BRADFIELD ST CLARE PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 22 OCTOBER 2019

The Parish Council Additional Meeting was held on 22nd October 2019 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall. The Chairman Cllr J Kirk welcomed the following Cllrs: M Newlands, G Thomas, M Hignett and P Foster. County Cllr Karen Soons was present. Eleven members of the public present.

1. Apologies for absence – The Parish Clerk sent her apologies. She had become unwell that day. Cllr Newlands agreed to take notes for the Clerk. Borough Cllr Sara Mildmay-White also sent her apologies.
2. Declarations of Interest – Cllr Thomas declared an interest in the matter as in previous meetings discussing a planning application in relation to Pitchers Green Farm.
3. Minutes – As the Clerk was not present at the meeting, Cllrs agreed that the meeting would deal only with the business of the planning matter. All other matters would be dealt with at the scheduled meeting on 12 November 2019.

4. Public Forum:
   Meeting was conducted as a public forum in relation to planning matter DC/19/0503/FUL (item 6 of the Agenda). The following comments/observations were made:-

   - The rebuttal is a smokescreen for no change in the original proposal;
   - The social benefits are irrelevant and incorrect;
   - The impact on Bishops Farm remains the same;
   - No proof of alternative use of the site other than redevelopment – again a negative impact on Bishops Farm also unacceptable proximity to the farmhouse;
   - The single track roadway is more of a lane than a highway – no allowance for the probable increase in traffic and no real passing points especially when large lorries and agricultural vehicles are in use;
   - "Increase patronage of local services" – again incorrect as none are present except the church and village hall;
   - The rebuttal is merely a desk top exercise;
   - The rebuttal does not add to the application – does not address the issue of heritage aspect to the farm remaining an agricultural concern – clear local interest here;
   - Clever use of selective case evidence from elsewhere with a disregard for local planning framework;
   - There is no clear indication of the time frame when the ecological survey was carried out;
   - Loss of hedgerows could lead to increased speeding;
   - Loss of hedgerows would lead to a loss of wildlife;

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- Does the applicant have the right to plan for a change in site lines when the ownership of the land outside the holding is unclear?
- Very surprised the Suffolk Preservation Society have made no comment about these plans;
- Very surprised there is no Environmental comment in the rebuttal;
- There is no mention of the retirement of the previous occupant in the viability statement;
- There is no evidence of any attempt to sell the farm as a unit;
- There is a need to place a TPO on some of the trees adjacent to the proposed entrance;
- Ownership of the land outside the farm gates is unclear – may need to consult Enclosure and Tithe maps – post 1834;
- The viability of proposed splays will also need a clear knowledge of land ownership. Parishioner has investigated and reported there are no areas of Common Land or Village Green around Pitchers Green;
- Has anyone registered land ownership of the land in question?
- The mood of this meeting once again clearly questioned and opposed this proposed development and further questioned the existing owner's future intention to possibly develop adjoining fields, which remain under his ownership and control. There is a clear wish for the farm to remain an agricultural unit;
- Suggested that the PC find out when the Planning Committee intend meeting and ensure a member of the PC attends and is accompanied by our Borough Councillor (if possible) and supported by one village member.

5. Clerk/RFO Report:

   Clerk not present at the meeting – report will be given at the scheduled meeting on 12 November 2019.

6. Planning:

   Application DC/19/0503/FUL – **re-consultation in respect of a planning proposal.** Conversion of barns to form 3 no. dwellings with ancillary accommodation and associated demolition, landscaping and access works (Amended plans and additional information received 26/09/19). Pitchers Green Farm, Bradfield St George Road, Bradfield St Clare, Suffolk.

   Cllrs Newlands forward notes of the meeting to the Parish Clerk, together with copies of emails received from parishioners with regards to this planning application. Clerk prepared and submitted a response as follows:

"At a meeting of the Parish Council on the 22 October 2019 the planning re-consultation under application DC/19/0503/FUL in relation to Pitchers Green Farm was considered. It is noted that the re-consultation is for the conversion of barns to form 3 no. dwellings with ancillary accommodation and associated demolition, landscaping and access works.

