

ELMSWELL PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of an Ordinary Meeting of full Council held on Monday 19th July 2021 at 7.30pm at Blackbourne, Elmswell IP30 9UH

Present: Cllr Baker, Burch, Edmonds, Hancock, Hawes, Mansel, Pallett (Chairman), Roots

Attending: Parish Clerk Peter Dow
4 members of the public

21.07.01 **Noted:**

- 1.1 An apology for absence was accepted from Cllr Schofield due to long term illness
- 1.2 An apology for absence was accepted from Cllr Friend due to long term illness
- 1.3 An apology for absence was accepted from Cllr Shaw due to illness

21.07.02 **Resolved:**

That the draft Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting held on 21st June 2021, as tabled, be agreed as a true record.

21.07.03 **Noted:**

That there were no Members' Declarations of Local Non-Pecuniary Interests and/or Disclosable Pecuniary Interests in subsequent agenda items and no additions, deletions or alterations to the Council's Register of Interests.

21.07.04 **Noted:**

- 4.1 A written report from MSDC Ward Members Cllrs Mansell & Geake
- 4.2 A written report from County Council Ward Member Andy Mellen

21.07.05 **Noted:**

The following correspondence to this meeting unrelated to an Agenda item;

- 5.1 From ElmsWild, copy of letter to BMSDC re biodiversity in amenity areas
- 5.2 From Ward Member Andy Mellen re skirting back of overgrowth on School Road pavement

21.07.06 **Noted:**

The Clerk's report as per Appendix A.

21.07.07 **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.

21.07.08 **Noted:**

The Planning results as notified by Mid Suffolk District Council;

- 8.1 DC/21/02602 Erection of single storey rear extension
6 Eastern Way GRANTED
- 8.2 DC/21/02551 Prior approval of a proposed: Change of use of Agricultural ...
Willow Farm, Ashfield Road APPROVAL GIVEN
- 8.3 DC/21/02390 Installation of outdoor swimming pool.
Luke's View, St Johns Close GRANTED
- 8.4 DC/21/03283 Discharge of Conditions Application 3469/16 Condition 20...
Land to the East of Borley Crescent APPROVE

21.07.09 **Noted:**

Planning applications as notified by Mid Suffolk District Council:

- 9.1 DC/21/03409
**Construction of a dropped kerb to provide vehicular access onto Church Road
Magnolias, Church Road**
Councillors made no comment on this application
- 9.2 DC/21/03606
**Erection of ground and first floor extension
38 Oxe Close**
Councillors agreed to support this application

- 9.3 **DC/21/02616**
Erection of a side extension and front porch extension. Raise roof and part conversion of garage to form annexed accommodation. Application of render to existing brickwork.

5 Prescott Drive

Councillors could make no comment on this application given the lack of information before them.

- 9.4 **SCC/0054/21MS**
Extension and alteration of existing school buildings to provide 3 additional classrooms and associated car parking and external works.

Elmswell Primary School, Oxe Close

Councillors objected to this application for the following reasons;

1 It runs counter to NPPF Paragraph 8 b which states that the goal of achieving sustainable development, 'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs,' is to be achieved by supporting vibrant and healthy communities and by fostering a well-designed built environment with open spaces that support health together with social and cultural well-being.

1.1 The proposals include, as examples of the inevitable site overdevelopment which is justified as, 'site constraints restrict the area available for expansion', the fact that circulation space is proposed to be utilised to form a larger studio space. Councillors translate this as teaching in the corridors. Councillors, as some-time parents, staff and volunteers at the school, know these corridors to be extremely narrow.

1.2 Further cramming is to be made possible by the 'remodelling' of the changing rooms and it is, therefore, 'expected that pupils can change in their classrooms'. This is retrograde in itself, but compounded by the fact that the capacity increase which required the 2013 new-build raised the upper age limit to 11. Mixed groups of 11 year-old pubescent children are ill-served if required to undress without consideration of appropriate allowances for decency and individuals clearly stand in danger of receiving body shaming and possible physical abuse clearly at odds with their social and cultural well-being.

1.3 The design takes no account of the lack of staff resource / working area, again, as a clear consequence of having to design to unrealistically constrained parameters.

1.4 The extremely desirable facility to be able to offer an area large enough to accommodate a whole-school assembly, already denied under previous intake expansions, is the more marked given the increase in pupil population. This is doubly problematic as it requires an unrealistically quick turnaround of the school dinner process which can only increase the worrying prevalence of eating disorders in young people.

2 NPPF Paragraph 20 c) requires an overall strategy for the quality of community facilities such as education. This proposal is for a make-do-and mend solution to a capacity problem which has been flagged up in recent years as development pressures have emerged and increased. It should fall, and the subsequent shortfall in accommodation be used as a trigger for consideration of a strategic, joined-up approach which would properly serve the children of Elmswell into the future.

3 NPPF Paragraph 91 requiring Planning decisions which achieve healthy and safe places. The Exterior Areas Analysis confirms that all of the proposed PE areas are below recommended guidelines as the scarcity of space on the site will not allow for the extension the building footprint. Again, it is confirmed that the proposals would produce a result to significantly below recommendations in this regard to the extent that Sport England are likely to raise objection.

3.1 The very tight site presented for informal outdoor recreation presents real hazards when the age mix of 4 – 11 year olds is taken into account.

