

Bramfield and Thorington Parish Council

**An Extra-Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council was held in the Village Hall,
Bramfield on Wednesday, January 26th 2022 at 7pm.**

Minutes:

Present:

Cllr. A. Thomas (Chairman); Cllr. D. Hughes; Cllr. A. Niven and Cllr. A. Rozkalns:

Also Present:

Paul Widdowson (Clerk) and three parishioners:

1) **Apologies:**

Cllr. M. Bond, Cllr. J. Key; Cllr. S. Key; Cllr W. Shoote and District Cllr. N. Brooks:

2) **To receive Declarations of Interest:**

There were no declarations of interest.

3) **Requests for dispensations:**

There were no requests for dispensation.

4) **Planning Matters:**

Proposal: Construction and operation of a Holiday Park comprising holiday lodges, reception and amenities building and ancillary infrastructure.

Address: Thorington Quarry, London Road, Thorington, Suffolk. IP17 3QZ

Ref: DC/21/3251/FUL

After some discussion with parishioners and councillors giving their views on the planning application, the Councillors agreed the following response to East Suffolk Council written by Cllr. D. Hughes.

Bramfield and Thorington Council strongly objects to this planning application.

*The grounds for refusal of this application to develop the **Thorington Biodiversity Reserve** (the proper name for this site, not the Thorington Pit or Quarry) are based on three particular issues:*

1) ***Historical:*** *We find it most disappointing to once again be discussing this site. The original planning permission that was agreed with Suffolk County Council (involved because it concerned mineral extraction) in 1989 stated that on cessation of extraction that the land was to be returned to agricultural use and this was a firm requirement of the Parish. In 1998 an application was made for the site to be turned into a landfill site for household, commercial and industrial waste. This was refused. After the closure of the quarry in 2003/4 (after a lack of restoration and enforcement action by Suffolk County relating to delays) restoration to a 'biodiversity reserve' was accepted by the Parish and others as an alternative to*

agriculture (although the reserve did have, by design some small-scale grazing components). Landscaping to make the area safer was done and work started to restore the land to a biodiversity nature reserve. This involved a programme for the great crested newt and we understand that the company signed licensing legal documents stating the reserve would be managed for nature in perpetuity. Suffolk County Council issued an enforcement notice upon the owners in order to facilitate restoration of the land.

In 2014 a planning application was made for the construction of a large wind turbine. The application was refused due to its detrimental impact on the landscape, listed buildings and the wildlife in the area. It is worth highlighting that a single turbine was considered by the District Council in its refusal notice to: "have a harmful effect on the wildlife in the area. As the restoration plan for the adjacent former quarry has not matured there is some uncertainty as to the likelihood of the impacts on the stone curlew and raptor population. As the restoration plan matures it will have the potential to attract greater numbers of these species to the site. The close proximity of the proposed turbine to the former quarry could be harmful to the populations of these protected species."

If this was the envisaged impact of a single turbine, the Parish Council believes that it is difficult to understand how the applicant can claim that 68 cabins and associated works will not have an unacceptable impact! There was a clear direction for the after use of the pit and it is nature conservation. The establishment phase ended in 2018, so it has little time to be established before its part-destruction is proposed. The Parish Council believes that this is not acceptable.

2) **Environmental:** The applicants have not completed an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), nor have the applicants referred to the extensive plans for the development of the Thorington Biodiversity Reserve. The detailed and costly environmental restoration of this important key site as a rare opportunity for a badly needed contribution to the Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan would seem to be being overlooked or ignored.

The Parish Council understands that this site is one of the top ten national and therefore one of the best regional sites for the Great Crested Newt (Peak GCN in 2010 of 379) with higher survey counts recently. The number of which exceeds the requirements for SSSI status. The Parish Council believes that the conditions of the environmental restoration (supported by Bramfield and Thorington Parish Council) regarding the completion of the ponds was not established properly. It appears that the largest one is now a shallow puddle while two are steep sided and overgrown.

