

CASTLE ACRE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council planning meeting held in the village hall on Thursday 6 August 2015:

Present: Mr Sean Allen (SA) Mr T Hubbard (TH)
Mr M Hickey (MH) Chairman Mrs H Breach (HB)
Mr Jim Moriarty (JM) Mr L Fisher (LF) Vice-Chairman
Mr Neil Patrick (NP)

In attendance: Ms L Roast (Clerk), 15 members of the public.

Apologies: Mr Richard Read (RR), Ms Charlie Williams (CW),

54 MINUTES of the meeting held on 23 July. Proposed by Mr Sean Allen and seconded by Mr Tim Hubbard. Adopted.

55 PLANNING
15/01054/O – Outline application for a detached two bedroom bungalow and pair of detached garages serving both existing and proposed dwelling at 75 Foxes Meadow, Castle Acre

MH asked for comments from Councillors after they had viewed the plans.

HB felt that the proposed bungalow looked squeezed into a small garden area and that this was an infill property. HB also mentioned that the surrounding hedge was home to a large flock of sparrows which are RSPB protected. Also that there would now be two access points very close to Foxes Meadow/Back Lane junction.

LF felt that it would be wrong to encourage infill properties. The BC had over-ruled the PC's objections to the other bungalow application along Back Lane - changes of this kind were detrimental to the character of the village. He said that of prime importance were the opinions of the neighbours.

TH agreed with both Councillor's comments. HB proposed that the PC object to the application and LF seconded. The motion was carried 4 to 2 with one abstention.

STATEMENT BY JIM MORIARTY ON THE PLANNING PROCESS

"I intend to run through a brief history of on what basis planning decisions have traditionally been made and how two recent events have, for the moment radically altered the situation here in West Norfolk.

When it comes to planning there are national guidelines set down by government but local councils such as the Borough Council of Kings Lynn and West Norfolk are the local planning authority and they determine the local rules and make decisions about planning when it comes to housing after consulting with local bodies such as parish councils and highways.

In 2004 Government established a new system of plan-making called the Local Development Framework which is made up of a number of smaller units which determine, for example, how the local authority will involve local communities in decision making through consultation (this called the Statement of Community Involvement), and the Core Strategy which is the plan of how the Borough Council will in principle make provision for 16,500 new dwellings across the borough between now and 2026. Important to note it is not 'to provide' but to make 'provision for' that number of new dwellings, ie to ensure that any local planning rules would allow for that number of houses to be built.

Prior to 2011 the Borough Council consulted on how that number of house could be provided for. They wanted the bulk, nearly 75% built in Kings Lynn and other major towns such as Downham Market and Hunstanton, and defined other smaller communities as Key Rural Service Centres, rural villages or finally Smaller Villages and Hamlets.

Castle Acre was defined as a Key Rural Service Centre, East Winch for example as a Rural Village and West Acre as a smaller village or hamlet. 17% of the required houses were deemed to come from Key Rural Service Centres and then the distribution was suggested to be based on existing population. The number of houses then suggested for Castle Acre was 11.

This number was consulted on and in 2011 the Core Strategy was adopted by the Borough Council. The next step was to identify where these houses might be built. I should point out here that the Council would not be responsible for building the houses, just o make it possible. For this to happen the Council had to consider how and what land outside the established village boundaries might accommodate new housing. New houses within the existing village envelopes would be considered 'windfall'. The Council has a team of officers which work with a number of councillors on a Local Development Task Group. The Task Group was tasked with finding specific sites for the new houses and to develop a series of policies which would ensure the numbers were achieved. This next step was called the Site Specific Allocations and Policies Development Document. An invitation was made to all land owners to put forward their sites for consideration for new housing. The suggestions were graded according to suitability and the results sent out for consultation. During the consultation period more sites were put forward and the LDF Task Group then came up with its final recommendation following further consultation with parish councils etc. That plan was then to be examined in a public enquiry to ensure it was sound and, following a report from the Inquiry Inspector was slated for adoption by the Borough Council later this year.

You will be aware that the site selected by the Task Group is the piece of land west of the Massingham Road opposite the Stone Barn properties. A number of other sites were put forward including land behind Back Lane past the school.

Press forward to early last month and the Inquiry opens but closes within a few hours as a number of objections were raised about the LDF Document which the Inspector felt needed addressing and the Borough Council asked for a adjournment to September/October to address these issues. To give you an example, the documents was supposed to contain a policy on how the council would deal with the impact of increased housing on natural habitat - not caused by the presence of the new housing but how it might be protected from the increased population etc. Not fatal concerns, but enough to cause an adjournment.

In itself this is embarrassing, but in isolation not something I would be giving a special briefing about. However, another event does mean this is a problem for the Borough and, in turn, for West Norfolk.

As you can see from the LDF, local authorities have responsibility for ensuring there is provision for sufficient housing to meet future needs. The LDF process was part of taking that provision up to 2026. The Borough Council was confident it currently had about 7.5 years provided for, and it needs to have a least five years provision of central government deems that the local authority is being too restrictive and national rules apply.

Clenchwarton Case

In November 2012 appeal Fosters Sports Ground 40 dwellings – Inspector concluded that the Council had a five year supply of Housing Land.

January 2015 Second appeal with a different inspector on same site for same number of dwellings on five year land supply. Since the November appeal, government guidance had changed to allow

Council's to include allocations in the Local Plan as meeting supply of land. Council (using methodology of the 2012 appeal) calculated 7.5 years supply of land. Developer using a different methodology calculated 1.5 years supply.

The inspector agreed largely with the developer and calculated that the Council could only demonstrate 1.9 years supply and thus added 2% 'penalty' for under delivery – 10% to provide a buffer – 14% for second homes and rejected large windfall and local plan allocation.

Lack of 5 year land supply – what this means in practice?

It means sites that would not normally be approved may be approved.

It does not however mean everything will be approved – presumption in favour of sustainable development.

It does mean that application will be coming forward that would not normally come forward.

How long will this change last?

Until there is a 5 year supply of deliverable housing sites, and normal policies for the supply of housing can kick back in.

Approving the site allocations plan and granting permissions for housing sites will help boost supply. Likely to be tested again at appeal.

The meeting was opened up to questions from the floor.

The hybrid application for 4 houses along Massingham Road and 11 houses on Holkham land was questioned and JM said the BC would be seeking to pass this application as the BC would want a quick fix to avoid other areas of development being added i.e. on land next to the school. There was no guarantee that a development here would include affordable housing.

Does this mean at the moment that the PC has any control over development?

JM answered that in terms of planning, the PC's views and objections will carry less weight.

JM went on to explain that in theory all the option sites in the original LDF site allocation plan could be put forward as future development plots and although the Borough and Parish Councils might object, an appeal to a Planning Inspector might find in favour of any sustainable development.

MH suggested that the PC debate at the September meeting and come up with a plan on what housing would be beneficial to the village in the future and to ask residents for their views. Agreed.

JM suggested writing to local MP Henry Bellingham to raise concerns at the danger of uncontrolled development in the village because of unclear Government planning policies.

56 ACCOUNTS

Mr Sean Allen proposed accounts be paid seconded by Jim Moriarty
FCC Recycling (UK) Ltd £ 34.90 E.on Energy (electricity) £ 63.37

The meeting closed at 9.15pm. The next full Parish Council meeting is at 7.30pm on Thursday 10 September in the village hall.