

CASTLE ACRE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held in the village hall on Thursday 14 September 2017:

Present: Mr M Hickey (MH) Chairman Mr L Fisher (LF) Vice-Chairman
Mr N Patrick (NP) Mr Martin Tate (MT)
Mr T Hubbard (TH) Ms C Williams (CW),
Mr S Allen (SA) Mrs Sheila Moister (SM)

In attendance: Ms L Roast (Clerk), Mr G Middleton (County Councillor) and two members of the public.

Apologies: Mrs H Breach (HB), Mr J Moriarty (Borough Councillor),

42. **Design presentation by James Bracey (JB), Holkham, and John Weston (JW) of Lucas, Hickman, Smith, Architects for the Massingham Road site hybrid housing development**

MH welcomed both guests to the meeting and briefly updated Cllrs on his meeting with James Bracey last February when it was confirmed that Holkham would be developing the site themselves rather than selling it to a developer. JB explained that the proposed scheme is consistent with the reserved planning matters application put forward to the Borough Council and at this stage the design plans are outline, with details still in discussion, and landscaping not yet completed.

JW presented layout boards of the proposal which would include five 3-bedroom properties (two of which would be social houses), five 4-bedroom properties and one 5-bedroom property, some with ground floor bedrooms. No bungalows are included. The two affordable semi-detached houses would be positioned on the southern corner of the access road near to the Massingham Road entrance. They may have a covenant to allow key workers or those working in the village to have the first chance to rent. JB quoted Flagship Housing as a possible provider. Cllrs requested that the parking spaces are moved to the back of these properties rather than at the front. JW agreed to the alteration. MT questioned why with 15 new dwellings under construction, only two, not three social housing units are planned. JB advised this was because of the hybrid application covered separate inner boundary and the outer boundary developments.

JW clarified that the design details, yet to be concluded, are of a more traditional, simple and honest style with gable ends onto the street to break up the roofline. The dwellings would be in red brick, possible Flemish Bond style, with some wood panels or render and some more modern features such recessed porches, possibly recessed aluminium windows and larger stone sills. Plots were generous, similar in size to Foxes Meadow plots, with traditional front gardens and flint front garden walls onto the street verges and landscaped with native hedging to the north and an avenue of trees along the internal access road. The intention is to start construction on the access road splay in October 2017.

In response to Cllrs queries, JW/JB clarified: the access road would be adopted (street lighting, costs?). Properties would have air source heating rather than ground source heating (space limitations). Solar panels: possibly on some roofs as the dwellings would be to a high environmental standard. Allowance has been made for the inclusion of an underground water pumping station (subject to consultation with Anglian Water). Cllrs were assured that this would operate very quietly and will not disturb the surrounding properties.

MH asked why Holkham has included a 5-bedroom 'executive' house given the top line findings from our Neighbourhood Plan questionnaire responses indicate an overwhelming

rejection of any more 'executive' houses in the village. While Cllrs are conscious that the call for 'affordable' or 'low cost' housing is difficult to define or supply, CAPC will find little enthusiasm from residents if we give our support to the proposed housing mix. JB answered that they had consulted Savills on the market evidence for property specifications most likely to be sold to families. A resident attending pointed out that smaller housing may not go to the kind of people it was intended for, as these properties are perfect for second home buyers and that the smaller houses are selling at a higher cost relative to the larger dwellings and could be snapped up. Cllrs asked JB if he would agree to put a covenant on the smaller houses - JB said that he felt that a covenant on any properties may depress the prices and the venture is after all, a commercial one. Discussion continued on what was an affordable price for a young couple starting out on the property ladder to put down as a deposit. TH stated that in the village as a whole there were very few places under £200,000 and were these affordable to locals? SM asked if Holkham would consider renting out some of the larger properties but JB said probably not in this location.

CW said that the village as it stands has a broad demographic including locals, second homers and those moved here from other places which was a healthy mix and wanted to make sure that this mix continued. She questioned the position of the social houses. JB said that the plan was not about segregation but about integration and that the design of the social housing will be equivalent to the housing on sale.

MH thanked JB and JW for their presentation and asked for PDF's of the layout boards to be sent to the PC in the next week to allow Cllrs time to reflect and then consider at their 5 October meeting in order to reach a final consensus on CAPC's support for the Holkham development.

43. Minutes of PC meeting Thursday 13 July 2017 - proposed by Mr Laurie Fisher, Mr Tim Hubbard, seconded. Agreed.

44. Actions from previous meeting:

28. Bailey Gate – English Heritage (EH) is scheduled to do repairs on the Gate, and to install the portcullis, between 26 and 29 September. A sketch of the portcullis was shown to Cllrs. MH explained that the height restriction currently for vehicles is 3.4 metres (11ft 4 inches) but that technically the dust cart, at 3.5 metres height and 2.25 metres wide, goes through the Gate illegally. EH decided to limit the portcullis depth to 3.8 metres to allow the dust cart continued access. A reflector strip and height warning sign will be affixed to the bottom of the portcullis. EH noted that the two posts on each side of gate, currently at 11ft (3.3 metres) apart, should be moved inwards to 8.0 feet (2.4 metres) apart. It appears that most drivers use SATNAV and do not look at the current signage which is increasing the problem. Highways' new warning road signage for the A1065 seems to have been lost in the system and has been re-ordered.