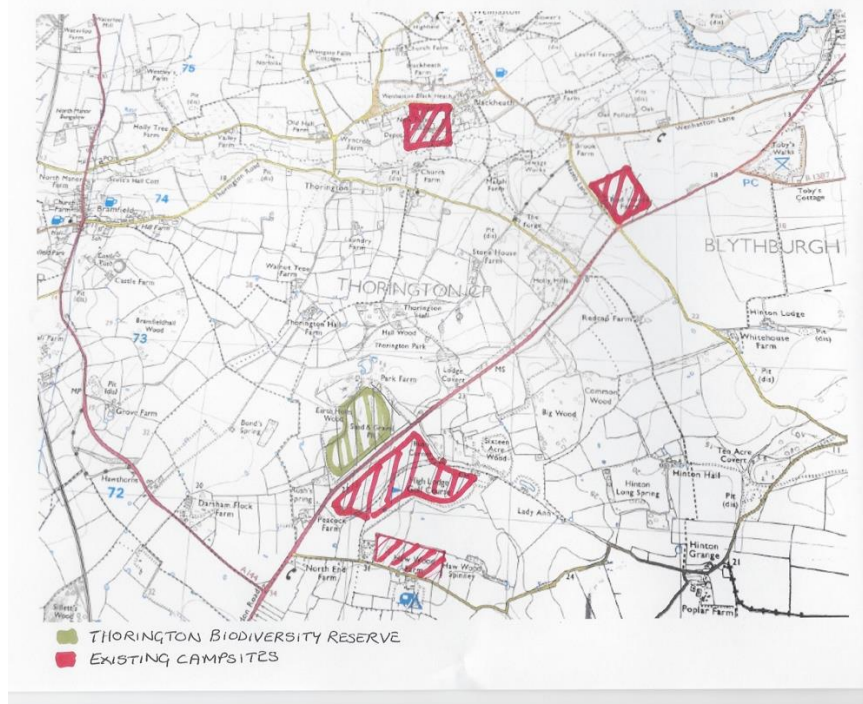
The site includes a wide range of species including a variety of bats, invertebrates, orchids and reptiles but the applicant has not carried out the normal range of surveys, so it is not possible to comment properly and to this end a full survey is indeed needed. The introduction of lodges, roads and people would destroy this special habitat. The Parish Council believes that all of this at a time where we are being encouraged to protect our world from such damage. Indeed, the Parish Council believes that we are in a biodiversity crisis and other sites in the county are under major threat from large scale development. The Parish Council believes that this is also an affront to the managers of Park Farm who have kept their land managed in a very good state following their undertakings for the half of the quarry land that they purchased. This includes the ponds and trees in and around Earholes Wood.

3) **Overdevelopment:** *The Parish Council believes that yet another holiday accommodation site in this area would have a serious impact on this attractive rural area. There are two existing camping sites less than 2 kilometres from this proposal; Haw Wood and Hinton (where many holiday lodges have recently been granted consent). We attach a map of the developments. In Wenhaston, Heathside Holidays (approximately 2km away) provides over 10 acres of camping. Red House Farm on Hazel Lane (also 2km approx.) has just applied for a glamping site. The Parish Council believes that it is inappropriate and unsustainable to continue providing new developments, of what are essentially second homes/holiday homes, in the countryside away from established settlements. If further accommodation is required it would appear more logical to allow expansion of existing sites which already possess much of the required infrastructure than starting anew on yet another site, particularly one as environmentally important as this one.*

The Parish Council understands that Thorington properties have little mains water and sewerage facilities and some properties are already adversely affected by lack of water pressure when the camping sites are occupied. Halesworth Sewerage Plant cannot take any more waste from private water treatment units so that sewerage must be taken some distance from the area for treatment. The Parish Council believes that extra traffic through Bramfield Village is a growing problem and local services cannot support the adding of more and more large developments.

Summary

The Parish Council believes that there is insufficient and inadequate information in the planning application to be able to scrutinise the implications of this proposal. As a Parish Council, we feel that this proposal is going against previous commitments made by the County Council, Natural England and the owners of the site. The community fought hard to ensure the retention of this site for wildlife after the previous agreement to restore the site to agricultural use was ignored. To subsequently ignore the revised plan for the site would be incredibly frustrating for the community. The location is essentially a nature reserve in a rural location. The Parish Council believes that to urbanise this site by providing 68 cabins is completely unacceptable especially when there are a large number of established sites locally which already provide this facility. The Parish Council believes that the location is of extreme importance in maintaining the increasingly threatened biodiversity of this area of Suffolk and every effort should be made to save and enhance what little remains.



Proposer: Cllr. D. Hughes: Second: Cllr. A. Rozkalns:

5) **Clerk's Report and Correspondence including Donations:**

There was no Clerk's report.

6) **Cheques and Receipts:**

There were no cheques or receipts.

The Meeting ended at 8-17pm