

CASTLE ACRE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council planning meeting held in the village hall on Thursday 23 July 2015:

Present: Mr Sean Allen (SA) Mr T Hubbard (TH)
Mr M Hickey (MH) Chairman Mr Richard Read (RR)
Mrs H Breach (HB)

In attendance: Ms L Roast (Clerk), 21 members of the public, James Bracey (Holkham Estate), Patrick Grange (Grange Developments).

Apologies: Mr Jim Moriarty (JM), Ms Charlie Williams (CW), Mr L Fisher (LF) Vice-Chairman

53 PLANNING

15/00942/OM– Hybrid application – full planning for demolition of existing buildings and erection of 4 dwellings with associated access and outline planning for erection of 11 dwellings at Massingham Road, Castle Acre

MH began the meeting by reading out an explanatory statement as follows:

‘Given the number in attendance, I would like to start by making an explanatory statement on how we have got to this stage. This is the culmination of 3.5 years of consultation between BC and CAPC in a process called the LDF. The Government makes the Borough Council take into account five years’ future housing demand (estimated at 16,500 in West Norfolk), land supply, landowner and local council representations and social and environmental considerations, in order to allocate a number of new dwellings that can be built on agricultural or brownfield site land outside of the existing building envelope, or boundary, that was established when the last LDF was settled 10 years ago. This process does not preclude adhoc infill developments or windfalls, subject to planning permission.

Castle Acre is designated as a Key Rural Service Centre, meaning it has at least a school, pub and village shop. The initial BC assessment in 2011 was that this justified eleven new houses. Since it was first consulted in November 2011, the PC has always expressed a preference for those houses to be built on what was then designated as option sites 1131 (the current Rose/Alberma cottages land and within the Conservation Area) and 508 (part of the Holkham Estate owned field to the west of 1131), as opposed to developing other land suggested to us outside the village envelope. It is important to note that this joint planning application, described as hybrid, that we are considering tonight, is the result of PC pressure on both developers to work together and produce houses that, to quote BC guidelines, *‘the sensitivity of the site will require careful design to ensure that the site makes a positive contribution to the Conservation Area and the setting of the nearby Listed Buildings. Standard housing designs are unlikely to achieve this’*.

After taking these considerations into account, the Borough Council’s Cabinet approved the inclusion into the final LDF document of part of 508 as a preferred option site with eleven houses and linked that with four more houses on 1131, designating the combined area as G22.1. The submission stated that the BC requires a coordinated scheme on the entire site that preserves and enhances the character of this part of the village and incorporates a significant landscaping belt along the northern and western site boundaries to soften any impact on the wider landscape. Approval of the LDF is subject to examination by a Government appointed Inspector who started this month but then postponed it for six months as he was not satisfied with the Borough’s environmental strategy in respect of new housing development. The PC has no idea how this delay affects the final approval of the outline application before us, though not the full application for the four houses, but it doesn’t change our obligation to take a view and report back to the BC before 27 July.

The other development option site that was initially not even put to the Parish Council is designated as 1193 and is the land to the west of the school and behind the houses on Back Lane. The PC did review its inclusion in 2014, culminating in a very well attended public meeting in May with the LDF manager. The PC was minded to agree with the forceful arguments put forward by Back Lane residents against development, citing: poor integration with the existing village boundaries, highway and safety issues, the estimated 20,000 vehicle movements per annum past Costcutter and the school, groundwater vulnerability, wildlife protection and light pollution. The PC was also swayed by the lack of any design or material constraints on a private developer on **that** land compared to the clear restrictive conditions on G22.1 Moreover, that developer would be under no planning obligations to provide any more social/affordable housing than the plans before us tonight. Equally, in the current economic climate and taking into account the recent declared Government policy of forcing Housing Associations to offer some of their properties for sale, it is almost inconceivable that the Housing Association could raise the capital both to buy the land and to build eleven social houses, as opposed to continuing infilling as we have seen opposite Costcutter and in Foxes Meadow.

It is for these reasons, and for others, that the PC has supported this development in meeting the minimum housing target sought by the Borough, in enhancing the northern approach to the village without being visibly intrusive in the landscape, in assuring houses of a style and quality worthy of a conservation village, in meeting Highways demands and including two houses for social rent.

I expect many of you have had a chance to see the plans online. The paper versions are laid out on the adjoining tables. The A3 illustrative plan you see is an artist's impression of the whole scheme but I must stress it is **only** a draft, as Cllrs are required tonight just to support or object to the outline option site as part of the hybrid application. The PC has made it very clear to Holkham Estate that should the outline be approved, it wishes to be consulted in great detail about the landscaping, position of the dwellings, services, parking and lighting before any detailed application is submitted to the Borough. And above all, that the houses are consistent with the exemplar standards already set and broadly approved by Cllrs for the four houses on the Rose and Alberma Cottage land.

Two further observations: the eleven dwellings will be a mixture of sizes and price levels and, as stated, will include two that will be reserved for social housing, probably through Freebridge HA. The scheme may be subject to a Section 106 agreement or its replacement - Community Infrastructure Levy - that will generate a cash sum that can be reinvested in village facilities or go to supporting village organisations'.