108. New Textile Bin – no details.

6. PC donations - new bank account – no update on account from HSBC – Clerk to chase.

Dog waste bin at Minns Meadow – waiting for NCC to issue a furniture license.

9. Minns Meadow path – MH obtained a quote for filling in the dip under the gate at the ford end of the Minns Meadow walk - £350. Cllrs agreed that this was too expensive and that perhaps a better alternative would be to fill in the dip with hogging.

26. Street lighting - unmetered electricity supply - E.on have reduced the monthly charge by about £5 per month (6.3%) after UK Power Networks updated the breakdown of street lights with the new LED bulbs and 30% of the lights going off at midnight. The Clerk is looking at comparative quotes from other suppliers. To be presented at the October meeting.

30. Priory Field path cutting – Holkham promises to do this soon.

Tree at 25 Town Lane – TH has investigated the tree which is right on the boundary of No. 25 Town Lane and the playing field. There is no way of telling if it was planted or self-sown. TH met the resident who previously had the tree topped at his own expense, some +/- ten years ago. Clearly the tree (a healthy specimen) now needs further management as some of the re-growth after topping is beginning to break at the weaker branch unions due to the weight of foliage. Cllrs agreed to assess the work required, obtain quotes and then contact the resident to see the cost could be split. TH to write a clear brief to be sent to contractors to get quotes.

33. Pot Holes at South Acre ford – Highways have not been back to tidy up the area and fill in the pot holes properly. The Clerk is chasing.

34. Bridge at the ford – the first two handrails on the Castle Acre side are loose and rotting. The Clerk has contacted Highways who have agreed to get the bridge repaired – not done yet.

Stocks Green, nearest lime tree to the Church –TH has examined and a report will be added to the tree register. The tree shows no rot and the non-urgent work required is both to cut back the ash sapling growing in the fork and to remove the vigorous new growth around the base.

37. Heritage litter sign at South Acre ford – the replacement sign is ordered and will be delivered on receipt of payment. The former Castle car park litter bin is installed and is being used. It will be emptied by the litter picking team on a regular basis. NP asked that this bin is moved further away from the bench.

Holkham new allotments –Cllrs are in favour of the new allotments in the village but Holkham's quote of £2,000 to clear the site means a delay in effecting the transfer.

40. St James Green damaged manhole cover – the Clerk has reported it to Highways.

45. Health & Safety issues.

Street Lights – the Clerk has reported three malfunctioning lights at Pyes Lane, Pyes Lane/Town Lane and Foxes Meadow.

Ash Tree, Back Lane – TH has reported a tree in Back Lane on the highways verge that needs remedial work, post planning permission. TH to monitor progress.

Parking along Massingham Road – CW reported that the shop extension builders are parking along the road and obscuring sight lines for exiting vehicles as well as putting school children and their parents in danger. Temporary solutions could include parking in the Ostrich car park, parking further along Massingham Road, in Back Lane or in Foxes Meadow. MH to speak to Mr Singh at the shop.

46. Matters requested by Councillors

Programme and costs to clear the container area of the playing field –CAPFA moved quickly to obtain quotations for the removal of the two garage structures, clearance and leveling of the whole area as well as moving the two onsite containers across to by the boundary trees with Lower House. The work is complete apart from moving one containers whose contents were not first removed when requested. Cllrs agreed to CAPFA's request to install a smaller third container to house essential equipment. – including the roller, tractor, pitch cutter. Noted the previous committee had established that no planning permission is required for the containers.

Verti draining of the playing field – to get rid of excess surface water. Recent work onsite covered digging up sections of the football pitch to reveal the whole drainage system. An 18 inch layer of clay under the top soil appears to be the culprit as water can't drain through quickly. Rolling the pitch is making the drainage worse and the verti draining last year would not have gone down through the clay. A possible solution is 'mole ploughing', once a year. CAPFA is looking into the cost. If the PC is to help with payments, quotes need to be presented to the council by the November meeting.

48. **Correspondence**

Email – dogs off leash – Email received read out “*I am writing to bring up the number of dogs off leash in the village. We have three dogs and always walk on leash because we know that one of our dogs is not good with other dogs, she wears a special harness stating such also.*

When we walk our dogs we are responsible enough to know that our dogs need to be leashed to protect them and to possible protect other dogs that approach us off leash. If we are in a clear area where we can see ,we will let our lab off leash to chase her ball. If we see people, especially with dogs, she goes straight back on the leash. Twice now we have tried to go to the Priory only to be met by a trainer with a van and about 6 dogs off leash. Is there a leash requirement for Castle Acre? I do understand people have well trained dogs that can be controlled off leash, but not all of them can behave as well as some owners think they can”. Councillors agreed that dog control is the responsibility of the owners and that they should abide by the countryside code of conduct.

