

Bramfield and Thorington Parish Council

**A Meeting of the Parish Council was held at the Village Hall on Monday,
October 17th 2022 at 7pm.**

Minutes:

Present:

Cllr. D. Hughes (Chairman); Cllr. A. Rozkalns (Vice-Chairman); Cllr. M. Bond; Cllr. A. Niven and Cllr. F. Ryder:

Also Present:

Paul Widdowson (Clerk); County Cllr R. Smith (Arrived 7-50pm and left 8-40pm); District Cllr. N. Brooks (Arrived 8-52pm and left 9-09pm):

There was an adjournment of the meeting between 8-40pm and 8-45pm.

1) **Apologies:**

Councillors accepted the apologies from Cllr. A. Thomas and Cllr. W. Shoote:

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

Cllr. A. Rozkalns (Vice-Chairman); Cllr. M. Bond and Cllr. F. Ryder all declared a personal interest in the Village Hall and the Jubilee Field.

3) **Requests for dispensations:**

There were no requests for dispensation.

4) **To receive a report from the County Councillor and the District Councillor:**

County Cllr. R. Smith Report gave his report after Item 12 in the Meeting:

District Cllr. N. Brooks Report gave his report after Item 14 in the Meeting:

5) **Public Session: Members of the public have fifteen minutes to ask questions on topics on the agenda:**

There were no parishioners or observers at the meeting.

6) **To confirm the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on September 22nd 2022:**

The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on September 22nd 2022 were agreed.

Proposer: Cllr. A. Niven:

Seconder: Cllr. M. Bond:

7) **Traffic Report:**

Cllr. A. Niven reported that the Speedwatch sessions begin tomorrow. He said that the Sign Indicator Device had been put outside the Village Hall for the next 2/3 weeks and he would then look at the data from the period.

Cllr. F. Ryder said that cars do come down the hill in Bridge Street too fast and that there ought to be a 20mph speed limit. Cllr. A. Niven said that he would contact Suffolk County Council to discuss a possible 20mph compulsory speed limit to be introduced along Bridge Street.

8) **Village Hall:**

Cllr. F. Ryder reported that the Village Hall had decided to create a Community Interest Company to own the Jubilee Field as it was an unacceptable risk to the Trustees to own it and the Village Hall could not own any assets. She said that the insurance would have to be adapted and some policies should be adopted regarding Anti-Slavery and Discrimination.

9) **Internet Banking:**

Cllr. D. Hughes and Cllr. A. Rozkals both said that they were working on becoming signatories to the Parish Council's Bank Account.

10) **Jubilee Field:**

Cllr. F. Ryder said that the purchase of the Jubilee Field was now with the Solicitors.

11) **Footpaths:**

Cllr. D. Hughes said that a parishioner had asked her if the Parish Council has a Footpath Warden. Cllr. D. Hughes said that the Parish Council does not have one so she would contact Suffolk County Council.

12) **Planning Matters:**

Proposal: *To convert garage, attached to house into a room, Exterior - To replace garage door with wooden window [dimensions 2.1m x 1m] to match the style of the other windows of the property. Wooden boarding under the window to match the boarding above the current garage door. Interior - To insulate the exterior wall and plasterboard the walls and paint. And carpet the floor. To retain the current interior door to the house. The existing floor plan of the garage/room will not change.*

Address: *Solario Cottage, Bridge Street, Bramfield, Halesworth, Suffolk. IP19 9JA*

Ref: *DC/22/3581/FUL*

The Parish Council had no objection to this planning application.

Proposer: Cllr. A. Niven:

Seconder: Cllr. M. Bond:

Proposal: Construction of 9 new affordable eco-dwellings in 2 terraces.

Address: Land North Of Castle Meadow And Adjacent Thorington Road, Bramfield, Suffolk. IP19 9JB

Ref: DC/22/3620/FUL

Bramfield and Thorington Parish Council recommend refusal of this application on the following grounds:

Housing Need: The applicant previously approached the Parish Council with a wish to provide open market housing on this site. The Parish Council advised that this was unlikely due to the countryside location and Local Plan policies (policy SCLP 5.3 was highlighted to the applicant). The applicant's subsequent desire however, to provide affordable housing on the site is to be applauded.

