

# Castle Acre Parish Council

Clerk: Mrs Libby Firth, 7 Sandles Court, Back Lane, Castle Acre, Norfolk PE32 2XF  
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## Minuted record of Parish Council business conducted via Zoom video online meeting 21 May 2020.

**Present:** Mr M Hickey (MH) Chairman  
Mr T Hubbard (TH),  
Mr N Patrick (NP)  
Mr M Tate (MT)  
Mr L Fisher (LF) Vice-Chairman,  
Mrs H Breach (HB)  
Mrs S Moister (SM)

**In attendance:** Mrs L Firth (Clerk, hosting Zoom call), Mr J Moriarty (JM) (Borough Councillor), twelve members of the public.

**Apologies:** S Allen (SA),

**Apologies not received:** Cllr G Middleton (NCC)

### 93. Postponing May's Annual Parish Meeting

MH reported on Cllrs' decision to cancel the Annual Parish Meeting, following guidance from NALC that public meetings are still banned, coupled with the closure of the village hall. The Chairman's Annual Report, which would have been read out at that meeting, was circulated to Cllrs. SM proposed the report could be published on the village website, LF seconded.

### 94. PC online Minutes for April 2020

LF confirmed approval of the Minutes, MT seconded (both by email).

### 94. Health and Safety

No new matters reported.

### 95. Outstanding Matters Arising

#### 41. Drainage in High Street - update

MT reported: both Anglia Water (AW) and BT carried out a lot of work at the beginning of April. The system has subsequently been flushed out and inspected by camera. BT has removed their ducting from the AW main surface water pipe beneath High Street. They also made an unannounced visit and did more work close to one of the drainage gullies opposite No.19 High Street, possibly to upgrade their network or to repair it.

AW has repaired the main drain and also fitted a new manhole cover to the chamber a little further up High Street towards Stocks Green. We are awaiting the results of the camera inspection. On AW's advice, the PC will contact Holkham Estate to determine if they can clear the final outlet discharge ditch, which is clogged up, as it is on their land. We are awaiting confirmation from Highways about whether they have done any further work following progress made by AW.

Concerns remain over the flooding at the corner of Massingham Road/Town Lane because the work that AW completed is not connected to that area and the drainage there is managed by Highways (HW). AW has advised that they do not own any infrastructure beyond the Massingham Road/Back Lane/Town Lane junction, nor to the north or east. Flooding at that junction is as a result of blocked road or ditch gullies and/or their associated pipework which AW understands to be HW's responsibility.

### **87. Massingham Rd housing development - update**

MH reported that Holkham's senior management has yet to give the final green light to start the building work on the Massingham Road housing development.

### **56. South Acre Ford TRO - update**

MH reported: the consultation due to take place in April is on hold perhaps for at least another month. MH will circulate a draft PC statement to Cllrs, updated from the initial flawed TRO consultation in 2016, highlighting the PC's reasons for supporting the road closure and TRO. Cllrs to respond to MH with any comments/amendments before giving their approval at the 11 June PC meeting, allowing for the document to be sent on, once the consultation process restarts.

### **55. Pales Green memorial bench and signage on the Green.**

The clerk has contacted a local family who would like to place a memorial bench on the Green. They are very touched by the suggestion and plan to install it soon. A new sign is now fixed to the Green's gate stating - 'Open to the public, no dogs allowed.'

### **92. Stocks Green Village Sign rot repair**

The clerk sought permission from Cllrs to continue with an online application to the BBC2 show 'Repair Shop'. The application's terms and conditions state that the applicant must give consent for the show makers to have full control either to repair or replace the village sign as they see fit. Cllrs agreed that the clerk should continue with the application process. Clerk has obtained a quote from the current village sign maker quoting £4,000 for the existing design made out of aluminium, £3,500 for a double glass reinforced sign and £7,000+ to replicate the existing sign in wood. MT observed the maker's brochure referred to grant funding. Clerk to look into this. MH proposed Cllrs review the alternatives at a later PC meeting. Agreed.

## **96. Matters requested by Councillors**

### **28. Re-installing Bailey Gate portcullis and Bailey Street warning sign**

MH explained that despite Highways delay in updating the traffic directional signs on the A1065 (agreed last December), English Heritage has perhaps taken advantage of the lockdown now to reinstall the portcullis on 26 May. It will be hung higher than before but still hinged to prevent damage to the stone structure. To effect this work, Bailey Gate and Street are subject to a road closure order from 25 May for three days. MH and SA to install the new warning sign at the bottom of Bailey Street as soon as the lockdown regulations allow.

