

MINUTES

Minutes of Extra Ordinary Meeting of Woodham Walter Parish Council.

Held at 7.00pm at Woodham Walter Village Hall

Tuesday 27th June 2023

Present:

Cllr. James Rushton (Chairman)
Cllr. John Brown (in attendance from 8.00pm)
Cllr. Jenny Hughes
Cllr. Joanna Symons
Cllr. John Tompkins
Cllr. Peter Warren

Others: Jacky Bannerman (Parish Clerk)
District Councillor Mark Durham

Public: approx. 60 Members of the Public, including for the applicant: Edward Gittins, Edward Gittins & Associates (Planning & Development Consultant) and a representative of Granville Property Solutions Ltd.

2979. Welcome Cllr. Rushton welcomed those present to the meeting and explained the reasons for the Extra Ordinary meeting being called.

2980. To report, approve and record apologies for absence

RESOLVED to accept apologies received from Cllr. James Bunn

2980. Disclosure of Interests/Consideration of Dispensations

There were no interests declared.

2981. Public Forum

There were approximately 60 members of the public present and all were in attendance to raise comments with regards to the planning application reference: 23/00521/OUT. The Clerk outlined the rules to be followed during the public forum.

The Chairman began by asking the representative of the applicant to speak. The following is a summary of their statement.

- Housing shortages nationally.
- Acknowledged the Maldon District 5 Year Housing Land Supply (5YHLS) figure has now increased.
- Sites must be sustainable and fit in with the environment which the application seeks to do by infilling using a frontage development to protect the remaining field.
- They have provided an illustrative layout and design which provides an eclectic mix for the street scene in line with other areas of the village.
- Land to the East (opposite Queen Victoria) has been left as green space.
- Restrained ridge lines take into account the ground levels and have been kept down such as by the use of dormers.
- Materials selected are Village Design Statement (VDS) compliant.
- Previous applications by the developer have included help to local communities such as schools and they have been in discussions with Woodham Walter Primary School (WWPS) with regards to providing land to increase the playing field.

The Chairman then opened the floor for public comment. The following is a summary of the comments received from multiple persons present.

- Contrary to comments heard, it does matter that the proposed development is opposite council houses. The development will be visible from all directions which will affect the whole village. Concerns raised regarding loss of sunlight and over-looking. Traffic access along Top Road is not suitable as it is too narrow. Drainage is barely good enough in Woodham Walter now and water run off from hard standings will exacerbate the problem.
- Has there been surveys conducted regarding wildlife and insects?
- The new property at Wincroft had issues during its planning phases due to the height of the roof line which had to be reduced prior to acceptance by the LPA, but this proposal is higher than theirs and yet adjacent. The plans

show High Prospect which was replaced by Wincroft and the boundary of the new house is much nearer to the plot of the first house in the proposed development.

- More information requested regarding the new playing field for the school.
- Neutral about application but raised concerns about the drainage in the area. There is underground water including at The Queen Victoria and this needs to be taken into account.
- Representative of WWPS Governing Body – they were approached to discuss the idea of the playing field being extended at the rear of the school because that land is in the same ownership. The land would be gifted to the school subject to planning consent being granted.
- The school proposal should be considered to be relevant to the discussion otherwise the school may have had concerns about traffic.
- The proposed houses are just theory which could be altered if a Change of Use is granted. The village is not sustainable, there are not sufficient local services. Asks the developer where the shop is (mentioned in planning documents) and commuter services are not fit for purpose.
- HGV's during the building phase along Top Road would be horrendous for residents and families during the school drop off/pick-ups.
- Loss of views of the countryside for residents along Top Road and Brook Close.
- If the application is approved, is there any guarantee that more housing wouldn't be built on that field?
- Top Road is very dangerous and access is a concern. There is no shop and poor commuter services. Not quite such a perfect village as planning statement indicates. Concern with regards to the remainder of the field. Not totally against but concerned.
- Concerns if Top Road needed to be closed during building process as access is required for carers, the school bus, ambulances etc.
- Junction at Queen Victoria is very dangerous – could this be an opportunity to sort this area out?
- Visual impact would be significant for our village and would have detrimental impact on the village and wildlife.
- Considers the connection to the school and school places to be at odds as the scale of the houses at commercial values would be outside of the capacity of many families who may bring families into the school.
- Where is the site access? Safe access along Top Road is not possible. There would be chaos and the village can't cope with this.
- Height of properties would be looking over Top Road and Brook Close which currently has open access to views over the countryside. Only a financial benefit to developers and no benefits to the community. Concern that there could be back filling behind the development in time.
- Infilling will destroy fabric of the village and concern it won't stop there.
- Views from public footpath behind the church of the new development line will spoil the outlook of the village.