Cllrs agreed they should hear first the comments from those attending before considering the hybrid application.

The majority of views from the floor were in favour of the planned four large detached houses along Massingham Road, accepting that the derelict cottages there were in need of redevelopment. Widening the road and adding a footway were welcomed. There were contrary calls for up to seven small flint faced cottages instead that could be more attractively priced for local people. MH pointed out that the developer's hands were tied by the Borough's insistence on just four dwellings there.

In reviewing the outline development of eleven houses on the Holkham Estate land to the west, some residents felt strongly these were unnecessary and blocking the views of 56 and 57 and 58 Foxes Meadow. Alternative suggested locations included placing all eleven houses further along the northern edge of Massingham Road (ribbon development) or on the land by the water tower. MH clarified that any housing was governed by what development land landowners had put forward. A resident suggested that the Borough Council had made many wrong assumptions about the use of the proposed G22.1 option site.

James Bracey was asked why the application for the eleven houses was only in outline. He explained that Holkham Estate was responding to the brief of BCKLWN. Moreover, as the area is outside the Conservation Area, a full planning application wasn't required at this stage. He stated that Holkham Estate would probably sell the land to a developer and would therefore not wish to invest the extra cost of full planning drawings at this stage, given the fluid planning process. The outline planning permission would just set the development area and the now acceptable position of the access road to the north.

MH brought the discussion back to the Parish Council and reminded the meeting it should be debating and supporting or objecting to the hybrid application as a whole. He asked Cllrs to take into consideration for the outline site:

- Landscaping: the need to retain all the existing hedges/trees at the end of the gardens of the two bungalows most affected in Massingham Road. Should the PC insist these hedges and those opposite Stone Barn are protected by a preservation order? Further 'dense-tree' planting to the south is proposed. In earlier discussions, the idea of erecting a 2 metre flint wall along the northern boundary was mooted. Should we insist on that, to match in with the 1.2 metre high flint wall planned in front of the four dwellings along the Massingham Road?
- The District Council's documentation has referred to the possibility of a footpath through the site. Bill Welch has asked if, quote 'the PC should consider requesting a 'greenway' on the site which could perhaps follow the line of the existing unofficial footpath which comes off the Massingham Road to the north of the Rose Cottages, goes behind the Rose Cottages and Albemarle House, the bungalows and towards the Foxes. This would have a number of advantages including retaining an existing desire line, providing a conduit for wildlife and help soften the landscape and provide some separation between the new and existing properties'.
- Pumping station. Why is it shown bottom left on the illustrative plan? Is that due to the lay of the land? I am assured these plants omit virtually no noise or smell, but the PC will need clarification and assurances.
- Car parking: to ensure there is an over provision so visiting cars do not park on the Massingham Road.
- Street lighting: any at all or just the minimum low level ground lights to reduce light pollution?

And for the full planning application for four dwellings, to note that:

- The dwellings are set back from a widened road (4.8 metres) and new 1.8 m wide footway and bordered by a 1.2 metre high flint wall. Two will share a drive/exit while the other two will have their own.
- All four dwellings are to the same exemplar design and materials/finish of flint, red brick and clay pantile, as agreed by the PC in the second application for the Rose Cottage land which the BC forced the developer to withdraw.
- Three of the four properties will have roof solar panels and all will have air source heat pumps.
- All existing hedging will be retained.

HB suggested that the plans did not consider the future of the village as a key rural service centre as there were no facilities being included in the plans i.e. for a medical centre or any employment for future residents. She thought that the planned eleven houses would just become a housing estate. HB also stated that she felt the design of the four houses along Massingham Road, did not complement the Conservation Area.

TH stated that he considered the Alberma/Rose cottage development meets what people had asked for and it would enhance the Conservation Area and with the wider road being an integral part of the plan. Supporting or objecting to the outline planning was more problematical. The process had been driven by BCKLWN and the LDF. The PC had tried to make the right decisions from the feedback they had received from the public. Any decision made by the PC could be overridden by BCKLWN and equally by the Examining Inspector.

RR agreed with TH that a wider Massingham Road would be beneficial. RR commented that given the unfortunate delay in the public LDF Examination, the PC's support for the hybrid application meant it would be supporting the principal of development on the outline option site for eleven houses only, not for the final designs and layout. Taking that into consideration, he agreed with the principal of eleven houses on the outline option site.

SA agreed with TH and stated that he had no problem with the four houses along Massingham Road. He was concerned that the outline option site with eleven houses would just become a housing estate. The as yet undefined details are accordingly of utmost importance.

NP stated that he had joined the PC to ensure the longevity of the village and its amenities by helping young families with children and thus supporting the school. Developing the village is necessary to achieve this and to keep other village amenities going. On that basis, he supported the application.

MH proposed a motion to approve the hybrid application. Motion carried 4 to 2 against. Cllrs agreed the five conditions for the outline site listed above in the Minutes should be communicated to BCKLWN.

The meeting closed at 9pm. The next full Parish Council meeting is at 7.30pm on Thursday 10 September in the village hall.