

MONK SOHAM PARISH COUNCIL

(Draft) Minutes an Extraordinary Meeting held on Wednesday 5th December 2018

The meeting commenced at 1900 at the Bedfield Sports Pavilion

12/18 - 01 Present

- David Entwisle (Chairman - DE), Caroline Berkley (CB), Cliff Arndt-Snelling (CAS), Graham Wigley (GW) and Julian Sayer (JS).
- Geoff Robinson (GR), as Parish Clerk.
- Thirteen (13) members of the public.
- The applicant Richard Mutton and representatives Suzie Carr (SC) and Brian Belton (BB).

12/18 - 02 Apologies

- Julie Giles and Gay Clark (approved).

12/18 - 03 Public Open Session

- DE opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and explained that it had been arranged in order to obtain the views of villagers on two current planning applications. These were **DC/18/05170**, which referred to "The erection of five dwellings with garages etc" on land opposite 1-8 Oakfields, Monk Soham Green. IP13 7EY and **DC/18/00805** regarding "Renovation of change of use of a garage etc" at the Long House, Monk Soham Green. He stated that that **DC/18/05170** replaced **DC/18/00805** which had been for up to ten houses on the site but had been refused by MSDC.
- He further explained that he would extend the public open session to a maximum of one hour in order to allow everyone who wish to speak express their views. This would then be followed by a closed meeting of the parish councillors to consider opinions and formulate a response to the application, to be forwarded to MSDC.
- DE then invited comments on both applications during an open session, taking each application in turn.
- He also invited Brian Belton to clarify or answer any queries raised. BB introduced himself and stated that there was no plans to build on the other half of the site, which would form part of the flood plan for the application. He also stated that the Planning Statement tried to address many of the concerns raised during the previous application and in the reasons for its refusal.

During the public open session on application **SC/18/05170**, several members of the public expressed opinions and concerns, the salient points of which are as follows (in alphabetical order), viz:

Drainage

- Although BB stated that the application covered the disposal of rainwater into the adjoining meadow, concern was expressed that there is still no mains drainage in Monk Soham. Further concern was therefore expressed about the ability to do this due to the clay nature of the area and lack of proof that this will actually be able to cope with five residences.
- BB assured the meeting that as stated in the Planning Statement, Anglia Water had assured him that the existing Oakfields system could cope with the foul water aspects of the development. However, concern was expressed that there seemed to be no written confirmation of this in the application from Anglia Water.

Environmental Issues

- The Planning Statement states in several places that that there would be no threat to the environment and no issues applied to the site. This was disputed by many of the villagers and that it is not backed-up by any survey having been done or submitted with application. It must therefore be taken as only the personal opinion of the applicant and his agent.

- Danger from traffic is a problem now, let alone with the additional proposed increase in vehicles. This is contrary to the MSDC aim of increasing tourist participation and healthy living, together with a reduction in car usage.
- Concerns were expressed that the weekly refuse collection would mean that all wheelie-bins would have to be left at the roadside. This was confirmed by BB who added that the general maintenance of the proposed site would be controlled by a residents committee.
- Although the Planning Statement claims that all houses will be fitted with solar panels, the orientation of some of the proposed properties will render this partly ineffective.

Highway Access

- Although the proposed development is on the C540, all other access roads to the village are unclassified and single track, with passing places. This also applies to most of the C540 itself. Traffic is already heavy at certain times of the day and there has never been a traffic survey completed within the village.
- The C540 is already used as “rat-run” by motorists from other villages and this will increase with new developments planned for neighbouring villages.
- BB confirmed that only 15% of the existing hedge will be removed and the splay will conform to SCC Highways standards.