*The Parish Council **OBJECTS** to the re-consultation application for the following reasons:-*

1. *The Rebuttal Statement and Amended Plans submitted by Durrants does not address the concerns regarding the fact that Felsham Road (also known as Bradfield St George Road) is a single track road and is only adequate to give access to agricultural vehicles to service adjoining fields. An increase of three extra dwellings on this site will increase the traffic flow on this already narrow, twisting and potentially dangerous lane;*
2. *The Rebuttal Statement says nothing about the applicant attempting to advertise and market the property over a period of time as a farm on the open market. It is the understanding of the Parish Council that it is obligatory that the farm should be advertised as a going concern and retained as a farmstead, before any proposal for development is considered;*
3. *The Rebuttal Statement continues to refer to increased patronage of local services, community facilities such as local shops, meeting places, public houses, etc. There is no public house or shop in this village or in the neighbouring village of Bradfield St George and there is not even a bus service. Clearly the writer of this document had not visited the village and the Rebuttal Statement is purely a desktop exercise. When determining a 'balanced judgement' the Policy Team should require the applicant to apply point 2 above before any further applications are considered;*
4. *The Rebuttal Statement fails to address the impact this development will have on the immediate neighbor at Bishop's Farm. The proposed plan to develop Barns 4 and 5 will mean that this new dwelling will be within approximately 2-4 metres of the Bishop's Farm farmhouse and overlooking it. This is wholly unacceptable;*
5. *Further, paragraph 2.3 of the Rebuttal Statement, refers to Heritage Asset – para 79 (criterion b) of National Planning Policy Framework dealing with optimal use of heritage asset – this comment is opinion and not based on fact. The view of the Parish Council was based on heritage usage – the building and the land have always been agricultural and not any form of multi occupancy usage (residential). In addition, a local farmer tried to purchase some barns to continue the agricultural heritage. No reference is made to this fact. Agricultural usage must surely be the optimal heritage use! We can see no evidence of the owner making any attempt to sell the property for continued agricultural use despite clear local interest (see point 2 above);*
6. *Paragraph, 2.4 of the Rebuttal Statement is referencing NPPF (para 83) Supporting a Prosperous Rural Economy. The claim is made that the LPA fails to recognize the contribution of the scheme to 'the retention and development of accessible local*

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services and community facilities' – see point 3 above. The village has a church and a small village hall, and no public transport, and did not qualify due to its size and location to have a mobile post office visit once a week;

7. *The amended plans together with the Rebuttal Statement do not address the Parish Council's original objections raised in response to the initial application and we respectfully urge the Planning Department to refuse to approve this amended proposal;*
8. *Further, the Parish Council feel that the ECO Survey should have been carried out when wildlife is becoming active not when going into dormancy. We would request that if the Applicant pursues this application that an ECO Survey is done at a more appropriate time of the year to give a true reflection of wildlife activity;*
9. *The Parish Council consider that the removal of the hedges, shrubs, trees etc will not only destroy the habitat for wildlife but will increase the speed of traffic through the bends making it more unsafe not safer. We would invite the planning department to consider this with SCC highways department and indeed visit the site to better understand the severity of the situation;*
10. *The Parish Council note that the original application form was raised on behalf of Pitchers Green Farm but the declaration at the end states that they certify that "**none of the land to which the application relates is, or is part of, an agricultural holding"**. The Parish Council consider that this is a false and incorrect statement, and we would ask that the planning officer consider this point and specifically respond to it;*
11. *Discussion took place at the Parish Council meeting with a member of the parish present who has experience as a Highways Consultant. The Parish Council note with concern the current comments from the highways department in relation to the re-consultation. The highways authorities initial concern on the original application was about the extent of the planning application site ie the red line area which has been changed but not to an extent that allows the visibility splays shown on the drawing and required by the highway authority to be implemented. In short, if you do not show that the application site includes all that is required to implement the splays any planning condition would be ultra vires and could not be enforced. We therefore consider that the appropriate course of action, is for the applicant to include the land and serve the appropriate Planning Notice and if he does not to refuse the application on the grounds "The application does not show sufficient land within the application site or within his control to provide the necessary visibility splays required as essential by the highways authority". This point should be made in the officers report to Committee and is a Material Consideration". Not only is this a valid reason for refusal but additionally the splays will mean the removal of the hedgerow and wildlife habitat that has been raised by a number of villagers;*
12. *Further, another point raised concerned the viability statement prepared for the applicant which dismisses a continued agricultural use and if accepted by the planners makes a residential change of use more justified. Villagers who attended*

the meeting felt that the viability statement falls short on fact and did not include items that a proper viability statement should include. It is considered that the facts that should have been included or should be considered is that up to 2 years ago the site was a viable dairy farm where the tenant gave up farming because he retired. No agricultural abandonment has taken place and we know that there are local people, as stated above, who would like to purchase the farm for continued agricultural use. Any viability assessment should include details of how the site has been marketed without success before any residential change of use should be considered in a rural area. No marketing has taken place so the viability statement should carry little weight and is not a material consideration in its current form;

13. *Finally, in the Parish Councils response to the first application we asked for Tree Preservation Orders on some of the trees on the site. We believe strongly that some of the trees do need TPOs on them, and would ask that the relevant officer visit the site and advise the planning department on which trees should have TPOs, and then those relevant Tree Preservation Orders be made."*

Clerk will follow up points about the TPO and attendance at Committee Meeting and report back to the PC.

7. Date of next meeting – 12 November 2019 at 7.30pm in the Village Hall.

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