According to the proposal, a pre-planning letter of advice from East Suffolk Council stated (to build affordable housing on a greenfield site outside of the settlement boundary): 'There would need to be evidenced need for affordable housing to justify an exceptional approach and I cannot see that the proposals have been designed in response to that. For an exception site to be justified, evidence would need to be provided that clearly identifies local need for affordable housing..... Whilst I acknowledge a scheme of 100% affordable housing would carry benefits, it should reflect an identifiable need and, until that is evidenced, the principle is not supported by the Local Plan.' The pre application response from the planning team at East Suffolk reflects the Council's recently adopted Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) on Affordable Housing and policy SCLP 5.11.

Unfortunately, the proposal does not address the recommendations of the planning officer or the policy requirements. The current application identifies a need for affordable housing in the district but does not evidence a need within the parish of Bramfield (as required by paragraph 6.7 in the SPD). The affordable housing needs of the wider district are better focussed on more sustainable locations with jobs, facilities, transport links etc. Without a local need for affordable housing the speculative development of a greenfield site in the countryside is not justified.

The SPD advocates a bottom-up approach to providing affordable housing with a plan being made to address an identified local need. This would usually be worked through with a housing provider and the Council's Housing Team. This scheme has been generated without a housing provider involved. Concern is raised that the scheme, and some of the perceived advantages, may be lost after the site is purchased by a developer/housing provider and amended to improve commercial viability etc.

Tenure: Further to the policy conflict above there appears to be no justification for the proposed tenures of the properties. More than 50% being (reduced/'affordable') market housing seems excessive and not in accordance with policy expectations and demand across the district. We question how affordable the market housing (even once discounted) would be for those local people who would qualify for the dwellings. A better mix of affordable rented, shared ownership and a smaller proportion of market housing would seem more sensible - if not as commercially attractive.

Maintenance: We also have concerns regarding the management and maintenance of the public areas of the development. No mention is made as to

how the parking areas, play areas and the community orchard are to be financed/maintained in the longer term.

Parking: There are also concerns regarding the proposed parking. Currently at least 6 cars are parked on the side of the highway where the entrance to the new development will be built. Only four public parking spots are contained within the designs and therefore it is easy to see the potential difficulties that will occur when people find it difficult to park.

Design and Materials: The proposed site is close to the Conservation Area and adjacent to a Grade II listed cottage. The East Suffolk Conservation Plan, in section 13 describes Bramfield as a typical, Old Suffolk village that still retains its traditional form and appearance. It makes mention that despite some intrusive 20th century developments, that the village continues to retain the special characteristics that strongly justifies its Conservation Area designation. Section 13.2 looks specifically at new developments that are adjacent to a conservation area and their impact upon it. 'Although a conservation area boundary represents a demarcation enclosing a special area of historic interest, changes immediately outside of it can still have a significant impact on character and appearance.' We believe that this is the case with this proposed development.

We believe that the contemporary designs put forward for the development, which is in an elevated location so close to the conservation area, would do little to enhance the character of the village. The choice of vertical cladding, a very contemporary fashion which often ages poorly, and other modern materials relate little to the rendered timber frame buildings, brick and flint materials used in the rest of the village. We believe that the proposed design will be discordant to the character of Bramfield. The opportunity for the building of new properties on this scale within Bramfield needs to be carefully considered not to clash with the historic nature of the village.

Archaeology: The Castle Meadow site contains a Ringwork known as Castle Yard (scheduled monument - Ref: 1017914). We believe that it is imperative for this site, thought to date back to the late Saxon Period and to be associated with the de Bramfield family, to be properly and fully excavated. The hordes of bronze axes, now held in the Tower Armouries, dating from the Middle or Late Bronze age were found near the Castle Yard in 1839.

