

Q: Will the structure have solar panels?

A: Yes, they have been considered, whether panels, or solar tiles.

Q: Rewilding – what is it?

A: In very basic terms, turn the entire place in to a wildflower meadow with a diverse range of plants and mow out what you need, when you need it. Fixed items will be in place, however these harden a landscape. The rewilding allows those items to be softened. Noted that there needs to be a balance between rewilding and maintenance costs. An important aim to green up the space so it has more use than just sport, an area of rest, relaxation, play areas. How can we “green” the space with what is already there alongside the community activities.

Councillor Jordan reiterated that all plans have to be suitable to the Borough Council and that flexibility will be required. Lines of communication will remain open amongst the community to ensure things are done correctly.

Q: Timescales.

A: A year worth of preparation and a years' worth of build in very simple terms.

Janet Wright – Pill Hill Brook Association

A new group of land owners that the Pill Hill Brook flows through, along with support of Stakeholders and volunteers helping conduct invertebrate tests.

Water testing for nitrate, phosphate, ammonia and water temperature. These water testing kits have been put together by the Angling Trust. The inspiration is to have every river tested every month for two years to produce a concise report of finding. Overall, it is felt the Pill Hill Brook is in a relatively good state. Communication between land owners will allow maintenance and to prevent any disruption. They association works alongside the Environmental Agency to help minimise risk.

The Pill Hill Brook is a chalk stream, only 250 in the world. In Hampshire there are only 37 classic chalk streams, therefore a very special environment as spring fed. Chalk streams has more life in any river in the world.

The group is a growing group, if anyone would like to know more please ask the Parish Council for contact details.

Overall, the Brook is looking well, clean with a good water speed. The huge amount of rain has had a positive impact on the Brook. The fish are gradually making their way back up the Brook.

Lynne Lucas – WI

Abbotts Ann WI has been founded for over a hundred years (1917). We have around 35 members and believe it is good for the village to have a WI. We support village events when we can, especially refreshments for the Fete where we raised over £1200 (before expenses) and the PlantSale. In turn the village helped us fill a coach to Windsor Castle last August and are doing the same for our trip to the Tower of London in August 2024. We still have a few spaces left and if you don't want to go to the Tower you can still use the coach for a trip to London for a bargain price of £23 or including entry to the Tower £48.

It is our AGM later this month when we review the last 12 months and look forward to the coming year. We will be enjoying Fish and Chips at the AGM this year as we have done for several previous years. Our Garden

Meeting in June this year is a visit to Featherstones Flower Farm in Nether Wallop where we will visit the flower meadows and have a cream tea in their magnificent barn. We are very fortunate that we have a bursary from George King in memory of his wife Pamela who was a keen member of our WI and this supports a fully funded meeting for our members each year.

On the 30th June we are holding an Afternoon Tea here in the Village Hall as a fund raiser so that we have sufficient funds to 'treat our members to new experiences'. Our membership fees just about cover the hire of the Village Hall and the cost of speakers. Please come, bring your friends - male, female or whatever. They will all be welcome and the scones and cakes will all be home made by our members.

We have a Coffee morning on the second Thursday morning of each month which is open to all. In addition to this and our monthly meeting we have a monthly walk, book club, supper/lunch club along with theatre visits.

New members are always welcome.

John Barlow – Abbotts Ann Community Land Trust

The aim is to provide 24 dwellings, affordable, market homes to purchase, whether a move or a downsize. Terms have been agreed for the purchase of the site. Discussions have taken place and surveys conducted. Noting that the community support is of the utmost importance. A good level of support has already been received. When further plans etc are in place, a further consultation will be taking place within the village. TVBC has requested that another housing needs survey is to be conducted. It is important to ascertain which type of properties are required. The aim is to build thermal efficient homes. The project has been going for many years, however is very much alive. Building costs have increased by approximately 25% in the last couple of years. Noting that this increase will significantly knock a developer's budget. Possibly adjustments are being considered on how to make the homes, and building of the properties a viable project.