Infrastructure

- The only village assets are two notice boards and a village sign. There are no shops, school, recreational area, village hall, community centre or any other communal asset in the village.
- Most people strongly challenged the claims in the Planning Statement that appeared to try and “twin” Monk Soham with Bedfield through the tennis & gardening clubs and website etc, pointing out that these were tenuous to say the least. It was felt that this was an attempt to disguise the isolation and lack of facilities in Monk Soham and especially at the proposed development site. Also, although Bedfield does have a school, public house, play area etc, the fact remains that they are not situated within a realistic walking distance, which is by way of a narrow, dangerous and single track lane with no footpaths.
- The only public transport is the High Suffolk Community Bus, which receives no funding from SCC. The Chairman of the bus committee explained that whilst this was a valuable community asset, its purpose was to provide occasional access to towns and villages on a one-off basis and could not be deemed a substitute for regular and frequent local use as claimed in the Planning Statement. These trips included Diss, Framlingham, Stowmarket, Ipswich etc. He emphasised that it certainly did not provide a practical daily link with Bedfield or any other neighbouring village and its starting time of after 0930 meant it could not be used for commuting.
- The lack of any public transport means that all residents of the new development will have to use cars to access the very basic facilities as none in the surrounding villages are within walking distance. This will increase the strain on already dangerous local roads.
- Any village benefits will be marginal at the very best, including local employment. Also the type of housing proposed is highly unlikely to be occupied by residents interested in employment at the new Beddingfield chicken sheds or the recently opened Shepherds Hut holiday site, the latter, which certainly is not a retail site as stated in the Planning Statement.
- If the five houses are built, a conservative estimate means any extra ten cars using the village roads, with the associated delivery vans and other service vehicles. The village currently has only in the region of 70 houses over a very dispersed area, which means that an extra 5 is disproportionate to the current infrastructure. It would be the largest new development the village in many decades. This would totally alter the ambience and infrastructure that the current residents enjoy, which has evolved over its long history. The approval of this application would also set a precedent for similar applications at other locations within the village.
- Particular concern was expressed that if the application is allowed, the five houses would occupy only half of the current site and this would raise the prospect of further houses being built on the other half, having set a precedent. Also for similar sites in the village.
- Whilst everyone welcomes and accepts that some development needs to take place, this far exceeds what most people would regard as proportional and sustainable to the current village

infrastructure.

- Disappointment was expressed that the proposed house designs were for substantial properties and the application did not include any “affordable homes”.

DE thanked the villagers for their constructive comments on application **DC/18/05170** and asked for a show of hands from the public regarding the application. All thirteen villagers present stated that the thought the application should be refused by MSDC.

He then closed the public meeting on **DC/18/05170** and invited comments on application **DC/18/05088**. Present was the applicant who confirmed that the garage was built some twenty years ago and the conversion will provide limited accommodation for himself and free-up the Long House for sale as a family house. He also confirmed that the current plot will be split into two, under separate ownership.

DE thanked everyone for participating in the meeting and closed the public open session at 1950.

12/18 - 04 PC Discussion on Planning Application DC/18/05170

DE resumed the meeting at 1955, the salient points of the subsequent discussion on **DC18/05170** being:

- The Parish Council unanimously accepts that limited development is necessary in the village, but All plans must take into account the points raised by the villagers in the public open session and in respect of concerns raised during the previous application **DC/18/00805**.
- DE stated that although the revised application had been considerable modified since the first one had been refused, the councillors needed to consider what, if anything, was now acceptable. Each councillor was asked for the views and a brief discussion was initiated.
- The overall view was that great limitations still apply to any development of the type proposed in terms of drainage, environmental issues, highway access and the infrastructure. They also needed to reflect the requirement for slow change and infilling rather than a development of the type proposed. They agreed that a housing survey would be needed before accepting any such development.
- The councillors did not accept the validity or accuracy of attempts to show “twinning” with Bedfield & its facilities or use the High Suffolk Community Bus in an attempt to minimise the isolated nature of the proposed site. As stated several times during the meeting, although some issues have been addressed, most of the major objections to application **DC/18/00805** still remain. Despite the claims contained in the Planning Statement, Monk Soham remains an isolated village in terms of day to day transport and facilities and is totally dependent on car transport for almost all everyday needs. It is also hard to see what social benefits a development of this type would bring to the village.
- Whilst BB’s points regarding planning decisions at Woolpit and Worlingworth may be relevant to MSDC’s overall housing strategy, every application must be on its own merits and certainly “sustainability” had been far from proven for Monk Soham in this application.
- At a show of hands, it was passed by a majority of four to one to recommend refusal of the application by MSDC.

12/18 - 05 PC Discussion on Planning Application DC/18/05088

After a brief discussion by the councillors on this application, salient points were:

- Concerns were expressed regarding the fact that the garage was close to a Grade II listed building and the overall visual effect of the conversion.
- Concerns were expressed regarding the proposed new access but it was agreed that SCC highways would no doubt address this issue.
- Comment was passed that unlike a similar application some time ago at Hartsmere Grange, this was for total split in ownership.
- By a show of hands, four councillors supported the application and one was opposed.

DE concluded the meeting at 2015.

Chairman.....