The Chairman allowed Mr Gittins to respond to some of the comments raised:

- School – this has nothing directly to do with the application. It is reasonable for a landowner to negotiate for providing local benefits to a community in return for development. This has nothing to do with planning and would require separate planning permission for a change of use of that land.
- Creating a frontage development prevents in depth housing.
- Ecology – there is a phase 1 ecological assessment on the council website which includes mitigation measures.
- Drainage – this will be investigated further and if necessary, could be rectified.
- Construction Traffic Management Plan would be done but inevitably there will be some disruption.
- Design – common place for indicative proposals to form part of the application but accepts this is not part of the application they are used to help understand the nature of the proposal.
- Infilling – many villages including this one, have evolved by infilling.

District Councillor Mark Durham was offered the opportunity to address the room.

- Also chairs the North West Area Planning Committee
- School proposal - it is normal for community benefits and the developer would be subject to Section 106 contributions as part of the approval.
- Ecology – application will have to show biodiversity net gain.
- There would need to be a construction management plan.
- Design – although all matters are reserved any future application would be broadly similar.
- Drainage – this would be part of the consideration.

The Chairman explained that letters should be written to Maldon District Council as they will make the decision. Details are on the Parish Council and District Council websites and information will also be distributed to residents, including by the Village Email.

The Public forum was closed at 8pm. Most members of the public elected to leave the meeting room with 11 remaining (including representatives of applicant).

**2982. Planning Application 23/00521/OUT Land between Ash Cottage and High Prospect, Top Road
(NB: High Prospect now known as Wincroft)**

Outline application with all matters reserved for up to 6 dwellings and garages.

It was noted that in addition to the Public Forum, the Parish Council had consulted with 20-25 neighbours and all but one were opposed to the application, the main reasons being: Loss of amenity for neighbours (Top Road, Brook Close, Little Baddow Road, Rectory Road); Height of Land; Road infrastructure and road safety; Precedent for further development; Negative impact on views and rural characteristics.

Comments were also received in discussions which were either neutral or in support of some development in the village. For example, some local residents consider it important that new blood is able to move into the village and that if it was affordable housing this proposal may have been supported.

The following is a summary of the points raised by councillors:

1. General

- a. The planning statement is incorrect as it is based on inaccurate MDC data.
 - i. District Cllr's advise that the 5YHLS has been satisfied (understood to be 6.36 years).
 - ii. The facilities stated are incorrect:
 1. No shop(s) (closed 2013).
 2. No suitable public transport (some services advance order only 2 days a week, daily service not frequent enough or suitable for most commuters).
 3. Travel times quoted questionable.
 4. NHS Drs and dentists in Danbury oversubscribed.
- b. Although access is reserved, the practicality of accommodating the change in level will exacerbate pedestrian access.
- c. The plans are incorrect as they show High Prospect not Wincroft, this building is approx.. 5m closer to the application site.
- d. The plans do not show a blue line around other areas of land within the same ownership.
- e. Indicative plans do not show change in levels.

2. Site

- a. WW is an Arcadian Village (1 of only 6 in District) with long vistas across open countryside.
- b. Lies outside of the defined settlement boundary (DSB)
- c. Field for arable crops
- d. Fronting on to a narrow lane – one car width average 3m by Women's Club.
- e. Partial footpath only.
- f. Field elevated above road by 4-5 ft.
- g. Access for the disabled runs at 1:12 i.e., 1m high and 12m long to be considered in the context of an elevated site.

3. NPPF

a. Sustainability.

- i. No shop (closed in 2013).
- ii. No suitable regular public transport.
- iii. Limited employment without the use of a car
- iv. No library.
- v. No medical services.
- vi. Extremely limited employment opportunities.
- vii. Need to use a car for wider village activities (average 2/household)

b. Social.

