



BINHAM PARISH COUNCIL

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2015/19

Minutes of the Special Parish Council Meeting held at 7.30pm on Tuesday 3 November 2015 at The Memorial Hall

Those Present Mike Bond, Liz Brown, David Frost (Chairman), Stan Hewitt, Lucy McCallum, & William Wales
Keith Leesmith (Clerk), 18 Members of the Public

1) Apologies received: Mike Chapman. Marie Strong would be late – visiting another Parish

DF thanked people for coming. This meeting had a single item on the agenda – to formulate the official response from the Parish Council to the proposed development off Priory Crescent/Walsingham Road. The Parish Councillors had already met on two occasions sitting as a planning committee and had prepared some initial ideas. However, a final response would not be made without this final opportunity for members of the public to express an opinion. It was intended that comments from the public could be made until 8.30pm, after which only Councillors would be able to speak. Invitations to this meeting had been sent to the County Councillor and two District Councillors. Marie Strong (NCC) intended to be here soon, after visiting another Parish, but no response had been received from the District Councillors. This was disappointing, considering that they are supposed to represent Binham people on the NNDC. Planning Authorities could only take into account *Material Considerations* when making decisions. DF asked the clerk to explain what this meant.

KL said that planning decisions had to be made using only material planning considerations. There is a published list of such, although being rather long; he did not intend to read it all out. He gave a couple of examples such as possible loss of light to neighbouring properties or highway issues such as sight lines or the appropriateness of local speed limits. However, many items raised at meetings held over the past few months were not material considerations, and there was no point in them being raised again at this meeting. Examples of these included the “track record” or financial viability of the planning applicant, or any financial deal made between them and the landowner.

At this point the public were invited to ask questions/make comments.

Q. Would there be any other further meetings at the District Council where the public could express an opinion?

A. Over 90% of planning applications are dealt with by officers and in this case only pre-sent comments could be taken account of. However, it would be most surprising if a planning committee did not decide this case. In such instances a limited number of objectors and supporters can speak for three minutes each, as can other interested parties including the applicant, the local District Councillors, and the Parish Council. People are advised however, to make any strong feelings known to the planners using the methods shown on the NNDC website.

Marie (and Mike) Strong (NCC) arrived during the following

Q. There does not appear to be enough car parking allocated on the plans.

A. This is something that Parish Councillors agree with you about. One of the possible suggestions that we intend to make is that the proposed “common green areas” are sacrificed to provide for more parking spaces. In particular it would appear that occupiers of the extension to the original estate (made about ten years ago) are currently parking on land that has been shown on the plans as being for other purposes.

Q. What other comments have the Parish Councillors decided to make?

A. DF read the comments made so far. *(These are not shown here, as they will appear at the end of this document when the final submission is decided)*

Q. Could you explain comments made regarding the footpath/bridle path on the west of the development?

A. This path is variously described as a footpath/bridleway/lane in different documents. We have asked Marie Strong to speak to County Council Officers to find out its exact legal status and also to comment on the proposals made in the plans.

MS – The officers have said that this is a public footpath, not a bridleway. This means that the public have the right to use the full width of it as pedestrians, but do not have the right to drive vehicles, horses, or even bicycles over it. However, individuals (as opposed to the general public) may have been given the specific right to use vehicles on it. This certainly applies to agricultural vehicles used by the adjoining landowner. The hedges on either side are the responsibility of the adjoining landowners, but the highways authority is responsible for the maintenance of the surface of the path itself. [In fact the highways authority have ignored this for the past few years and the path has been cut voluntarily by William Wales]. As far as the specific proposals in the planning document are concerned the County Council would not have any objection to the use of “grasscrete” on sections of the path. They would, however, not agree to bollards being placed anywhere other than on the boundary of the path.

Q. In early meetings, mention was made of “planning gain” and the fact that the village might obtain some financial gain if this development went ahead. Has the Parish Council made any enquiries about this?