## **97. Planning**

### **Planning application Ref: 20/00573/FM - siting of 14 glamping eco pods over two phases for use as holiday accommodation at land W of School N of Highfields House And N of 2 To 6 Back Lane.**

Cllr TH declared a non-pecuniary interest in the application and would therefore not be making any comment or voting on this planning application.

By way of introduction, MH summarised the main aspects of the application, quoting in particular the applicant's Design & Access Statement and Business Plan. These are posted on the Borough Council's planning portal. Cllrs received a copy of both to read in advance of the meeting.

MH reported that the PC has received e-mails from concerned residents. These were again sent to Cllrs in advance to read. They are also uploaded onto the planning portal. MH summarised the main points from these e-mails which dealt with highways safety, traffic congestion, noise, light and air pollution levels, litter, disruption from visiting vehicles, the safeguarding of school children,

environmental damage, negative impact on the village's historical identity and general inaccuracies in the application. MH read out the e-mail from the Chair of Castle Acre Primary Academy:

*The roadway into this field is owned and maintained by the Diocese of Norwich and is the access road to Castle Acre Primary Academy. The road is unadopted and whilst the owner of the field has a right of access, any significant change to its means and the volume of access would need to be agreed with the Diocese. Also the increased volume of traffic not just with holiday makers but with service vehicles etc. would endanger the safety of pupils and families.*

MH also highlighted that the Business Plan gives no estimate of the expected annual volume of traffic. Equally there are no details in either document of:

- analysis of 'breakeven/ profit occupancy capacity.
- seasonal or all-year occupancy.
- budget and arrangements for cleaning; maintenance of site; tracks; pods – costs for these.
- analysis of how this proposal is 'sustainable'.
- evidence/justification provided for additional short stay tourist accommodation in the area.
- detail on the short, medium and long term strategy for the proposed Glamping business.
- analysis of competition from nearby glamping sites.

MH invited Cllrs to comment.

MT reported as Steering Group Chairman of Castle Acre's Neighbourhood Plan (NP): He stated that this planning application is in direct conflict with the village's plans for that area of land which is designated as a Local Green Space. This designation follows the principles of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Borough Council's Local Plan strategy which are:

- to conserve local biodiversity.
- safeguard and improve the environment.
- enhance local community wellbeing and quality of life.

By declaring this site as a Local Green Space in the NP, this will restrain development and protect the local environment, character, heritage and identity. MT also outlined that this site, known as Further Pond Close, hosts several protected species such as barn owls, bats, and great crested newts - all of which will have already suffered from the level of habitat disturbance through the early site clearance, prior to planning approval. MT considers that a full Environmental Impact Assessment, Protective Species Survey, Habitats Regulation Assessment and an Archaeological Assessment should have been carried out, prior to submitting this planning application. MT stressed that the applicant did not consult about this glamping proposal with either the local authority or the local community and can therefore not qualify his statement that 'it is the most effective use of the land'. This is merely the applicant's opinion.

LF commented that the application's pros and cons of additional employment and possible increased business for the pub and shop don't seem to outweigh the list of drawbacks to the village. He could not support this application.

SM commented on her concerns of the risks to school pupils, staff and parents with the increase in traffic. She doesn't accept the applicant's proposal to control guests check in and out times which won't mitigate against the risk levels to the school which utilises the road throughout the day and evening. SM concurred with the NP's questionnaire findings that the majority of parishioners do not wish for an increase in tourism in the village. SM stressed the weak structure of the Business Plan, noting that it does not appear to be a family orientated project with its two person sized pods.

HB expressed her concerns about the poor layout of the site plan, the access road being unadopted and not up to highway standards as well as the Business Plan. She supported MT's call for proper assessments to be carried out, prior to any decision being made at Borough Council level.

NP expressed his conflict in wanting to support the application to bring business growth for the pub and shop and offering locals affordable visitor accommodation, while set against the drawbacks for the school and local safety and the impact it could have to those living in close proximity to the site.

MT responded on comments regarding supporting the local economy; to outline that the affordability of the glamping site may undercut existing holiday accommodation which would have a negative effect on the local economy and also outlined the non-inclusivity of the glamping site proposal with limited access and scale of the pods.