A new Housing Needs Survey will be coming in the upcoming weeks, I urge you, family and friends to complete the survey. The community will be contacted before anything further goes ahead. TVBC looks very carefully at what it is we want to do, and what community benefit will be derived from it. Community Consultation and support is vital. Hope to obtain settled proposals in the next few months. Please ensure that the word is spread that the project is very much alive.

Q: Do you have Home in England funding?

A: Yes. Main source of funding for all works completed thus far.

Q: What standard of insulation will the build have?

A: Aiming to be as close to passive housing as possible.

Q: Affordable Housing, what will the figures be?

A: The market price houses will be sold by the Developer. The affordable housing will be handed to a housing association who will determine the property pricing. The CLT aims to make it as affordable as possible.

Q: Affordable housing, who will oversee?

A: A Housing Association has not been decided.

Q: Has the Developer been chosen?

A: At present unable to share due to sensitivity of the project.

Q: Qualification of local connection? How rigid can it be to target local people?

A: To be agreed between CLT and TVBC. Looking at local residents, relatives of local residents and those with a local connection. If no local connection is available, a cascade arrangement will be adopted so that the property can be offered to people from adjoining villages. The development has always had a local connection forefront and these views will be stressed to TVBC.

Councillor Jordan advised that the CLT have, and will remain to have the support of the Parish Council.

Chris – Village Shop

The Village shop and Post Office speak for themselves, running for 22 years with a fantastic group of staff and forty volunteers who cannot be praised enough, alongside an enthusiastic management committee. Wonderful new awning and print along the front. Financially, the healthiest the bank account has ever been. It reflects the community support, and everyone should feel pride in it.

Tim Tayler – St Marys Church

Abbotts Ann PCC report for the Abbotts Ann Annual Parish Meeting

St Mary's Church is part of the Anna Benefice with All Saints' Upper Clatford and St Peter's Goodworth Clatford. It is managed by Abbotts Ann Parochial Church Council (PCC) which supports our rector, the Reverend Teresa Townsend, in promoting our mission to the community. A proposal to amalgamate with the six parishes of the nearby Portway and Danebury team has been dropped.

There are weekly services, traditional and modern, in St Mary's Church. Weekly Zoom services help people who are less mobile and Night Prayer on Facebook reaches 50 people around the world four times each week. Monthly Messy Church is popular with children as is Wild Worship, every two months, it's for people who like to find God out of doors – which is where we saw in the Easter sunrise at Upper Clatford and Ascension Day on Danebury Ring.

It's a pleasure to share in the life of Abbotts Ann Primary School. Children and parents celebrated Harvest festival and Christmas carols in St Mary's where we welcome history and RE visits. Teresa now visits the Nursery School for story time and they join us in church for Primary School services.

Men's Café puts the world to rights each week in the village shop. Little Steps, our monthly toddlers' group at All Saints', is going from strength to strength. We provide pastoral care to anyone who is finding life difficult or would just like a chat. And we take home communion to those who request it.

Our building is in fairly good shape. We're immensely grateful to Abbotts Ann Parish Council for maintaining the churchyard and funding the clock. St Mary's Church Building Trust kindly supports our repair work. We're continuing to raise funds for a self-contained WC south of the tower stairs.

At the village fete we ran the cake stall and hosted the flower show which attracted over 300 visitors. With the fete committee's generous grant of £1030 we are extending the range of the sound system and making provision for recorded music.

In the tower our ringers have maintained the bells and honed their skills to support weekly worshippers and wedding and funeral families. The handbell group, with their own fete grant have bought two new bells and share a new amplification system with the PCC. The benefice choir can muster 20 singers to support worship and put on concerts. Their carol singing outside Tesco Extra at Christmas raised £185.22 for Andover's Finding Freedom from Abuse.