Highway: Bridge Street and Pitman's Grove are essentially single-track roads with no pavement. Bramfield Primary School is very close to the proposed development and in recent months we have had complaints from concerned residents about fast traffic and the dangers for children. Discussions have taken place within the Parish Council to investigate the possibility of the speed limit being reduced from 30mph to 20mph. The increased volume of traffic from the imminent Greenbanks development, and that proposed within this application gives cause for concern, particularly at school drop off/pick up times. There is a history of flooding along Pitmans Grove and Bridge Street. There are no storm drains on this road and excess runoff is dealt with through a simple drain that frequently blocks due to poor maintenance the proposal would accentuate the problems. Concerns have been expressed about more pressure being placed on already limited/fragile infrastructure. For example, has the sewage network spare capacity from the cumulative development proposed?

The Parish Council wish to make it clear that we, and a number of parishioners, would like to see new housing/life added to the village. However, it is felt that this

should be a plan-based exercise with housing need being assessed, tenure types being considered and the site being chosen after an assessment of all potential site options. The current proposal is well intentioned but the Parish Council believes that it is speculative and does not comply with policy.

Proposer: Cllr. D. Hughes:

Seconder: Cllr. M. Bond:

Item 4: County Cllr. R. Smith Report gave his report at this point in the Meeting:

County Cllr. R. Smith reported that he had visited the Thorington Theatre and had raised the Parish Council's issues. He said that Sizewell C had been given permission by the Government to be built but it was now awaiting a judicial review. County Cllr. R. Smith said that an application challenging the decision from the RSPB Minsmere had been lodged one day too late. He wondered how the money to build Sizewell C was going to be found as although it was currently budgeted to be built for £20 billion, he thought that it would cost eventually through inflation, £30 billion. He also lamented how the way of life would be affected by the extra traffic and building work.

County Cllr. R. Smith reported that Suffolk County Council needed to set a balanced budget by the end of February 2023. He said that £3 in every £4 spent by the County Council was spent on Social Care and with 15-20% inflation in Social Care Costs, he thought achieving a balanced budget would be very hard. County Cllr. R. Smith said that the county council would be spending £625 million overall and the current inflation rate would add £58 million to this figure and the Government grants took no account of inflation.

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

The Clerk said that he had received a Glasdon Brochure, a Sunshine Gym Leaflet and a letter from the East Anglian Children's Hospices asking for a donation. The Councillors asked the Clerk to put the possible donation to the East Anglian Children's Hospices on the next Parish Council Meeting Agenda.

14) **Financial Report:**

a) **Balances at the Bank on September 30th 2022:**

Business Community Account	£6 974-43
Business Savings Account	£6 633-50

b) **Payments and Receipts:**

Internet Banking	Clerk's Tax for July until September 2022	£143-60
Internet Banking	SALC – Six Months Payroll Service	£22-80

Proposer: Cllr. A. Niven:

Seconder: Cllr. M. Bond:

Item 4: District Cllr. N. Brooks Report gave his report at this point in the Meeting:

District Cllr. N. Brooks reported that the current Chief Executive, Stephen Baker, was retiring on December 31st 2022 and a replacement had been found. He said

that the new Chief Executive subject to ratification was currently the Deputy Chief Executive at Suffolk County Council, Chris Bally.

District Cllr. N. Brooks said that the first section of the new Lowestoft Road Bridge over the railway line had been built. He said that East Suffolk Council had launched its 'Ease the Squeeze' Scheme with advice and information on the website and face to face to help people know where to get help. Finally, District Cllr. N. Brooks said that the East Suffolk Council was currently working on setting its budget. Cllr. M. Bond said that the money for the Village Hall sign had not been received. District Cllr. N. Brooks said that he had put the payment through the system but he do it again.

15) **To receive information and agenda items for the Parish Council Meeting to be held on Monday, November 14th 2022:**

The Clerk was asked to put the possible donation to the East Anglian Children's Hospices and the expenses incurred by the Parish Council regarding the Queen's Passing on September 8th 2022 on the next Parish Council Meeting Agenda.

Cllr. F. Ryder gave her apologies for the next Parish council Meeting on November 14th 2022 and it was preliminarily agreed to move the Parish Council Meeting planned for January 9th 2022 to January 16th 2023.

The Meeting ended at 9-13pm.