Cllrs called for urgent steps to halt any further clearance work on the site while the planning application is being considered.

MH summarised that the application does not meet the NPPF criteria for effective use of the land and possibly fails to meet the Borough Council's development policies. He highlighted the likely high level of traffic movements and cautioned against the probably expansion of the glamping site without requiring further planning permission. He noted that the Borough Council impose an Habitat Levy on glamping sites to mitigate against the harm caused to our natural environment.

With Cllr's agreement, MH opened the meeting to members of the public who were listening to the debate.

One non-resident expressed support for the application suggesting the extra traffic volume might lead to improvements to the access road. He noted that the site would only be open for six months of the year and stated that the majority of existing local accommodation was not owned by locals and that income doesn't come into the village local economy. One resident, who lives next to the school, expressed her huge concern over the amount of noise and light late at night from the glamping site, plus increased footfall with people returning to the site from the pub. This resident feels that overall this application will prove detrimental to the village and doesn't accept the optimistic view that the local shop would gain in business, while the village would see an increase in unwanted mobile businesses. A third resident stated that the application seems speculative and that the poor quality Business Plan has some diagrams not to scale and not enough attention to detail, questioning the applicant's honesty and reliability.

JM confirmed that he will ask the Planning Officer to call in this application unless officers are minded to refuse under delegated authority. He didn't feel that stressing the additional light pollution from the site would be particularly valid for this application, citing the church external lighting.

A motion to object to the planning application was proposed by LF and seconded by SM. TH reiterated that he would not be voting. A vote was taken with four in favour of the motion and two abstaining. The PC will submit its objections to planning application ref:20/00573/FM to the Borough Planning Officer before the deadline of 9 June 2020.

## 98. Reports

**Neighbourhood Plan-** MT reported: assessing residents and stakeholder's replies to the Reg.14 consultation will be completed this week.

**Borough Council-** JM advised that the BC were receiving daily/weekly reports from the government, much like reports sent to the PC. West Norfolk has been worst hit by the virus compared to Norwich and South Norfolk, indicating further investigation.

## 100. Accounts to be paid

Berrymans Glass Recycling Ltd (URM UK Ltd)	£36.00 (£6.00 VAT)
E.on Energy (electricity)	£66.09 (£3.15 VAT)
BCKLWN weekly litter bin collection	£320.82
Holkham allotment rent April 2020- November 2020	£100.00
TTSR Ltd village greens maintenance March - Oct 2020 (1of 2)	£955.86 (£159.31VAT)
Clerk expenses - printer ink (for NP circular)	£87.89 (£14.65 VAT)
*MH added Clerk's personal expense of 1 x monthly Zoom account	£14.39 (£2.40 VAT)

TH proposed approval of accounts to be paid, NP seconded.

## 101. Village Maintenance

### Potholes

Highways have reported that an internal issue with misreporting of completed tasks has resulted in several unfinished pothole repairs in the village such as on Orchard Lane, Archer Lane, North Street and Foxes Meadow. All to be addressed in the near future. Clerk to follow up.

### Tree in River at Ranrevir

The CA Fishing Club has confirmed that it has plans to remove the tree. Clerk to remain in contact.

### Broken glass on Common Lane.

Clerk to report the broken glass at the end of Common Lane to Highways.

### Tree work required in Priory Court

The local tree surgeon has noted decay in an ash tree in Priory Court. Clerk to contact Freebridge.

## 102. Public Question Time

### Further Pond Close, Gt Crested Newt protection

A local resident wants the PC to be aware of the severe impact on great crested newts should the pond on the Further Pond Close land be cleared or the terrestrial habitat damaged further during their breeding season and calls for urgent action to be taken. Clerk to be contacted by member of the public on how to do this.

### Next Parish Council meeting

Cllrs agreed that this meeting by Zoom had gone better than expected and praised the Clerk for her skilled handling of the technology. Agreed that the June PC meeting will again be through Zoom unless the current lockdown restrictions are eased. Agreed to deal then with both postponed decisions - 1. Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman for the next 12 months and 2. Co-opting a new Cllr. (both backdated to 14 May).

The meeting closed at 9.0pm. The next full Parish Council meeting is scheduled for **Thursday 11 June** at 7.30pm