A. No we have not; we have been more concerned up to now about the actual plans. We were told early on however, that the cost of altering the Hindringham Road/Walsingham Road/Front Street junction would be included in this, and after it was paid for there may not be much money left. This badly needed improvement will of course be advantageous to the village as a whole, not just any new residents.

Q. The fact that you have a list of alterations that you are asking for would suggest that you have decided to support the development rather than oppose it outright. A lot of people in the village would rather see no development take place.

A. That hasn't actually been decided yet. The first thing that the Councillors will do tonight is to vote on whether to oppose the application or to support it with modifications.

Public Session closed at this point.

A discussion then took place on the relative merits of the two main options – opposing the development outright, or supporting/not opposing with modifications. This took some time, but eventually a vote was taken with 4 Councillors in favour of the second option and 2 against. It was decided to use the list of proposed modifications previously mentioned with a narrative beginning. DF would draft the narrative and circulate it to Councillors by email. They would comment, but would finalise by Thursday Afternoon in time to allow KL to send it to NNDC by the closing date.

Meeting closed at 2112

The following is the response sent to the NNDC planning department:

This formal narrative response from Binham Parish Council is in accordance with the resolution approved by a vote of Councillors 4 to 2, with one absentee at the Special Parish Council meeting held at Binham Memorial Hall on Tuesday 3rd November 2015 at 7.30 pm.

Introduction

The Parish Council was made aware early in 2015 of the likelihood of a planning application for 28 dwellings being submitted. Since then the Council has conducted several public meetings, three public displays of plans and a household survey. From these activities the Council has been made aware that many people in the village, including some of the Councillors, would prefer that no development take place. It is strongly felt that 28 dwellings are too many for the site size resulting in a density more than 20% higher than the adjoining existing Priory Crescent which is currently, by far, the largest and most concentrated group of houses in the village. The high density proposed seems contrary to the professed design philosophy of the Architect to give an overall appearance in harmony with the existing village. We would wish to see the number being reduced to nearer 20. That said we believe that if the Parish Council takes a negative stance, NNDC is most likely to still give approval and we will then be in a weak position to influence changes that could benefit the Parish in the short and long term. **Binham Parish Council will not oppose the plan but we would ask planners to make the following conditions /alterations** in addition to any of their own.

We would also welcome responses from “Comments” Sections A and B.

1 Density

We would like to see the number of houses reduced, lowering the density to more nearly match that of the average of the present houses in Priory Crescent.

2 Traffic

2.1 The sight lines at the Front Street/Hindringham Road/Walsingham Road should be improved before any construction vehicles access the site.

2.2 Other traffic-calming measures should be taken on Hindringham Road. We suggest moving the 30 mph sign back approximately 200 metres south to the telegraph post No 7 and a permanent radar-operated flashing warning sign appropriately positioned south of the junction. We have evidence from our own moveable SAM2 sign that traffic approaching this junction from the south does so at faster speeds than any other approach road to the village – in fact 65% of vehicles are travelling at more than 30mph (evidence available).

2.3 Construction traffic should only access the site by the new road from the Walsingham Road.

3 Parking and the four Green Spaces

3.1 It is understood that parking for the two existing bungalows numbers 27 and 28 at the end of the spur of Priory Crescent have spaces allocated on this length of roadway in their tenancy agreements, which will become the access to Houses 25 to 28 of the development. Broadland St Benedict will therefore have to negotiate a solution satisfactory to Victory Housing and the present occupiers of bungalows 27 and 28 before the overall site plan is finalised.

3.2 When the residents in existing houses No 13,15,17,19,21 and 23 Priory Crescent have visitors, these often have to park on the road; over this length only 3.9m wide, assumingly designed for single sided access. Unless the roadway is widened, residents in the new houses will find difficulty in safely turning in, and backing out, of their parking slots. A better solution must be found to remove a potential area of conflict between existing residents and newcomers, a situation the Parish Council is doing our best to anticipate and press for elimination, as elsewhere on the current layout plan.

