

ELMSWELL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of an Ordinary Meeting of full Council held on

Monday 15th June 2020 at 7.30pm

on-line via the Zoom internet video conferencing facility

as authorised by and in accordance with

The Local Authorities (Coronavirus)

(Flexibility of Local Authority Meetings) (England) Regulations 2020

Present: Cllrs Barker, Edmonds, Friend, Hawes, Mansel, Pallett (Chairman), Roots, Schofield, Shaw

Attending: County Council Ward member Mrs Jane Storey (part)
District Council Ward Member Helen Geake (part)
Parish Clerk Mr Peter Dow
Assistant Clerk Ann Brett (part)
6 members of the public (variously)

20.06.01 **Noted:**

- 1.1 An Apology for absence was noted from Cllr Burch for personal reasons.
- 1.2 It was noted that District Council Ward Member Cllr Helen Geake would be late.

20.06.02 **Resolved:**

That the draft Minutes of the Annual Parish Council Meeting held on 18th May, as tabled, be agreed as a true record.

20.06.03 **Noted:**

The following when any Members' Declarations of Local Non-Pecuniary Interests and/or Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in subsequent agenda items were invited and to note there were no additions, deletions or alterations to the Council's Register of Interests;

- 3.1 Cllr Pallett declared a Local Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda item 9.3 relating to the Planning application at Amberlea as he was near neighbour;
- 3.2 Cllr Edmonds declared a Local Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda item 9.2 relating to the Planning application at Dagwood Farm as he was near neighbour;
- 3.3 Cllr Mansel declared a Local Non-Pecuniary Interest in Agenda item 9.2 relating to the Planning application at Dagwood Farm as she was near neighbour.

20.06.04 **Noted:**

- 4.1 A written report from MSDC Ward Members Cllrs Geake & Mansel
- 4.2 That a report from County Council Ward Member Jane Storey had been emailed but not received and that a copy would be sent immediately, meanwhile Cllr Storey covered some of the main points it contained.

20.06.05 **Noted:**

That there was no correspondence to this meeting unrelated to an Agenda item.

20.06.06 **Noted:**

The Clerk's report as per Appendix A

20.06.07 **Noted:**

That when any Complaints Committee business for information, to be noted or for inclusion on a future agenda was invited none was forthcoming and that the date of the next Complaints Committee meeting was not known.

20.06.08 **Noted:**

Planning results as notified by Mid Suffolk District Council:

- 8.1 DC/19/05924 Non material amendment – change roof on extension
Ten-Ten, Kiln Lane Approved
- 8.2 DC/20/01756 Extension
27 Orchard Close Granted EPC supported
- 8.3 DC/20/01721 Rear shed/garage converted to residential
Wistaria, New Road Granted EPC supported

20.06.09

Noted:

The following Planning applications as notified by Mid Suffolk District Council:

- 9.1 **DC/20/01922**
**Erection of 1No. dwelling and associated parking (following demolition of garage)(amended scheme to that approved under DC/19/00322)
Land adjacent to Marlborough, Cross Street**
Councillors agreed to support this application

- 9.2 **DC/20/01999**
**Demolition of existing structures and erection of 1No. single storey dwellinghouse
Land North of Dagwood Farm, Ashfield Road**

Councillors objected to this application for the following reasons:

The Settlement Boundary, as defined in the Local Plan, now has behind it the empowering factor of an accepted 5 year housing land supply. The site is in the countryside outside of the Settlement Boundary within which new development will properly take place. Further, the site is not identified in the emerging joint Local Plan as suitable for development.

With regard to the strong policy imperatives aimed at protecting the existing character and appearance of the countryside, this proposal offers no justification for exceptional treatment and does not present a case for special consideration under categories identified and defined in the Local Plan, the Core Strategy or the National Planning Policy Framework. The current burden of development with extant Permission amounts to a 37% uplift in housing stock imposed on a community already suffering from poor infrastructure provision, in particular regarding education and highways. There are not sufficient material benefits to justify the extra dwelling as proposed.

