

MINUTES OF THE WOOLPIT PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 23 SEPTEMBER 2019 AT 7.30 P.M. IN WOOLPIT INSTITUTE.

Present: Mr Guyler (Chairman), Mrs Ewans, Mr Wheatley, Dr Geake, Mrs Jenkins, Mr Hardiman, Mr Aldis and 33 members of the public.

Public comment: WPC was asked for flashing speed warning signs at the entrances to the village. Mr Guyler advised that this would be considered along with action points from within the Neighbourhood Plan regarding traffic calming.

A resident asked if WPC reject flats on the development in Old Stowmarket Road. Mr Guyler advised that this would be considered when a full and detailed planning application was submitted.

Incidents of smoke in the village were raised by a resident but nobody else had noticed this. The resident was asked to try to ascertain where the smoke was coming from.

1. **Apologies for absence** were received from Mr Howard and Mrs Moore.

2. **To receive declarations of interest.** There were none.

3. **To approve minutes of the meetings 2 September 2019.**

The minutes were approved and signed.

4. **Planning – to consider current applications and receive MSDC decisions.**

19/04312 Replacement of existing flat roof to garage. Hawthorns, Warren Lane – support.

19/04267 Erection of garden shed/bicycle store behind the property. Spring Lodge, Church Street – support.

19/02970 Erection of single storey extension to existing garage to house swimming pool. Carvalho House, Borley Green. MSDC decision – permission granted.

5. **To approve accounts for payment.**

Mr K Harknett £62.40 and Anglian Water Business (National) Ltd £47.47 allotment water 4/6/19-3/9/19 were unanimously ratified. Mr P Branham £110.52 edit October/November Woolpit Diary was agreed and cheque issued.

6. **To consider the name proposed by the developer for land at the rear of Orlanda, Juniper and The Cottage, The Heath and take any necessary action.**

Councillors are happy to accept the developer's proposal of Heath Gardens.

The meeting adjourned at 7.45 p.m. to hear public comments on the Joint Local Plan. Woolpit Multi Academy Trust is against a new school off Bury Road along with the extension for the current site. Two schools in the village would be detrimental to community cohesion. The current school site should be extended to accommodate village children from all the new developments. The need for a new school is based on accommodating children from Elmswell. This should not happen, a new school should be provided in Elmswell for Elmswell children. It is not a sustainable option to bus children from Elmswell to Woolpit on a daily basis.

What provision has been made to future proof development for climate change, cost of affordable homes, housing for the elderly, over development of Woolpit, lack of infrastructure, the need for the development of a new town near Ipswich were other issues raised.

Mr Guyler summarised a draft response document.

Mr Aldis left and the meeting reconvened at 9.08 p.m.

7. **To consider a response to Barbergh Mid Suffolk Joint Local Plan Consultation and take any necessary action.**

Cllrs agreed to send the following response.

Policy SP04. Housing Spatial Distribution

Object.

1. The 727 homes allocated to Woolpit is excessive and will result in the village increasing in size by 76%. Woolpit will be overwhelmed by such growth and a village will be turned into a town. No justification is provided for 43% of the total housing in Mid Suffolk coming from the 14 core villages and only 10% from 44 hinterland villages, many of which have expressed a wish for more houses. Many also have a good connection to a main road and some of the facilities which define a core village.

Furthermore, the August 2017 consultation (p. 31) defined the 'Transport Corridor' option as including 'communities within approximately 2km of an A road junction' and did not confine future development to the core villages. It is difficult to understand therefore why the only A road included is now the A14 – not the A140, A143, A1088 or A1120.

Para 9.7 refers to rural communities benefitting from 'appropriate growth', but there is minimal provision for houses away from the main transport corridors.

2. Paragraph 9.6 under Spatial Distribution states that 'it is important that all communities throughout the area are helped to maintain vitality and services.' By concentrating new housing in the A14 corridor and in core villages, the JLP fails in this objective and does not spread new housing around the area. It thereby deprives hinterland villages of the opportunity to encourage young families to settle and maintain community viability.
3. Woolpit Parish Council is in the final stages of producing a Neighbourhood Plan which is now being submitted to Mid Suffolk for independent examination and a subsequent referendum. The NP is based on a housing growth of 255 within the parish up to 2036. This figure is calculated from 25% of the District housing needs being allocated to the core villages. Woolpit Parish Council considers this to be a suitable proportion to be built within core villages. The housing needs of the NP should have been considered in the JLP.
4. During the preparation of the NP, Mid Suffolk District Council was continually pressed to provide a housing allocation that the NP should use. Mid Suffolk would not provide a figure (contrary to the assertion in para 9.6 of the JLP that 'The District Councils have produced minimum housing requirement figures to assist the NP groups in the formation and progression of those plans'). Woolpit NP therefore used the 25% allocation, this figure being based on numbers and calculations contained in the August 2017 Joint Local Plan Consultation document. Woolpit's derivation of the 25% figure is given fully in the NP.
The lack of information and cooperation clearly did not conform with para 16c of the NPPF which states that '*Plans should be shaped by early, proportionate and effective engagement between planmakers and communities, local organisations, businesses, infrastructure providers and operators and statutory consultees*'.
5. Although Woolpit has considerable employment land, the number of new homes proposed and the proximity to the A14 will result in many people moving here simply because it provides a straightforward, but often lengthy, commute to Cambridge, Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds. The provision of these houses in Woolpit will result in many long journeys to work which could be much reduced by building nearer the major centres of employment. Given a major road and houses which are more affordable by Cambridge standards, commuters are prepared to travel long distances to work from Mid Suffolk. This Joint Local Plan should not be encouraging such unsustainable travel.
6. Woolpit is unfortunate to be overburdened with new housing because Mid Suffolk have been unable to resist the easy opportunity to include a 500 home site which will dominate the village. Greater efforts in seeking smaller, more suitable, sites in Woolpit and elsewhere would have produced a less disastrous result.