3.3 Many have expressed concern about the lack of parking spaces generally, particularly for visitor’s cars with only 4 allocated for the affordable houses. This is not likely to be enough and has the potential of causing aggravation between neighbours.

3.4 There is a real concern that the large green and the three smaller ones in front of Houses 6,7 and 8 will become muddy parking lots. We believe that the greens should be much reduced or removed altogether from the site plan; and that all or some of the area of some 500m² used to give more space around the small affordable houses and for extra visitor parking bays in both areas of the development.

3.5 When the various aspects above have been settled on the overall site plan, the actual designated parking spaces should be permanently marked on the appropriate areas.

4 Intrusion into Public Footpath No.4

4.1 The extension of the roadway between Houses 8 and 9 with a length of “grasscrete” ending with bollards in the Footpath and the area of concrete pavers in front of the Pumping Station are unacceptable. The bollards represent a danger to public use of the Footpath, as an obstruction, and contravene existing rights of access. We understand that the County Council will confirm this, as this is a public right of way.

4.2 Access, restricted to pedestrians to the Footpath from the roadway serving Houses 8 and 9 should be maintained.

4.3 The location of the cart lodges for Houses 8 and 9 on their plots should be revised to make reversing out possible on the roadway ending at the present boundary of the Footpath.

5 Fencing

5.1 The proposed chain-link (weldmesh) fence dividing the development from the footpath is visually inappropriate for a rural site and we suggest should be replaced by a close boarded wooden fence as proposed for separating individual plots.

5.2 The 1.8m high brick walls for the houses fronting Walsingham Road is also inappropriate, particularly for such an important design feature of the overall development, identified by the Architect as providing an attractive visual entrance to the village. We suggest that 1.5m high flint walls should replace these.

6 Bin storage

The proposed wooden bin stores adjacent to houses 19 and 24 are not likely to be very durable and we believe that they should be replaced by brick structures.

7 Maintenance of landscaping and common grass areas

7.1 The maintenance of the landscaping and cutting of the grass on all the common areas in the development should be at the cost of the developers in perpetuity, not just the 5 years as in the current proposals. If this is not the case the Parish Council should be provided with a lump sum to perform these functions.

7.2 If a hedge is to be planted along the fence on the western boundary of the development, the cost of maintenance should also be as 7.1 above.

8 Window frames

In the material schedule on the drawings it does not state the frame material. We believe that there should be a single specification of high quality for all the houses.

9 Liaison Group

We believe that a Liaison Group should be formed, as a subcommittee of the Parish Council, with representatives of the Council, local residents and senior management of the Developer and the Main Contractor. It should have powers to ensure the safety of, and minimise disruption and nuisance to, residents in Priory Crescent and along the Walsingham Road during the whole of the construction period.

COMMENTS

A Planning Gain

At an earlier meeting with Broadland “Planning Gain” was mentioned with the prospect of possible financial payment to the Parish Council if the development is approved. We request clarification of the magnitude on offer and how the Parish Council should proceed with the application.

B Restrictions on use and sale of housing on the development

B.1 We would prefer to see this land, which NNDC acquired at their inception, used for the original proposed purpose of providing social/affordable housing only. We do however; understand the principle of allowing the sale of market housing to finance the social housing. We have to accept that this is in line with the policy of addressing the national housing shortage, particularly in rural areas, to provide more affordable rental property. But, for the wellbeing of the village community it makes little sense to assume 50% of the open-market houses will be sold to owners not for permanent occupation (Baker Tilley Social Impact Survey). The Chief Executive of NNDC at one of the consultation meetings earlier this year advised Binham that consideration is being seriously given to placing restrictions on sales of houses on exception sites for investment purposes, bringing little social gain to the village. The Parish Council would like to know of the progress being made and hope to see such restrictions in place before any of the open-market houses are sold.

B.2 Similarly the declared policy of the present government to force Housing Associations to sell off their affordable housing stock at a discount is illogical in these times of declared shortage. At the same meeting the NNDC Chairman assured Binham such a proposal would be vigorously resisted. We would also like to know what progress is being made on this matter.