

# **ELMSWELL PARISH COUNCIL**

## **Minutes of an Ordinary Meeting of full Council held on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023 beginning 7.30pm at The Blackbourne, Elmswell IP30 9UH**

Present: Cllrs Barker, Brown, Burch, Hancock, Mansel, Pallett (Chairman), Roots, Schofield, Shaw

Attending: District Council Ward Member Jen Overett  
County Council Ward Member Andy Mellen  
Parish Clerk Peter Dow  
1 member of the public

23.12.01 **Noted:**  
1.1 An apology for absence was accepted from Councillor Edmonds who was unwell  
1.2 An apology for absence was accepted from Councillor Hawes who was unwell

23.12.02 **Resolved:**  
**That the Minutes of the Ordinary Parish Council Meeting held on the 20<sup>th</sup> November 2023, as tabled, be agreed as a true record.**

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

23.12.04 **Noted:**  
The following when reports from external bodies were invited and questions taken from Councillors and the public on any such reports and on any matter on the Agenda.  
4.1 A written report from BMSDC Ward Members Cllrs Mansel and Overett  
4.2 A written report from SCC Ward Member Cllr Mellen  
4.3 The Clerk confirmed that all current outages and upgrades to the Council's street lights are authorised for works or awaiting authorisation which will soon be granted.  
4.4 Cllr Mellen confirmed that he is pursuing improvements to the way highways issues are dealt with by the recently appointed contractor now that there has been time for teething troubles to be resolved. He has attended at Norton Road where serious flooding remains a hazard and undertook to urge remedial works to the underlying infrastructure maintenance shortcomings towards a long-term solution. He also agreed to look into how many staff continued to work under the new contractor under the Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment rights legislation and to report back his findings.  
4.5 Cllr Mellen confirmed that he was watchful of the predicted SCC overspend for 2023/24 of £11.4m and pointed out a shortfall of some £4bn in Central Government support of Local Authorities for that period which must, he suggested, represent an important dynamic in the funding process.

23.12.05 **Noted:**  
That there was no correspondence unrelated to an Agenda item.

23.12.06 **Noted:**  
The Clerk's report as per Appendix A:  
6.1 The Clerk drew the Meeting's attention to 2 draft Policies forwarded from BMSDC for comment as appropriate and available to view on request, being the Scrap Metals Policy and the Sexual Entertainment Policy.  
6.2 The Clerk confirmed that the recent breakdown in the Blackbourne ground source heating unit is likely to have cost some £7,000 in repairs and in providing alternative heating during the down-time.  
6.3 The Clerk confirmed notification from SCC Rights of Way officers of the extension to the Closure Order on FP12, over the railway line at Hawk End, until December 2025 to allow diversion works to be completed.

23.12.07

**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.

23.12.08

**Noted:**

Planning results as notified by Mid Suffolk District Council;

8.1 **DC/23/05291**

Tree works...

Lewis House, Bennett Avenue GRANTED EPC opted not to comment

8.2 **DC/23/05110**

Tree works...

6 Grange Meadows GRANTED EPC supported with comment

8.3 **DC/23/05113**

Non material amendment...

Dagwood Farm, Ashfield Road APPROVED EPC opted not to comment

8.4 **DC/23/04988**

Approval of reserved Matters...

White House Barns, Ashfield Road APPROVED EPC opted not to comment

8,5 **DC/23/05339**

Discharge of Conditions...

Holly Lodge, Cross Street APPROVED EPC opted not to comment

8.6 **DC/23/05437**

Non material amendment..

Mulberry Farm, Ashfield Road APPROVED EPC opted not to comment

23.12.09

**Noted:**

The following Planning application as notified by Mid Suffolk District Council;

9.1 **DC/23/05651**

Outline Planning Application (Access to be considered, all matters reserved) – Erection of Care Village comprising 66 bedroom care home (C2 Use), 40 No. extra Care Bungalows (C2 Use), Management Office (E(g)(I) Use), Club House, Community Growing Area, Orchard, Community Bee Hives and Open space provisions

**Land to the North and West of School Road**

Councillors objected to this application for the following reasons:

It is not disputed that this site is in the countryside. This has been the case since the 1998 MSDC Local Plan against which it has been previously tested when the Policy constraint has been adjudged to be secure, a view backed by Historic England. That same constraint is very recently reinforced by the BMSDC Joint Local Plan (JLP), made on 20.11.2023. The Elmswell Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) was adopted on 24.11.2023, reinforcing the status of the site as lying outside of the Settlement Boundary where proposals for development, '*will only be permitted where they are in accordance with national and district level strategic policies*'. No case is made for consideration of this site as in any way deserving of exception from these historic, recent and unequivocal controls.

The countryside in this case is, '*key landscape*,' in the case of Elmswell, which the NDP identifies in the context of; '*St John's Church (which) commands a prominent position as a gateway to the village*', overlooking a feature defined in the Suffolk Landscape Character Assessment as, '*Rolling Valley Farmlands*'. Into this undulating sweep of valley comprising some 29 acres of agricultural holding this Proposal seeks to impose 40 bungalows and an institutional building with an internal floor area of 3770 m<sup>2</sup>. There is no mitigation suggested regarding the sheer mass of the care home building which the indicative artist's impressions have as 2 storey. Neither is there any constraint suggested on the size of the bungalows or of the ancillary buildings listed as necessary for the administration of the complex. The NDP confirms and Elmswell accepts that, '*there are few significant landscape features across the parish*'. Should this application succeed, an iconic perspective which, in this village context, makes a unique contribution to the landscape setting, would be irrevocably destroyed. The JLP clearly requires that, '*Proposals for supported*

*and special needs housing will be supported where they are located within a settlement boundary*'. This application cannot and does not claim to qualify. No evidence is presented regarding the need for this facility. Any such need would be assessed in the context of strategic planning on a District-wide basis and would take into account the acknowledged drawbacks of, 'ghetto-isation', where a high concentration of a restricted demographic is detrimental to community cohesion as well as to individual mental health and wellbeing. The scheme should be subject to a 'call for sites' across the District when the many relevant aspects of community planning could be assessed across the proposals which come forward. An application with such far reaching and dramatic consequences for the host community should not be made on an ad hoc speculative basis.