Furthermore, the emerging Joint Local Plan has it, at LP24, that development should 'Respond and safeguard the existing character and context', and that, 'Development that fails to improve the quality and character of the area will not be supported.' This ad hoc, opportunistic off-Plan proposal clearly fails on both of these counts. If granted, it would erode the rural and historical setting and breach the current building line boundary presented by the existing farm track and represents an incursion into an adjacent holding which would make further creep of development difficult to resist. The buildings to be demolished have a close functional relationship to the original farm, of which Grade II Listed Building, Dagwood Farmhouse remains. As vernacular features they are part of the farming context which would be lost should this Application succeed. Their replacement with yet another pastiche rural dwelling would be to deny the village an element of its heritage and clearly detract from the setting of the farmhouse from which upper storeys it would be clearly visible. Further, the result would be detrimental to the wider setting of the medieval Bottenhaugh Green edge development dwellings at Oak Farmhouse, Mulberry Farmhouse & Willow Farmhouse. In reaching these conclusions, Councillors had reference to Local Plan policies SB1 & H7, Core Strategy Policies CS1 & CS2, National Planning Policy Framework para.55 and to the emerging BMSDC Joint Local Plan.

- 9.3 **DC/20/02014**
**Application for Outline Planning Permission (some matters reserved, access to be considered). Erection of 1No. single storey dwelling using existing access and creation of new access to existing dwelling.
Amberlea, Warren Lane**

Councillors objected to this application for the following reasons

- 1 The introduction of a new access on to Warren Lane at this point poses a significant additional hazard. The highway narrows and bends so as to limit visibility and presents problems when 2 vehicles pass. There is no justification for making a less than satisfactory situation worse.
- 2 The proposed access passes close to and parallel with the north elevation of the host dwelling in which there are 6 windows and a half-glazed door. Traffic using this access would pass close to and be very visible from Amberlea to the serious detriment of the amenity of that dwelling.

- 3 The result of this proposal would be cramped and would present a contrived relationship to the surroundings. It would patently fail the test of maintaining or enhancing the character of the surroundings.
- 4 In the current context of development in Elmswell, there is no social or economic benefit to be derived from yet another dwelling and, given the clear drawbacks as outlined, no reason to grant Permission for this Proposal.

9.4

DC/18/02146

**Erection of up to 86 dwellings including car parking, early years provision, open space provision with associated infrastructure and vehicular access
Land to the North and West of School Road**

Councillors agreed to object to this Application for reasons summarised and expounded below:

- 1 The proposal is unsustainable in terms of highways infrastructure.
- 2 The proposal is unsustainable in terms of education provision.
- 3 The proposal would effectively sterilise the opportunity for the community to work towards the aspiration of a relief road taking traffic over the railway line and directly to A14.
- 4 The proposal is for a housing density which is out of keeping with the local norm.
- 5 The proposal should, properly, be subject to a Strategic Planning assessment and time allowed for the emerging Neighbourhood Development Plan to be brought forward.

1 Highways provision

1.1 It is accepted by all parties, including the Applicant, that the School Road / Church Road junction would be over capacity should this development go ahead adding to the impact of the recent permissions in the village for 60 dwellings at Borley Crescent, 240 dwellings at Wetherden Road, and 106 dwellings at Ashfield Road and as the 190 dwellings at the Bacon Factory site are built-out. The mitigation suggested by the Applicant comprises:

- (a) The removal of the built-out traffic calming sweep into School Road from Church Hill. This safety measure was installed, after much public pressure, to slow traffic on this bend. It also affords some protection in terms of noise, vibration, air quality and visual intrusion to the adjacent Grade II Listed almshouses. The inevitable speed increase encouraged by the removal of this reverse curve traffic calming feature creates further dangers for vehicles attending at the almshouses or at St John's Church;
- (b) A mention of the widening of School Road with no dimensions shown and no suggestion as to how to maintain any wider carriageway through the pinch point where the abutment accommodates the curtilages of Church Mount & St Lucy;
- (c) An apparent pedestrian crossing over School Road where users approaching St John's Church have no sightline to the traffic approaching the junction.

1.2 The input from SCC Highways is poorly researched, misleading and posits an unacceptably hopeful solution to the inevitable overloading and subsequent hazard at the School Road / Church Road junction, ie that, *'There are alternative routes from the proposed development and it could be considered that many drivers will choose these routes to avoid queuing on School Road'*. The supposed alternative requires vehicles to negotiate the problematic right turn at Shop Corner which is regularly at a standstill when the railway crossing gates are down. It must then take drivers down to another right turn at New Road or at Cooks Road into Church Road and through the same dangerous junction, further impeding those queuing to access Church Hill from School Road.