Income is down and expenses are up but we are holding our own financially. We have lost some key members recently but there is evidence of growth. And, as always, we are very grateful to the many volunteers from across the village who assist at services, provide refreshments, arrange flowers, clean the church, lock up at night and undertake so many unseen tasks.

Fete Committee – Anne Cunningham

In 2023 our plant sale and fete raised our highest revenue for the village community organisations including generous donations from the village coronation committee and Evans and Partridge our main sponsor. At our AGM last November we were therefore able to distribute grants to the value of £8,450.

The following organisations benefited:

Church £1,030	FOTAAS £1,150	Handbells £920	Memorial Hall £1,150
Nursery £500	Players £1,000	School £750	Shop £1,150
WI £800			

Each organisation used their grant to benefit their organisation and the Village community. For example, the Abbotts Ann Nursery will use their fete grant to purchase books on diversity, educating our local pre-school children. Our Handbells group ordered 2 new bells. These additional bells enabled the group to extend their musical repertoire and give more enjoyment to village listeners and many older members of our nearby community centres whom they visit.

Our village community last year pulled together to create a wonderful, enjoyable, safe Family Day. Our fete entertainment last year included the Out of Bounds Theatre Group, Military Wives Choir, Primary School Country Dancers, The Larks acapello singers, Vintage Car Parade and our Handbells group. We also offered traditional teas from our WI, BBQ and family games including Tug of War. Our traditional flower, produce, baking and photography show / competition was housed in 3 venues across the village which enabled our community to enjoy seeing brilliant exhibits but also experience the beauty of our quintessential English village with church, pub, shop, and war memorial hall.

Our Grand raffle was superb, with a variety of excellent prizes.

The stalls we offered were very successful including Bric a Brac and the cake stall. The 20 + external stalls in Duck Street provided variety and allowed charities and commercial enterprises to create a wow factor.

No surprise the Eagle support was outstanding, not just with providing a great pub service and food for the BBQ but also helping to put up and dismantle the large marquee in the Village Hall grounds and move heavy equipment. Their generous use of their pub garden also enabled us to facilitate the popular dog show and hold a wonderful fete evening party with live music. Our local Gurkha restaurant the Plough also provided good food in the evening at the pub.

Our grateful support of John Benson who allowed us to use his land for parking which was superbly managed by the Am Drams.

At our first March 2024 fête committee meeting we welcomed new members from all community organisations. We are particularly delighted to welcome the church bell ringers group to our committee.

Our first committee decision was to decide on the fete venue and after detailed information lists were sent to the community groups and a follow up open discussion, the village centre was chosen as the fete venue for 2024 following a significant majority vote.

This year our fete will be run in a similar way as last year, promoting local entertainment groups and village talent. It will be fantastic, for example, to promote the village ukulele group offering folk music and the Blue Apple Singers from Winchester for the first time.

Having enough volunteers is always a challenge. Last year our villagers excelled and heavily supported us. We need the same response this year even though we have also secured the additional assistance of Blue Bird Day Care, the Tesco Volunteer Champions and our local army cadets. Having rotas for volunteers is essential, demonstrated last year with a highly successful gate rota.

Another exciting addition this year is our new local main sponsor Kieron Beattie Landscapes based at Monxton. Evans and Partridge Estate Agent will also be sponsoring us and promoting our fete with boards around the village at the end of July.

We therefore are looking forward to another enjoyable fete on September 7th within a safe environment. We adhere to a rigid risk assessment and are guided meticulously in our safeguarding policy by Judith Cole our Lead on fete Safeguarding.

There are so many people helping behind the scenes to make the village plant sale and fete successful and we are wholly grateful to everyone in the Parish especially for the support of the Parish Council.

Q: Where will the Fete be?

A: In the street, as it was last year.

Councillor Jordan noted that Anne's position is a thankless, difficult task as not all people can be pleased. Main source of funding for several community groups, sincere thanks passed for the work. Thank you to Ann, the team and the community that appears to be going from strength to strength.

