

BRAMFORD PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD IN THE PARISH ROOM, BRAMFORD ON MONDAY 20TH JANUARY 2020

PRESENT: Cllr A Horn, Cllr M Brand, Cllr J Gardiner, Cllr A Haigh, Cllr P Kingham, Cllr C Ranson, Cllr C Wolton

1.1 QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

A number of local residents reminded Councillors of their previous objection to planning applications relevant to a site in Fitzgerald Road and requested the Parish Council continue to oppose the new applications and respond accordingly.

2.1 TO RECEIVE THE REPORTS OF THE COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS

Written and verbal report from County Councillor Field including information on 2% increase for Council Tax and Social Care.

He stated there has been no progress with regard to the loss of the bus service.

Verbal report from District Councillor Caston including details on civil parking introduction and outcome of meeting with Dan Poulter MP regarding Fitzgerald Road planning application, with Dr Poulter agreeing to write to District Council.

He advised Councillors of Government funding for assistance in preparing and producing Neighbourhood Plans.

3.1 APOLOGIES

None, all Councillor present

4.1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST RELEVANT OT ANY ITEM ON THE AGENDA

Cllrs Horn, Brand, Gardiner and Kingham declared a non-pecuniary interest in Items 10.(a) and (b) due to previous comments made on earlier relevant planning applications and Cllrs Haigh, Ranson and Wolton declared a non-pecuniary interest with regard to being residents in the parish.

Cllr Wolton **agreed** not to engage in the debate and vote regarding Items 10.(a) and (b) on the grounds of predetermination.

5.1 DISPENSATIONS

All Councillors, with the exception of Cllr Wolton, were granted a dispensation for this meeting to participate in any vote taken on Items 10.(a) and (b) on the grounds that without the dispensation the number of persons unable to participate in the transaction of council business/matter would be so great as to impede the transaction of the council business/matter

6.1 MINUTES

- a. 18th November – Councillors **agreed** to approve and sign minutes of this meeting
- b. 16th December – Councillors **agreed** to approve and sign minutes of this meeting, subject to clarity on correct naming of ‘Dairy Farm Greenhouses’ under item 2.

7.1 ACTION PLAN

- a. Works to Council Building – external woodwork and windows – Councillors were advised of a recent survey update visit by Chick representative, in preparation of detailed specification for tender.
- b. Cemetery – Field adjacent to Cemetery – Councillors advised that legal advice still required with regard to potential sub-letting situation.
- c. Cemetery – Unauthorised structure – Councillors advised a request for a meeting still to be organised by Clerk.
- d. Bramford Bus Cuts – Councillors updated by County Cllr Field earlier in the meeting – no progress.
- e. Land adjacent to bus stop – Councillors advised that correspondence received from County Council, following third-party complaint.
- f. Ship Lane river bridge – Councillors advised that ownership still being determined.

8.1 FINANCE

- a. Monthly Payments – Councillors **agreed** to make payments of £6,391.87
- b. Budget 2020/21 – Councillors **agreed** to approve the draft budget for 2020/21 financial year whilst accepting the transfer of electronic cash-book services had disrupted the opportunity to review figures at an earlier stage.
- c. Precept 2020/21 – Councillors **agreed** to a precept of £68,850

9.1 INTERNAL AUDIT

Councillors **agreed** to book Heelis and Lodge as Internal Auditors for 2019/20 review

10.1 PLANNING

- a. DC/19/01401 – Outline Planning Application (some matters reserved) – Residential development of up to 115 dwellings and access, including open space and landscaping – Land to the South of Fitzgerald Road
- b. DC/19/01649 – Outline Planning Application (some matters reserved) – Residential development of up to 115 dwellings and access, including open space and landscaping (DUPLICATE APPLICATION) – Land to the South of Fitzgerald Road

Please note: The following response has been submitted for both applications listed here.

Councillors considered both planning applications DC/19/01401 and DC/19/01649 at a recent meeting, and agreed, despite a significant reduction in the number of dwellings, these applications remain unsustainable when considered against current guidelines.

Para 1.2. of the National Planning Policy Framework states ‘sustainable development’ is a ‘...material consideration in planning decisions’ whilst describing the objective of sustainable development as ‘...meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’ (Para 2.8).

Councillors believe the planning authority is currently able to show a five-year land supply, these applications not included, and therefore consider both applications fail to satisfy the 'sustainable development' definition as per the NPPF.

Strategic objectives listed in the draft Joint Local Plan (3.1) include 'enhancing and protecting the environment' and 'supporting strong and healthy communities and delivering infrastructure'.

Councillors feel the proposed developments are contrary to these objectives and will mean the loss of accessible countryside and create a 'ghost-town' effect, with many potential occupants of the proposed dwellings working outside the immediate area, due to the lack of employment opportunities within Bramford.

With the recent loss of the main bus service, Councillors are also concerned that an increase in 'car-dependent' road users, already adversely affected, will mean current infrastructure potentially unable to cope with the additional traffic generated by these applications.

JLP environmental objectives include the protection and enhancement of environmental assets including river corridors, and ensuring new development avoids areas of flood risk, including the reduction of future flood risk where possible, (3.3.v.).

The land identified for these proposed developments borders land that has regularly flooded in recent years, due to the proximity of the River Gipping, and Councillors are concerned that the 'concreting over' of land currently an asset in limiting flooding will contribute to further problems and are unclear as to how the developers propose to mitigate such factors in the long-term, especially in light of issues at the nearby Wolsey Grange development.