Speed limit at Jubilee bridge – Email received read out “*The speed limit sign for cars entering Castle Acre from the Jubilee Bridge over the river is 30 mile per hour (MPH). We use this bit of the road all the time. The bridge itself is too narrow for two vehicles to pass & there is the corner with the road off the left to go up to Chimney Street. The sight lines are v short. If cars or vehicles travel at 30 mph, this would provide insufficient time for drivers to break & avoid other vehicles. I think those who originally put up the 30 MPH sign made a mistake & intended for the sign to be 20 MPH.”*

Cllrs agreed to respond by stating ‘The Council agreed that the 30mph would be too fast to negotiate some hazards in this area, and share your concerns about speeding in the village. However, 30 mph is the maximum speed limit for this area, and drivers must take into account all road conditions and drive at a safe speed. In many areas of Castle Acre, as well as many others in villages Norfolk, which have a 30 mph limit, driving at 30 mph would be dangerous. Road safety is a top safety priority for the Council, by asking highways to change signage, we have tried to reduce traffic flow in more constricted areas such as Jubilee bridge. We have also paid for additional footpaths and flashing speed awareness signs. Unfortunately, we were unable to get enough volunteers to sustain the village speed watch patrol which would act as a visible deterrent to drivers entering the village. The signs on the A1065 are due to be altered in the near future and hopefully this will have some effect on this problem.’

49. **Reports**

Highways –MH reported: Orchard Lane drainage problem reported. High Street drainage – the Clerk to report the problem again as the drains have not yet been flushed.

School – no report:

Village Hall – The Clerk reported: the concert by Neil Cousin on 9 September was not well supported and the Village Hall lost money.

CAPFA –CW reported: inspection of playground equipment is due. The committee plans to get quotes to update the equipment and to make this a nicer area for children.

Neighbourhood Plan (NP) – MT reported: the village questionnaire has generated lots of work! With 551 completed questionnaires, the 65% response rate in Castle Acre is much better than most villages. 42 pages of comments has been collated. The next stage is to work out the priorities from the information received and to identify what people think the villages needs are and to support this with evidence. TH congratulated the NP team on its efforts.

Borough Council – no report

County Council – Graham Middleton (GM) reported: £6,000 has been allocated to his care for local highways improvements but with twelve Parishes under his guidance, this is only £500 each. GM asked for ideas from the PC on what this could be spent on in Castle Acre – perhaps something niggling residents or could be put towards a larger scheme. His intention is to choose perhaps two or three schemes of £2 -3,000 each. Work from Highways would be at cost price which would benefit the amount of work undertaken.

50. **Accounts**

Annual external audit – NALC has confirmed that the PC is no longer required to have their annual accounts audited by an external accountancy firm as its expenditure is below £25,000. Payments proposed for approval by Mr Laurie Fisher, Mr Tim Hubbard seconded.

Berrymans Glass Recycling Ltd (URM UK Ltd)	£ 35.34 (£5.89 VAT)*
E.on Energy (electricity)	£ 75.18 (£3.58 VAT)*
Lorenz Design website page (Locality Fund Neighbourhood Plan)	£250.00
Mazars (annual external audit)	£120.00
Limelight Signs Ltd (heritage/litter sign at ford)	£59.28 (£9.88 VAT)
Penty Construction (removal of garage etc from playing field)	£2,160 (£360 VAT)**

** Amounts vary from Agenda because of late arrival of invoices*

*** Mistake on Agenda noted – Net price of £1,800 on Agenda did not include VAT*

51. **Village Maintenance**

Street signs at Chimney Street, Pales Green and Blind Lane – replacements on order from BCKLWN

Newton Road hedge – only part of the hedge was trimmed back last March before the closed season. The Clerk has requested Holkham now completes the job

Flooding at Newton Road Bridge – Breckland Highways have been requested to look at drainage and to clear the grips.

Cows and Minns Meadow – cows coming across the river even though an electric fence has been installed and are causing damage. The tenant stockman is aware and will take action.

Old School Stocks Green – many comments in Neighbourhood Plan about the building and what was going to happen to it. The Clerk will contact the new owner and enquire about his intentions.

Hedges around Blind Lane, Orchard Lane and Archer Lane – The Clerk to request that the rangers cut these back at their next visit.

South Acre Road hedges/trees – Harry Wakefield, head forester for Holkham, had said that these trees needed to be looked at but as yet, nothing has happened. The Clerk to email.

52. **Public Question Time**

South Acre Road – trees overhanging the bridge are destroying the river bank. The ford is still a Highways. Hedges along the bottom of South Acre Road are restricting the view. Ask Rangers to cut these back on next visit.

The meeting closed at 9.50pm.

The next full Parish Council meeting is on Thursday 5 October at 7.30pm in the village hall.