1.3 6 months' data from the Elmswell Community Speed Watch Group, as lodged with Suffolk Police, shows 4,000 vehicles per day travelling into the village up Church Hill. Over half (51.8%) are exceeding the speed limit. Half of these vehicles, 26.78% of the total, are travelling above 40mph at this point. There is a clear risk to road safety in removing the speed constraint at the junction

1.4 No account is taken of the daily access requirements, both in and out of the village, of the extraordinarily large rear-steer HGV trailers operated from Grove Lane and having no alternative route to A14. The current voluntary one-way HGV routing goes some way to addressing the inevitable problems presented which are exacerbated by the through-routing of HGV traffic consequent upon the weight restriction on A1088. This Proposal can only make a stressed situation worse.

1.5 The Parish Council's own commissioned traffic surveys, conducted by

Waterman Infrastructure & Environment Ltd as recently as July 2018 and lodged with the Planning Authority, demonstrates an overestimation on the part of the Applicant with regard to the Church Road / School Road junction capacity resulting from their reliance on LinSig modelling rather than the more realistic assessments derived from the TRL approved PICADY software.

1.6 The single access point into the estate in the proximity of the sharp bend and almost opposite the access to the Old Schools Court development poses a significant traffic hazard.

2 Education provision

The proposal would, as confirmed by the SCC Strategic Development submission, produce demand for primary school places in excess of the capacity of Elmswell Primary School, even allowing that the school is expanded in the meantime to a 420-place site. Similarly, the existing deficit in pre-school places in the Elmswell / Norton Ward has not been addressed. Recent Planning decisions at Woolpit, as yet not signed off, suggest that the pupils from this and other ad hoc developments in Elmswell will be expected to add further to the traffic problems by travelling to a new primary school in Woolpit. This is not how the residents of Elmswell would wish to see their children's education provided. Secondary schooling provision along the A14 corridor is, a rapidly emerging quandary that has not been addressed

3 Relief Road

The clearly expressed and widely supported community aspiration for a relief road has every chance of being embedded in the emerging Joint Local Plan. This application, if successful, would remove any chance of negotiating the preferred route making the project infeasible. Parish councillors entirely support the SCC view that "*it is essential that detailed consideration be given to...the delivery of a relief road, including the identification and protection of a 'corridor' "*". Unless and until this matter is addressed, the application is premature.

4 Density

There are 85 dwellings proposed at a density of 32 per hectare. The village's emerging Neighbourhood Plan is seeking to require an upper limit of 25dph. The recently granted development at Wetherden Road allowed 240 dwellings at under 21 dph. Similarly the sites at Warren Lane and White House Farm are set at 20 and 26 dph respectively. This proposal would result in an uncharacteristically crowded site in a prominent location, as a 'gateway to the village', clearly at odds with the housing density across the village street scene.

5 Strategic Planning

Councillors did not have the benefit of a Design & Access Statement on this Proposal. The lack of any information regarding the site context and / or the Planning context as seen by the Developer makes a proper assessment of the proposals impossible. In the absence of the perspective that might thus be offered, Councillors are at one with the County Council view that a development such as this should be part of a plan-led approach identifying the infrastructure requirements based on cumulative growth.

There is no pressing need for the houses proposed here. Some 648 dwellings have recently been granted Planning Permission or are in the latter stages of that process in the village of Elmswell. Of these, some 100+ are already built-out on the redundant Grampian Harris site and are occupied with 5 more added each month. There is time to stop and consider the wider picture, and in particular the proposed Relief Road which is deliverable and which would remove the overriding problem of traffic which is blighting the community and which decisively counts against this particular proposal. Contrary to the Developer's contention that the Relief Road is not being progressed, the access to the Grampian Harris estate which is currently under construction was required, under Planning permission ref. 0846/13 – plan ref 947-02, to be designed and built to a specification which would satisfy the requirements of the future Relief Road.

The dominant and central theme to the NPPF is sustainability. Piecemeal proposals such as this which seek to ameliorate the serious problems, stresses and strains that they create by patching in unrealistic infrastructure solutions – such as suggesting that traffic find alternative routes – should be refused pending the imminent delivery of an Elmswell Neighbourhood Plan which will provide a community-led overview of reasonable and sustainable development to 2033.