Ray Lucas – Abbotts Ann Action (AAA)

Test Valley Borough Council has held a public consultation on the proposed revised Borough Local Plan 2040. which when adopted in about 2026, will run to 2040 and replace the current Local Plan . The Local Plan provides the basis on which planning applications are determined in the Borough.

The draft Local Plan 2040 continues the policy of directing the majority of new housing to major development areas in Andover and Romsey with a total of only 260 homes being proposed in the rural areas of Northern Test Valley over the period 2020 to 2040. Abbotts Ann is one of the villages considered capable of taking part of this allocation because of its community services etc. (such as the village shop, pub, church, school). It is for the Parish Council or a community organisation like the Community Land Trust to bring forward proposals. The draft Local Plan 2040 does not identify specific sites for development in the rural area.

An important Local Plan policy for Abbotts Ann is the continued designation of a "Local Gap" in the area bounded by the Pillhill Brook, Red Post Lane, the Army Headquarters, the A342 and A303.

"Local Gap" designations help guide the direction of growth and identify areas of countryside which are strategically important in defining settlement edges and settings, and in maintaining separation between them. " (Local Plan 2040 paragraph 5.185)

There has been a degree of doubt as to the validity of Local Gap designations in view of the absence of their mention in national policy. TVBC commissioned a study in 2023 of the 9 Local Gaps in the Borough which provides a rationale and studies the characteristics of each gap. The study concludes in relation to the Abbotts Ann gap:

"This Local Gap is particularly effective in separating the two settlements, noting in particular the openness of the arable landscape. Consideration should therefore be given to how the strong sense of separation between the settlements is maintained and potentially reinforced, with regard to any future pressures for development."

The gap concept may still be challenged by land owners, developers or by the examining inspector at an Inquiry.

Ray Lucas for Abbotts Ann Action

Q: Has a green belt been mentioned?

A: Unfortunately, they are not allowed here as more suited to cities. Other policies exist to protect the countryside.

Councillor Jordan reiterated that the Parish Council strongly understand the benefit of the Local Gap and will continue to aim to preserve it.

Keith Saunders - failure of Openreach to fulfil its contractual obligations.



Ministerial Support Team
Department for Science, Innovation and
Technology
100 Parliament Street
London
SW1A 2BQ

www.gov.uk/dsit

Our Ref: TO2024/03901/JJ

Dear Mr Saunders,

Thank you for your correspondence of 23 January regarding delays to the Fibre Community Project in Abbotts Ann, Monxton and Ampport.. I am responding as a member of the Ministerial Support Team and sincerely apologies for

the delay in you receiving a response.

Building Digital UK (BDUK) is the executive agency responsible for delivering Project Gigabit, the government's £5 billion mission to deliver gigabit-capable broadband to UK premises that are not included in suppliers' commercial plans.

BDUK officials have investigated your case and contacted Openreach directly for an update. The Openreach reference for your project is OR12306 and Openreach have advised that build for this project has been extended due to the volume of civil engineering interventions required to rollout the project. These interventions have required multiple notices and traffic management.

Openreach have advised that a further 42 premises will be connected through this project over the next few weeks.

Following this, a further intervention is required which is noticed for 14 June. However, this is currently being escalated to attempt to bring this date forward. Overall, Openreach has suggested that build for your project should complete by July.

The Openreach regional community team have advised they will be contacting your community to discuss this project in due course. We hope they can answer any additional questions you may have.

Thank you again for your correspondence.

Yours sincerely,

Joe Jenkins **Ministerial Support Team**

6. General Q & A with the Parish Council

Councillor Jordan advised that additional reports will follow from our Borough Councillors and Keith Saunders with regards to broadband rollout. The reports will be published with the minutes.

If there are no final points, or questions, we thank you for your support this evening and supporting the Parish Council.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 20:59.