

Dear Members

It is a sad time in a working democracy to have to resort to social media to find out what our Town Council is up to.

The Town Council at its meeting on 8th January considered a report entitled *Pedestrian Links - Access Through Woodside Park*. The report should have been headed *Agreement between Town Council and site promoters of SS6 to allow pedestrian access across Woodside Park and Forest Gate Gardens Amenity Area to SS6* - because that is what the report was about!

We found out about this via a Facebook posting from Cllr Jack Davies - a Pennington councillor – yet he and other councillors were only given this report **10 minutes** before the meeting.

The document which Jack Davies and other councillors received at such short notice concerned pedestrian access arrangements for SS6 and agreements with the site promoters, Cicero, to help them with this.

The agreement, a 'statement of common ground', would agree to a payment by the site promoter of £75,000 for a footpath along the edge of Woodside Park running from the access at Rookes Lane, along the edge of the rugby pitch and down to the car park. The Smith family, who are the main landowners of SS6, and the site promoters Cicero Estates want this path put into place because the narrow width and mature hedgerow along the edge of Ridgeway Lane make it very difficult to create a pavement there. Cicero's plans show a link cut through this ancient oak hedgerow between SS6 and Woodside Park - something the Town Council report fails to mention.

The report also recommends that councillors agree to allow a new pedestrian link across amenity land between Forest Gate Gardens and SS6, through an existing mature tree screen. **However, it fails to mention anywhere that the same Town Council in November 2017 gave a written commitment, which is currently still on their website [here](#), stating that the amenity land at Forest Gate Gardens 'would not be available for any purposes of housing development.'** It appears to PALLS that they have not only reneged on this promise but also failed to give any reason for doing so. Furthermore, they have not made any attempt to consult with either the affected residents of Forest Gate Gardens or PALLS and its 700 members.

The Town Council state that they already have plans to extend the footpath network within Woodside Park to include a path around the rugby pitch and the agreement would merely make them be able to do so without denting their coffers. There is no mention of the environmental impact and additional costs of lighting the paths - which we think would be essential if they are to be residential estate paths rather than recreational footpaths - or the significant environmental impacts of the works, especially loss of hedgerow and habitats.

The Town Council report states that they have legal advice which states that they have no option but to agree to the landowners and site promoters demands. But, they were unable to provide copies of this legal advice to their councillors at the meeting. The Town Council also appear to have forgotten that they objected to the allocation on SS6 in the summer of 2018 on the grounds of impact on the lanes and on Oakhaven Hospice, responding to the overwhelming local opposition when 700 of the local electorate had joined PALLS and strongly objected to the site.

Needless to say we have raised these concerns and questions with Lymington and Pennington Town Council and will keep you informed.