7. A new settlement is required as a priority at the outset of the JLP in order to reduce the housing pressure on core centres. Leaving it 'for future consideration' is unnecessary and leads to distorted spacial distribution. The best solution has been ignored because of an easier option.

Policy SP05. Employment Land

Object

Small scale employment sites should be allocated in rural locations in order to create more viable villages and reduce travel to work distances.

Policy SP08. Infrastructure Provision

Object

1. The Babergh and Mid Suffolk Infrastructure Delivery Plan (2019 – 2036), which forms part of the Strategic evidence base of the Joint Local Plan, states in section 3.6.5 on Secondary Education that:

The County and District Councils will also seek opportunities for the establishment of a new school along the A14 corridor, to be determined through the next Local Plan. An 'area of search' has been identified as the parishes of:

- - *Woolpit and Elmswell*
- - *Needham Market (including relevant areas of Creeting St Mary, Badley, Darmsden and Barking adjacent to Needham Market)*
- - *Bramford and Sproughton*

There is no allocated site in Woolpit for a Secondary school and there is nothing suitable available. No provision has been made in Woolpit NP for a Secondary school. No reference to a Secondary school in Woolpit should appear in the Joint Local Plan or its associated documents.

2. In table 8, New Primary Schools, the Infrastructure Delivery Plan states that there will be a need in *Woolpit for 'a new primary to supply growth of Elmswell and Woolpit'*.

As no new primary school is envisaged for Elmswell, and the existing school has only room to expand to 420, which is only large enough to accommodate children from the sites which already have outline planning permission, it is clear that the surplus children will have to be educated in Woolpit. This is unacceptable. There is no safe walking or cycling route between the two villages. The arrangement will lead to more traffic in both Woolpit and Elmswell and be detrimental to the wellbeing of the children, particularly of this age group. The creation of an additional primary school in Woolpit could lead to social divide within the local community. A new primary school must be built in Elmswell.

The provision of primary education for the existing population and the 250 new homes in Woolpit, as provided for by the Woolpit NP, can be achieved by extending the existing school on land available adjoining the site, as described by SCC's Growth, Highways and Infrastructure team in its consultation response to Mid Suffolk planning application 19/02656 for 40 house at the rear of the school. Such an extension would even be adequate if all the houses proposed by the JLP were built.

3. In Woolpit, Thurston and Elmswell hundreds of new houses are been built. The railway stations at Thurston and Elmswell villages are on the main line to Stowmarket, Bury St Edmunds, Ely and Cambridge, yet there are just a dozen car spaces at Thurston station and six at Elmswell. More people and cars are forced to use an already crowded A14. Provision of more car parking at stations must be included in the JLP.

Object.

Insufficient detail is provided of the requirements needed to achieve the objectives of NPPF para 148 which states that the whole planning system should '*support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings, and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure.*'

Comments on Housing Allocation sites in the Plan

LA093 East of Green Road. 2.3Ha, 49 dwellings

Support. Site already under construction. Site is supported by the Neighbourhood Plan.

LA094 South of Old Stowmarket Road. 6.52Ha, 120 dwellings

Support. Provides a car park for the Health Centre. Traffic can access the A14 without going into the village centre. Site is supported by the Neighbourhood Plan.

LA095 North East of The Street. 36.2Ha, 500 dwellings

This site is not supported by the Neighbourhood Plan or Woolpit Parish Council.

Object for the following reasons:

1.

Woolpit currently has approximately 950 houses and planning approval has recently been granted for a further 169. With the 500 from this site, the number of homes in the village will rise by 70%. This is a disproportionate increase which will overwhelm the village and its facilities and destroy the unique character of Woolpit. A village would become a town.

2.

The traffic through the village is already an issue for the many listed buildings in the conservation area and the additional traffic from 500 more houses, much of which will use the village centre, would have a serious detrimental effect on the mediaeval core. The narrow pavements and pinch points of the centre will create additional congestion and make pedestrian safety a serious issue.

3.

Sustainability. The development is not sustainable within the definition of the NPPF, in that it does not meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Firstly, the economic objective is not met. Economic sustainability builds a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure.

