

Minutes

of a meeting of the

General Licensing Panel



held on Thursday, 20 July 2023 at 11.00 am in Meeting Room 1, Abbey House, Abbey Close, Abingdon, OX14 3JE

Open to the public, including the press

Present in the meeting room:

Councillors: Ron Batstone (Chair), Oliver Forder and Diana Lugova
Officers: Ben Silverthorne (Democratic Services Officer), Darius Zarazel (Democratic Services Officer), Sarah Commins (Legal Officer), Simon Turner (IT Programmes Manager), and Sally-Anne Worsley (GIS Team Leader and Street Naming and Numbering Officer)

Remote attendance:

Officers: Jeremy Lloyd (Broadcasting Officer)

7 Election of a chair

A motion moved and seconded, to elect Councillor Ron Batstone as chair of the panel was carried on being put to the vote.

RESOLVED: that Councillor Ron Batstone be elected as chair of the panel.

8 Welcome and introductions, and chair's announcements

The chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, outlined the procedure to be followed and advised on emergency evacuation arrangements.

9 Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

10 Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

11 Procedure

The chair confirmed that all parties present understood the procedure.

12 Street naming at Ford Lane, East Hendred

The chair outlined the application and then invited the GIS team leader and street naming and numbering officer to present their report.

Officer's report

The Street Naming and Numbering Officer and the IT Programs Manager informed the panel that the options presented to them were to either change part of Ford Lane street name to Fordy Lane or to change the current Fordy Lane street name plate back to Ford Lane and add 'Access ONLY to Mulberry Cottage, Fordybrook, Brook House and Furlong House'.

The officers then presented the history regarding the naming of the street, such as its original closure of the road for vehicular traffic except for access to frontage properties. They noted that the name "Fordy Lane" derives from a planning proposal from 1995 when Oxfordshire County Council ("OCC") wrote in response to the local parish council indicating their objection to the Ford Lane access and support for the Church Lane access. As part of that response OCC had confirmed that if the Vale of White Horse District Council ("VWHDC") were to install a "Fordy Lane" street plate it would not come into conflict with the existing Prohibition of Vehicles Order, hence the beginning of the reference to "Fordy Lane". In 1996, OCC made a further order (the (Ford Lane, East Hendred) (Prohibition of Driving) Order 1996 which closed Ford Lane to through traffic (other than pedal cycles) at a point 150 metres south of the junction with Cat Street and which was enforced by the installation of locked bollards.

At some unknown point after 1996, a street name plate appeared at the northern extent of Ford Lane bearing the name "Fordy Lane". The officer emphasised to the panel that a street name sign that bears a different name to the road name should have only taken place where a street naming and numbering authority carried out the change following the required consultation under Section 13 of the Oxfordshire Act 1985, which had not happened on this occasion.

On 27th March 2023, OCC approached VWHDC querying the extents of Ford Lane and Fordy Lane and in subsequent email exchanges with OCC appeared to be advocating for the change of street name from Ford Lane to Fordy Lane for the section of street north of the road closure.

Under Section 13 of the Oxfordshire Act 1985 the council may alter a street name for whole or part of a street but must first conduct a consultation via public notices and serve those to owners or occupiers of the properties affected by the change. Officers outlined how important it is for properties and streets to be easily identified as the Emergency Services, statutory undertakers (gas, electricity, water, and telephone companies) all locate the property by the information provided by the district council and that currently there is an anomaly between information held by those bodies and information provided on Google which identifies a street by what appears in situ (the Fordy Lane sign). The officers informed the panel that as a result of the anomaly of the existing street name plate and the correspondence with OCC it was important for VWHDC to regularise the situation and therefore the required consultation for the possible name change was carried out between 12 May and 10 June 2023. Letters were also sent out on the 26 June informing occupiers of the four properties affected to ensure that they understood that were there to be a street name change this may

also mean a change in their postcode. However, these properties already contained a different postcode to the southern end of the street, so the address change would only affect the street name.

The officers then continued by listing the limited implications that could arise with the street name changing; the only implication of note being the minor financial cost of replacing the street sign, which could be met within the existing budget.

In conclusion the officer's recommendation was that the least disruptive solution was to retain the Ford Lane street name for the four properties affected and to change the Fordy Lane street name plate back to Ford Lane and to add the house names to the sign, as shown in appendix 2 of the officer's report in the meeting's agenda pack, to make it clearer which properties are accessed from the northern end.

The chair offered the objector a chance to ask any questions for the officers, to which there were none.

The chair then invited members of the panel to ask any questions of the officers. The panel asked how an incident like this was able to occur with the installation of an unofficial street name plate and officers replied that it was unclear but commented it was likely to have occurred prior to 2012. Officers understood that the parish would like to keep the street name plate the same, although as the parish had not responded with any reasons or expressed an intention to attend the panel they could not comment on this further.

The objector

Doctor Richard Myhill, an objector, then presented his case to the panel. Dr Myhill highlighted that, in his opinion, if the name was formally changed to Fordy Lane this would result in a great deal of work needing to be done by the affected residents such as altering documentation associated with their residences which was unnecessary as they had continued to refer to the street as Ford Lane and could see no justifiable reason for changing it. In consequence Doctor Myhill agreed with the officer's recommendation for retaining Ford Lane as the street name and the installation of a replacement street name plate for Ford Lane which would have the names of the properties that could be accessed from the northern part included on the street name plate.

The chair then invited members of the panel to put any questions to Doctor Myhill

The panel asked whether all the street names on the deeds of the other three properties were the same as his own. He was unable to confirm this but assumed that that they were likely to all be the same.

Final submissions

The chair then invited each party to present their final submissions and Doctor Myhill concluded by stating that the change recommended by the officers was acceptable as he desired to keep the name of the street the same and viewed changing the street name plate to Ford Lane as the correct solution.

The Street Naming and Number Officer and IT Programs Manager confirmed that the recommendation was to correct the street name plate rather than make any change to the name of the road.

Finally, the chair invited all the relevant parties to confirm that they had been provided with a fair opportunity to put their respective cases to the panel and each party confirmed that they had received that opportunity.

The panel then retired and excluded all the people from the meeting room apart from the Democratic Services Officers and the Legal Officer while they deliberated on the proposal.

Deliberation

The panel then deliberated the proposal and considered the written and oral evidence of the officers and objector. The panel also considered what would be appropriate having regard to the evidence and the Council's naming and numbering policy.

The panel considered how it was unclear how the Fordy Lane street name plate had come to be installed but agreed that the current situation would continue to cause confusion which could affect the ability for delivery of mail and the attendance of emergency services if not resolved. The panel agreed that the street name should not be changed to Fordy Lane but instead following the officer's recommendation the street name plate for Fordy lane should be replaced with one for Ford Lane detailing the properties to be accessed from the northern section of the lane, and was in accordance with the policy considerations of providing accurate information about a street to anyone needing to access such information and was the least disruptive solution to achieve this result

The panel, having reached a decision, called all members of the hearing back into the meeting room.

Decision

The chair then read out the decision; that the Fordy Lane street name plate should be removed and replaced with the proposed Ford Lane Street Sign as suggested by the officer in Appendix 2 of the officer's report to the panel.

The chair then informed all individuals present that the decision in the form of the minutes of the meeting would also be sent to them in due course.

The meeting closed at 11:25am