A recent audit on behalf of the Campaign to Protect Rural England charity and The Place Alliance recommended 'House-builders need to ...advance a more ethical approach to the design of development that prioritises...the health of the environment at large' and Councillors are concerned these proposed developments will do little to achieve this, thereby potentially contributing to greater flood risks in the immediate area, which includes a number of heritage, and listed, buildings.

Para 102 of the NPPF states that transport issues should be considered from an early stage so that the potential impacts of development on transport networks can be addressed, opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport are identified and pursued and the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified, assessed and taken into account.

Councillors are concerned that traffic analysis surveys continue to be undertaken during school holidays, thereby indicating inaccurate levels of traffic movements, and that reference to a suitable bus service able to accommodate the proposed developments is now no longer valid, following the withdrawal of the service linking Bramford with the economic centres of Ipswich and Stowmarket.

Councillors remain frustrated at the apparent 'disconnect' of Highways when consulting on planning applications, believing the local roads and transport infrastructure is now unable to cope, leading to

increased stresses on local residents attempting to access essential services, such as GP surgeries and schools.

It's noted that the Highways consultee response makes numerous references to the location of a bus stop and the provision of new bus shelters, when services are being withdrawn, and little enthusiasm shown by relevant County Council portfolio-holders to consider suitable replacements.

Professor Matthew Carmona, Chair of The Place Alliance, who led the audit for CPRE, states 'Some highways authorities...do not even recognise their role in creating a sense of place for communities'.

It's the hope of Councillors that Suffolk's Highways do recognise this role and demonstrate suitable 'professional curiosity' as to the impact these proposals might make on the wider community, including the cumulative effect of other nearby developments along the Gipping Valley and, most notably, Wolsey Grange, Sproughton and Blakenham.

Suffolk County Council's Green Access Strategy identifies policies to promote and improve Public Rights of Way in the county over the next decade and recognises this network as '...an essential asset to us all for our health and wellbeing'.

The County Council's vision is '...to get more people using and enjoying Suffolk's green access network' in line with its aspiration to create the 'Greenest County', which includes raising awareness with local planning authorities.

Bramford Councillors are, therefore, at a loss to understand how the locating of a new housing development adjacent to a Public Right of Way crossing the site is in keeping with County Council policies and strategies as a result.

Councillors are also at a loss to establish any viable 'landscaping' solutions that would resolve the detrimental effect on this particular green access, with over 100 houses proposed within a few metres of the Right of Way concerned.

Councillors also wish to bring details of a previous refusal decision from 2002, to the attention of the planning authority, on the basis that the grounds for refusal on that occasion remain relevant with regard to these latest applications.

Application 1291/02 proposed 13 dwellings on the site and was refused on grounds that appear relevant today.

It was identified that the proposal would be '...a visual intrusion on this very southern edge of Bramford to the detriment of the rural character and appearance of the area as a whole'.

Councillors, therefore, are concerned as to the 'visual intrusion' of up to 115 houses as a result.

The 2002 development was described as 'car dominated' and didn't '...create any sense of place or demonstrate any sensitivity to a prominent visible location'.

Again, Councillors are concerned that these, considerably larger, developments will be significantly more car dominated, especially with the recent loss of the main bus service, and that up to 115 houses will be of considerably greater 'insensitivity to the prominent visible location'.

The 2002 development failed to satisfy relevant policies with regard to safe access to and from the site, with the sharp bend in Fitzgerald Road being described as having 'substandard forward visibility'. It was also noted that visitor, delivery and service vehicles, if attending the three road-facing properties, parked on Fitzgerald Road, would further exacerbate the problem.

Councillors note that there are at least 10 properties on the current applications, potentially facing onto Fitzgerald Road, with an access road also located within close proximity to the bend, thereby creating an even greater safety problem than originally identified in 2002, due to the increased volume of traffic to and from the site and the potential increase of parked vehicles on Fitzgerald Road.

In 2002 it was noted that Suffolk County Council, in its publication 'Development and Public Rights of Way' stated the '...character and future use of public rights of way are important and should be retained...' with the planning department stating the proposal '...fails to safeguard the rural character of this footpath route...detracting from the amenity that users of the footpath currently enjoy'.

This position appears to concur with current Suffolk County Council policy with regard to the benefits of green access and the desire to improve such access and, as previously mentioned, appears to be in conflict with the positioning of up to 115 houses on the site, when the initial 13 dwellings were considered inappropriate.

Bramford Parish Council therefore **continues to oppose** this application for the reasons identified above.

11.1 REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES AND RELEVANT GROUPS

- a. Bramford Playing Field – Cllr Gardiner advised Councillors that funding from County Cllr Field had been received for the erection of the fence adjacent to the Willowbrook development.
- b. Loraine Victory Hall – Cllr Horn advised Councillors that repairs to the flat roof had been completed and that the Committee was looking to appoint a new treasurer.
- c. Bramford Open Spaces – Cllr Brand advised Councillors that plans to sow wild seeds had been delayed due to water-logged ground.
- d. Councillor's Report
 - i. Councillor's activities – nothing to report
 - ii. Village issues – Cllr Wolton advised Councillors that work on the school extension was due to start in February.

12.1 TO RESOLVE TO EXCLUDE PUBLIC AND PRESS

Councillors **agreed** to exclude the public and press from Item 13 of the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted according to s.1(2) of Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960

13.1 CONFIDENTIAL ITEMS

Details of items (a.) to (f.) recorded separately under confidential minutes

14.1 ITEMS FOR NEXT MEETING

Neighbourhood Plan

Risk assessment

Asset Register

10.05pm, Meeting closed

DRAFT

SIGNED

DATE