We have seen no evidence that this development is of the right type, in the right place or at the right time to support growth. We have seen no evidence that it will support innovation or improve productivity locally.

We also have concerns about infrastructure. Although the railway station at Elmswell is close by, it is very difficult to get to without using a car. Cycling is dangerous and walking the short distance is terrifying. There is no mention of increased bus services, which are limited during the day and non-existent in the evening. The lack of access to public transport coupled with the easy access to the A14 in both directions means that those living here will be encouraged to drive rather than use public transport. This also has implications for a transition to a low carbon economy (see below under environmental sustainability).

Secondly, the social objective is not met. Social sustainability supports strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number

and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; it fosters a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being.

The huge scale of the proposed development, in conjunction with other developments already granted planning consent locally, means it cannot be socially sustainable. The easy access to the A14 in both directions means that the estate will be more dormitory than community.

Thirdly, the environmental objective is not met. Environmental sustainability contributes to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment, including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

Services in the village centre are between 345 and 435m distant. The health centre is 790m away, nearly twice the desirable distance of 400m. It seems likely that vehicular transport will be used to access the centre of the village and certainly the health centre. This is unsustainable in terms of transition to a low carbon economy.

4.

Wildlife. The site is locally important for wildlife. The ecological survey acknowledges the high number of skylarks, a red-list species in severe decline, nesting in the fields; skylarks are in decline due to loss of habitat, and this development cannot be mitigated in a way that will not contribute to their decline. It also found evidence that eight of the 17 UK bat species roost or forage here, that there is good evidence for common lizards and that there are great crested newts that will be affected by the development. Local mitigation may be possible for these, but the continued piecemeal loss of habitat is not sustainable. The ecological survey mentioned two owl species, little owl and barn owl, but did not apparently find the tawny owl well known to those living on this side of the village, nor the hedgehogs which are found on both sides of Bury Road.

Increased street lighting will be to the detriment of Woolpit's dark skies (it is a relatively dark village for its size, with few streetlights) and to the detriment of bats, owls and night-time pollinators such as moth species.

Increased traffic on Bury Road will be detrimental to those species which are vulnerable to road traffic, such as hedgehogs and barn owls.

5.

Historic England is concerned for the setting of the Grade 1 listed St Mary's parish church. They say that 'they are concerned that development of the site would result in harm to the significance of the listed building' and 'it would not achieve the NPPF overarching aim of promoting sustainable development.'

6.

This site has open and extensive views across to Norton Wood and to the church tower of Elmswell which will be damaged by the development. The views inward are from the A14 and White Elm road of the village with the Woolpit church spire. These views are of significant importance to the village - in the words of the Landscape Appraisal undertaken for Woolpit Neighbourhood Plan they are "distinctive and valuable". The appraisal also says, "Development in this area also has the potential to alter the settlement form and character, undermine the rural setting to the church and alter perceptions of arrival." There will also be some loss of public amenity in the form of views over Street Farm from White Elm Road, Bury Road, and Hay Barn Meadow.

7.

Provision for a new primary school should not be included whilst discussions

are currently taking place with Suffolk County Council for an extension of the existing school.

8.

The site is high quality grade 2 agricultural land.

LA096 North East of Heath Road. 0.8Ha, 10 dwellings

Object. Most of the traffic generated would have to pass by the school and Health Centre along the already congested Heath Road which is an HGV route. The site is beyond normal walking distance to the village centre and residents would generally use their cars to access local shops and services. The site is not supported by the Neighbourhood Plan.

LA097 West of Heath Road. 1.7Ha, 30 dwellings

Object. Most of the traffic generated would have to pass by the school and Health Centre along the already congested Heath Road which is an HGV route. The site is beyond normal walking distance to the village centre and residents would generally use their cars to access local shops and services. The site is not supported by the Neighbourhood Plan.

Lawn Farm, Woolpit Business Park Extension

Object. This industrial site will be immediately adjacent to the grade 2 listed properties of Lawn Farmhouse and Lawn Cottage and will be severely detrimental to their setting.

Initially some 300 people will be employed on this site and this will rise to some 600 if all the land available is developed. It will not be possible to control their travel routes to and from work and many will pass through the already narrow congested Heath Road by the School and Health Centre, particularly when heading towards Bury on the A14.

Suffolk is a rural county. This proposal will add to the urbanization of farmland alongside the A14 and contribute to the feel of driving through a ribbon of development. Industrial development should be confined to the designated areas near the major towns.

Woolpit is already the fourth largest centre of commercial development in Mid Suffolk and its proximity to the A14 encourages workers to travel large distances to work. New employment areas should be located near centres of population with public transport and lower travel-to-work distances.

The proposals are in clear contravention of Local Plan policy E10 which states that industrial and commercial development in the countryside will not be permitted unless an overriding need can be demonstrated and set against the impacts including traffic generation.

8.Date and time of the next Parish Council meeting – Monday 7 October 2019 at 7.30 p.m. in Woolpit Institute. Noted.

The meeting closed at 9.32 p.m.

Signed.....

Dated.....