

ELMSWELL PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Clerk's Report to the Ordinary Council Meeting 20th January 2020

1 The qualifying criteria for a Capital Grant from BMSDC towards funding the extension and improvement works at the Chamberlayne Hall include the requirement that applicant organisations have certain key policies in place including one on Equal Opportunities and one on Safeguarding. I have identified pro forma documents which address these areas of concern and which comply with the BMSDC guidance. These are customised and appear as Agenda items 14 & 15. Councillors have had copies with meeting papers to allow a proper assessment of the strictures and guidance they offer. Since drawing up the agenda, I have been advised on the desirability of there being a Health & Safety Policy in place. Again, I have worked on a recognised pro forma to produce a document, as circulated with this Report. It would be in order for an amendment to be proposed at either 14 or 15 to include this Policy for adoption.

2 I attended the MSDC Development Control Committee B meeting at Endeavour House on 8th January to support Council's case for the Refusal of the Application ref. DC/19/03924 on land to the west of the former bacon factory. Councillors will recall their objections dated 17.09.2019 to the proposal for up to 65 dwellings on a 7.7 acre site accessed from the estate of 190 dwellings currently under construction by Taylor Wimpey, being that:

- 1 *The site is outside of the Settlement Boundary and is not a Preferred Option in the emerging BMSDC Joint Local Plan. It represents ad hoc development without the safeguards of any strategic planning and, as such, is an unsustainable location on which development should not be approved.*
- 2 *The proposal found no support during the pre-application consultation process from either Elmswell Parish Council or the public. It imposes further strain on the infrastructure provision which is already stretched to accommodate 634 houses in Elmswell with Planning permission currently being built-out or soon to commence construction. Of specific concern are:*
 - 2.1 *Highways infrastructure which, at the School Road / Church Road junction, is already over the safe operating capacity, as confirmed by SCC Highways, and where no mitigation is suggested or offered.*
 - 2.2 *Highways infrastructure where the clear guidance enshrined in the Suffolk Design Guide is for 150 dwellings served by a single access road, this stricture already breached by the host development here on the Bacon Factory site and now further to be ignored in a proposal which seeks to allow 265 dwellings to be accessed from the increasingly busy single junction at Ashfield Road, a 56% uplift on the accepted safe limit.*
 - 2.3 *Educational provision which is already stretched by extant proposals requiring the expansion of Elmswell Primary School on its constricted site to accommodate 420 pupils and which, by Suffolk County Council admission, still leaves a residue of Elmswell children required to be bussed elsewhere when all current housing development is realised. All of the primary schoolchildren from the new housing proposed here would have to travel by bus to receive their primary education.*
- 3 *The addition of the public green space to the north of the site, which was not originally mooted at the consultation stage, inevitably means that the land reserved for the Relief Road separates the residents from their recreation area posing a hazardous prospect as any such road would, by definition, carry considerable volumes and weight of traffic.*

I reinforced the point made at 2.1 above regarding the resultant overloading of the Church Road/ School Road junction as identified by EPC's own September 2018 Traffic Study conducted by Waterman Infrastructure & Environment Ltd. This overloading is also noted by the Applicant and by SCC Highways who suggest that, 'There are alternative routes ...and it could be considered that many drivers will choose these routes to avoid queuing on School Road.'

I suggested that the alternative routes via New Road / Warren Lane Kiln Lane or up Ashfield Road and along the winding back lane to Norton are unsuited to increased traffic. One of the Committee members spoke of his 'Chronic unease' at the quality of input from SCC Highways when consulted on such major Planning applications. I further suggested that, being outside of the Local Plan Development Boundary and having not been scheduled in the site specific allocations of the emerging JLP, the site is subject to the NPPF test of, 'demonstrable harm', which it, clearly, meets. With the support of Cllrs Mansel and Geake the Committee was persuaded to defer a decision so that alternative highways routes can be assessed. When the timetable for the further discussion is known I shall further reinforce EPC's case.

3 Council acquired some years ago various electronic kit in the hope of youngsters from the then Youth Club being able to learn DJ skills. This was grant aided but the scheme never took off and the equipment never used. It was clearly unlikely to benefit Elmswell and stood in danger of becoming out-dated, as well as posing a storage problem. I advertised it for sale but found a taker for just one element, turntables, sold and accounted for. The rest I have given across to The Mix in Stowmarket, a purpose-built youth facility which has a need. Their use will serve the purpose originally intended.

4 The proposed closure of Station Road over the second weekend in February at the railway crossing to allow further works on the line is now not to happen. Works will still take place requiring train cancellations but the rail replacement bus service will, contrary to the original plan, call at Elmswell on the basis that the bus stops in School Road at the bus stop – an idea which came from Sarah Mansel rather than the operator's phalanx of expert professionals. This they consider to be such a good idea that they will adopt it permanently.

This is the situation as I understand it to be at the time of writing. Recent experience suggests that it might be changed in some or all regards at short notice.

With Cllr Pallett I will be working towards better liaison with Network Rail in the slim hope of avoiding upset and confusion in the future.

5 I have attended with the Chairman at the Green King site in School Road together with the Greene King Estate Manager to clarify various issues, none of which look to pose any problem towards finalising a Contract to purchase. On Solicitor's advice we are engaging with a professional practice expertise in, and experience of, charitable structures in order to determine the most appropriate framework within which conveyance can best be effected.

6 The next site meeting at Wesley is 24th January. Meanwhile, the first of the GSHP boreholes is drilled, piped and infilled. This process furnishes data on ground conditions towards refining the specification for the total collector-pipe network, ie how many more holes and to what depth. These should be drilled within the next 2 weeks. The roof to the new-build is in place and internal scaffolding removed. External scaffolding and scaffolding inside the chapel will be struck within 2 weeks when a better 'feel' for the facility will be evident.

7 Our Village Warden, Peter Hancock is to move on, having, effectively, created and shaped the job whilst, in the process, acting as an excellent ambassador for EPC in its attempts to keep our village clean and pleasant. My personal thanks to him and for his ex-professional advice on various matters concerning building works which will, I trust, continue, as will his representation on Council's behalf on the BWMA. Advertisements for his replacement will be posted about the village.

Peter Dow
19.01.2020