In reaching these conclusions, Councillors had reference to;

NPPF paragraphs 109, 110, 132, 134

Local Plan policies GP1, H13, H15, T10

Core Strategy policy CS5

- 20.06.10 **Resolved:**
That the Clerk makes known the Council's comments on the Planning Applications on this Agenda to the Chief Planning Officer at Mid Suffolk District Council.
- 20.06.11 **Noted:**
That there was no other Planning business.
- 20.06.12 **Resolved:**
That both the Elmswell Trefoil Guild and the Friends of Elmswell School be thanked for their stewardship of the Station Road Recycling Centre over the respective 3 month periods to 21st February & 29th May and that a grant of £150.00 be made to both bodies.
- 20.06.13 **Noted:**
That position regarding the Wesley development scheme was as outlined in the Clerk's report at paragraph 1.
- 20.06.14 **Resolved:**
That a recycled plastic park bench seat ref WFD320 be purchased from Messrs Realise Futures for siting at the Maze on Church Road for the sum of £472.74 including ground fixings and delivery, net of VAT.
- 20.06.15 **Noted:**
That the position regarding the Railway Tavern site was as outlined in the Clerk's Report at paragraph 2.
- 20.06.16 **Resolved:**
That 2,000 self-adhesive vinyl wheelie bin stickers advising drivers of the 30mph speed limit be purchased for distribution to residents on the main through-roads in the village at a cost not to exceed £1,120.00.
- 20.06.17 **Proposal: Cllr Schofield;**
That, on the understanding that the project cost of the proposed refurbishment of the fenced children's play area at Blackbourne does not exceed the s106 funding available, Cllrs Pallett, Roots and Schofield, together with the Clerk, be granted delegated powers to appoint a contractor from the 3 shortlisted in light of refinements to the specifications already provided
Seconded Cllr Shaw
- Proposal carried**
- 20.06.18 **Proposal: Cllr Pallett;**
That, within a ceiling of £125,000.00, the identified Preferred Contractor be engaged to carry out the proposed extensions at the Chamberlayne Hall at Blackbourne, as previously agreed, on a fixed-price, fixed-scope Contract based substantively on the RIBA Concise Building Contract 2018 and that the Chairman and Vice chairman of Council, together with the Clerk, be granted delegated powers to customise the final terms of the Contract accordingly.
Seconded Cllr Roots
- Proposal carried**
- 20.06.19 **Noted:**
That the position regarding land to be gifted as an extension to Blackbourne Meadow was as described in the Clerk's report at paragraph 7.
- 20.06.20 **Proposal: Cllr Barker;**
That, as the Council's tenant at the railway station, Travel Stop be granted a deferral of all rental payments for the 6 months beginning July 2020. That, for the following 6 months beginning January 2021 the normal rent is payable and that from July 2021, the accrued shortfall be repaid in equal monthly instalments being ½ of the monthly rental added to the standard rent due for the following year.
Seconded Cllr Shaw
- Proposal carried**

- 20.06.21 **Noted:**
The authorised payments made and income received as per Appendices B and C, and indicative financial overview as at 31.05.20.
- 20.06.22 **Resolved:**
That proposed payments, scheduled as Appendix D, be authorised.
- 20.06.23 **Noted:**
The Balance as per Appendix E and the Chairman's confirmation that the relevant bank statements and computer report verify the published figure.
- 20.06.24 **Noted:**
The following when public comment or questions were invited on matters relevant to Council business;
24.1 The Chairman confirmed that the smoking shelter at the Railway Tavern will remain but that negotiations with the Tenant there are in hand towards re-orientating the structure in tandem with fencing off a garden area for use of the Wesley facility.
24.2 The Clerk confirmed that the Clerk's Report was already posted on the Council's website.
- 20.06.25 **Noted:**
The following any other Council business from Councillors or the Clerk for information, to be noted, or for inclusion on a future agenda;
25.1 The Clerk confirmed that he had been informed by the District Returning Officer that no Poll had been requested in relation to the vacancy on the Council and that co-option is the next option.
- 20.06.26 **Noted:**
That the next meeting of Council is scheduled for Monday 20th July 2020 beginning at 7.30 p.m. either on-line or at the Blackbourne as circumstances allow.
- 20.06.27 **Noted:**
That the meeting closed at 9.42pm.