The concerns raised from residents, both during and outwith the consultation exercise, centre on 2 key issues, being the existing infrastructure shortcomings in terms of highway safety and of health service provision. Elmswell Parish Council shares these concerns and makes specific objection on the following grounds:

1 The junction at Church Hill and School Road is at capacity. Having been recently reconfigured in order to take the extra burden of the 86 dwellings to the north of Parnell Lane it is accepted by the Applicant that there may be the need for traffic lights on Church Hill for the extra loading from this proposal. The issues surrounding any traffic control measures on Church Hill have been recently well aired, including in professional assessments undertaken on behalf of Elmswell Parish Council, and inevitably reach the conclusion that a very dangerous bottleneck would be created, this much exacerbated by the exceptional HGV units based in the village. The provision of 110 parking spaces within the complex serving their stated assessment of 75 employees and a fair estimate of a minimum of 120 residents, together with the vehicles servicing the special needs of the core demographic, suggests a higher traffic flow than would normally maintain given the density of this development. It is safe to assume that the part-time nature of much of the staff establishment together with the multiple occupancy of many of the bungalows, together with visitor trips above that which might normally be expected on a conventional housing development aggregate to distort the traffic management figures which are presented in support of the application. There can be no safe way to accommodate this proposal in highway terms without dramatic and unacceptable mitigation measures such as traffic controls better suited to an urban environment.

2 The GP surgery which serves Elmswell is in Woolpit. This is a mile distant across the busy A14, a journey which involves points of driver-stress at the Church Hill / School Road junction and across the roundabouts at A1088 and in Woolpit itself. The residents of the proposed facility will be, statistically, less able than average in terms of negotiating complex driving manoeuvres. Further, the Health Centre is under the capacity burden which characterises many NHS facilities and is in no way fit to register 120 new patients en bloc, these drawn from the provably high-needs demographic of elderly individuals requiring specialist and often emergency care. The Applicant's suggestion of a clean-room in which GP's might be able to consult does not begin to address the strain which this proposal seeks to impose on an already stretched system of medical care. The Practice has been approached previously with a view to an outreach arrangement for minor patient care procedures and has made it clear that this is untenable under their business operating model. The JLP requires that proposals for special needs housing will be supported only, *'where there is good access to services and facilities, especially health services*. This application in no way addresses this imperative.

There is unease across the community that the vague references to the land within the red line boundary as being not, in this iteration, designated for development, will be a hostage to fortune should the built environment of

Elmswell be allowed to creep south of Parnell Lane towards the church and almshouse. The ad hoc sketching-in of features such as random cycle paths and footways form no coherent offer of community benefit and serve only to provide a veneer of protection against further predation. Having met with the developer's Agent, parish councillors remain unconvinced that this element of the scheme does not pose a severe risk of further ill-considered speculative expansion which might, with the passage of time, prove difficult to resist. In consideration of the above, Elmswell Parish Council strongly urges rejection of this application.

- 23.12.10 **Resolved:**  
**That the Clerk makes known the Council's comments on the Planning Application on this Agenda to the Chief Planning Officer at Mid Suffolk District Council.**
- 23.12.11 **Noted:**  
The following other Planning business;  
11.1 The Meeting noted the adoption of the BMSDC Joint Local Plan on 20.11.2023  
11.2 The Meeting noted the Dismissal of the Appeal ref APP/W3520/W/23/3314326 re DC/22/02951, 4 dwellings at Kiln Lane, and certain of the points made in the Inspector's Conclusion which strongly echo views often expressed by EPC regarding residential development at Kiln Lane.
- 23.12.12 **Resolved:**  
**That the Contract of Employment of the Assistant Clerk to the Council be amended from 01.01.2024 to show that the hours of work are set at a minimum of 29 hours per week and a maximum of 37 hours per week as required and directed by the Clerk.**
- 23.12.13 **Noted:**  
The authorised payments made and income received as per Appendices B and C.
- 23.12.14 **Resolved:**  
**That proposed payments, scheduled as Appendix D, be authorised.**
- 23.12.15 **Noted:**  
Balances as per Appendix E and the Chairman's confirmation that the relevant bank statements and computer report verify the published figures.
- 23.12.16 **Noted:**  
That when public comment or questions on matters relevant to Council business were invited none were forthcoming.
- 23.12.17 **Noted:**  
The following any other Council business from Councillors or the Clerk for information, to be noted, or for inclusion on a future agenda;  
17.1 The Clerk confirmed that he is to meet with the BMSDC Housing Enabling Officer early in the new year with a view to ensuring that the new Administration is aware of the Elmswell Community Land Trust's aspirations to provide community housing on the Council's land at School Road, with no Right To Buy or To Acquire, and to ensure that all available avenues of support are being investigated.  
17.2 The Meeting noted that recent record rainfall may prevent farmers from being able to reinstate ploughed cross-field Rights of Way within the statutory 14 day period and that these paths may well become difficult to walk until the conditions allow reasonable tractor access.
- 23.12.18 **Noted:**  
That the next Meeting of Council was scheduled for Monday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2024 beginning at 7.30 p.m. at Blackbourne.
- 23.12.19 **Noted:**  
That the meeting closed at 8.28pm.