3.2 There is no space for the essential designated safe areas to cater for pupils with special needs whose condition can often be best addressed via a safe-place policy both indoors and out where trained staff can exert a calming influence and prevent the escalation of challenging behaviour.

4 NPPF paragraph 94 b encourages meeting the needs of communities in terms of education with one of the imperatives being the widening of choice on the understanding that key planning issues are identified and resolved before applications are submitted. Key issues here, not least highway safety and parking constraints which are chaotic even under current numbers, have not been addressed prior to this submission.

5 NPPF paragraph 97 states that existing open space, sports and recreation land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless an assessment clearly shows them to be surplus to requirements or the benefits of alternative provision outweigh the loss. This proposal squarely flies in the face of this crucial proviso and seeks to reduce sport and recreation spaces to the clear detriment of the pupils who are denied the alternative of indoor provision given the cramped nature of the existing hall and the lack of any consideration of this factor in the plans presented. The new-build takes up some 50% of the playground space which also serves as the muster point for safe arrival and dispatch of pupils at the beginning and end of the day.

6 NPPF paragraph 102 d has it that development proposals should identify, assess and take into account the environmental impacts of traffic. The current dangerous situation presented at this site when cars deliver and collect pupils will worsen when a 33% uplift in pupil numbers is factored in. The constrained nature of the site will not allow remediation of this crucially important aspect.

7 Local Plan Policy T10 requires that regard be paid to the suitability of existing roads giving access to the development and to the acceptable level of traffic generated in relation to the capacity of the road network. The existing situation in this regard is extremely bad because Oxe Close is configured too tightly to accommodate the free flow of traffic and the prevalent on-street parking. The site is being asked to take twice the traffic that its original designers intended and this is ill-considered and dangerous.

8 Local Plan Policy RT3 confirms that the District Council will safeguard recreational open space, making specific mention of school playing fields. These proposals fall foul of this measure.

9 Local Plan Policy SC8 again emphasises that the development of land currently used as school playing fields will not be permitted. The proposed loss of such facilities here should not, therefore, succeed.

10 Local Plan Policy RT7 requires that attention be paid to the proximity of existing settlements when noisy sports are sited. In this case, the very close domestic boundary to the proposed MUGA high-impact steel fencing will create considerable noise nuisance, as previously experienced at the Blackbourne facility in the village. The MSDC guideline for distance between games activity equipment and domestic dwellings is 35m which cannot be met here.

11 The emerging BMSDC JLP lists in, 'Visions and Objectives', that it seeks to enable communities to be healthy and active. The constraints which would result from these proposals in terms of physical exercise at this early years of children's development and well-being run directly counter to this essential policy aim. Further, the constrained nature of space provision renders the facility unsuitable for the out-of-hours activities by way of teams and clubs that should form a valuable extra-curricular adjunct to the school's life in the community.

12 The emerging BMSDC JLP Policy LP32 confirms that sites in current educational use will be protected from development in excess of the Government guidelines for play provision. SCC's own analysis identifies this problem.

13 Local Plan Policy GP1 has an overall constraint against poor design and layout, as has to be the case with regard to this proposal as it seeks to cram the site to the detriment of the natural tree belt creating a scale and density ill-suited to the wider semi-rural setting. Councillors would add that they are aware of 2 new possible school sites within Elmswell with realistic potential. They repeat their suggestion that a more strategic overview is necessary to consider the underlying factors behind this application, one of which is the lack of an alternative. This can be addressed and the current initiative held in limbo during that process.

21.07.10

Resolved:

That the Clerk makes known the Council's comments on the Planning Applications on this Agenda to the appropriate Planning Officer.

21.07.11

Noted:

The following other Planning business:

11.1 Noted that the Refusal for Permission at Bennett's Farm, Ashfield Road for the erection of a dwelling, to which application the Council objected, is the subject of Appeal by written representation.

- 21.07.12 **Noted:**
That the position regarding the recent incursion on to the Council's land adjacent to Blackbourne was as per the Clerk's report at paragraph 6.
- 21.07.13 **Resolved:**
That Council enters into a Tenancy at Will with Chris Mapey in relation to the licensed premises to be known as Elmswell Tavern at School Road IP30 9EE.
- 21.07.14 **Resolved:**
That the Clerk be asked to respond to the current Boundary Commission Review of all parliamentary constituencies in England, with particular reference to the proposals for the North Suffolk County Constituency, confirming Council's objections to the current proposals and suggesting an alternative constituency which includes Stowmarket and excludes the north west arm of the draft boundary, as discussed and agreed at this meeting.
- 21.07.15 **Noted:**
Authorised payments made and income received as per Appendices B and C, and indicative financial overview as at 31.05.21.
- 21.07.16 **Resolved:**
That proposed payments, scheduled as Appendices D, be authorised.
- 21.07.17 **Noted:**
The Balances as per Appendices E and the Chairman's confirmation that the relevant bank statements and computer report verify the published figures.
- 21.07.18 **Noted:**
That when public comment or questions on matters relevant to Council business was invited none was forthcoming.
- 21.07.19 **Noted:**
The following Council business from Councillors or the Clerk for information, to be noted, or for inclusion on a future agenda;
19.1 The Chairman confirmed that Cllr Friend continued to serve although having moved away from the village.
- 21.07.20 **Noted:**
That the next Ordinary Meeting of Council is scheduled for Monday 20th September 2021 beginning at 7.30 p.m. at Blackbourne.
- 21.07.21 **Noted:**
That the meeting closed at 9.18pm.