- i. 1 central public house (the Queen Vic having been closed for a year) and 1 outlying.
- ii. Church.
- iii. School & Nursery
- iv. Golf Club (public and private).
- v. Village Hall.
- vi. Women's Club (private clubroom)

c. Environmental

- i. Essential use of cars due to village location.
- ii. Destruction of Arcadian village long vistas and big sky from within and without the village.
- iii. Dwellings on elevated site will dominate the central village.
- iv. Overlooking and domination of Top Road, Brook Close and some Little Baddow Road and Rectory Road dwellings.
- v. Visual impact on the village central core and surrounding countryside.
- vi. Possible noise disturbance from heat pumps.
- vii. Indicative plans shows significant size of dwellings which are larger than those in close proximity

4. MDC LDP

a. Rural Landscape

- i. The domestication and urbanisation of the site, readily visible across the surrounding landscape, creates an incongruous form of development that is out of keeping eroding the intrinsic beauty of the open countryside and that of an Arcadian Village.
- ii. The principle of development should be considered contrary to Policies S1, S8, D1, H4, T1, T2 and D2 of the Maldon District Local Development Plan (2017), the Maldon District Design Guide (2017). and the policies and guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework (2021).
- iii. Future food security and the loss of a food production zone.

b. Defined Settlement Boundary

- i. NPPF requirement of a 5-year housing land supply is satisfied by MDC with an excess to requirements (6.36).
- ii. DSB should therefore be protected and should carry some weight.

5. RAMS

- a. The site is within the Essex Coast Recreational Disturbance Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy(RAMS) zone of influence for the Crouch and Roach Estuaries Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site; Essex Estuaries Special Area of Conservation (SAC); Blackwater Estuary SPA and Ramsar Site and the Dengie SPA and Ramsar site.
- b. The proposed development falls within the scope of the RAMS as relevant development. Given that the proposal is for additional housing, and its proximity to the SPAs and SAC there is a reasonable likelihood that it would be accessed for recreational purposes by future occupants of this development. This additional activity would have the potential, either alone or in combination with other development in the area, to have a likely significant effect on the European sites.
- c. The proposal would constitute habitats development and mitigation would be required.

6. Other Points and Issues Raised

- a. Existing drainage issue - extra hardstanding and surface water run-off.
- b. Construction traffic would have difficulty accessing site and cause unacceptable disruption.
- c. Road safety and junction accesses.
- d. Side and other access points to field (Gunhill Farm, Little Baddow Road, West Bowers Road) – opens up the possibility of ribbon developments to Stivvys Road and along Rectory Road all the way to West Bowers Road.
- e. 'Indicative' plans.
- f. S.106.
- g. Fail to see a net gain in Bio-diversity
- h. Construction Management Plan - closure of Top Road etc.
- i. Concerns with regard to school discussions
- j. Main focus should be sustainability, Defined Settlement Boundary and overlooking.
- k. Some local residents consider it important that new blood is able to move into the village and that if it was affordable housing this proposal may have been supported.
- l. Frustration village shop is still being referred to.
- m. Recycling point – this is bottle bin outside of the main centre of the village
- n. Local workforce – no guarantee that this would be local
- o. MDC services such as waste and recycling are already stretched as they don't always get round to all properties in the village now.
- p. Corporate Plan indicates support for local and rural communities
- q. Arcadian village – only 1 of 6 in District.
- r. Long views – site can be seen from many angles around the village including the vista from the church field
- s. Access to local facilities is only possible with a car
- t. Local infrastructure poor

- u. Negative impact on amenity of neighbouring properties
- v. Defined Settlement Boundary
- w. Unable to comment on conditions if LPA are minded to approve because the information provided is only indicative so not relevant.
- x. Indicative drawings do not show the change in level. The footpath shown would be an escarpment.
- y. Disable access into properties would be difficult with the change in levels for a 1 in 12
- z. Inspector comment re: importance of characteristics of the Arcadian village in Warren application refusal.

RESOLVED by unanimous decision that the Parish Council will object strongly to the application. It was noted that this had been the majority view in the room during the public forum as well as the view of the Parish Council.

RESOLVED to notify residents of the Parish Council response and provide information on how local residents can respond to the application.

2983. Points of Information/Items for future agenda

None

2984. Date of Next Parish Council Meeting:

Next scheduled Ordinary Parish Council - Monday 17th July 2023 at 8pm in Woodham Walter Women's Club.
(NB: July meeting one week later than usual due to Clerk summons to Jury Service and out of office 3rd-12th July)

2985. The Chairman closed the meeting at 8.50pm.

Signed

Dated