

SOMERSHAM PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the Parish Council Meeting held on September 4, 2019 at 7.30pm at the Village Hall

PRESENT

Cllrs James Caston, Penny Pearson, Sam Barrell, Shaun Innes Whiting, Keith McKeown and Will Caston Cook were present, together with eight members of the public and the Clerk Rod Caird. County Cllr Kay Oakes was unable to attend and had sent apologies; District Cllr John Field was present for part of the meeting.

1/040919 Apologies and approvals of absence

Stephen Wright had sent his apologies and his absence was approved.

2/040919 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensation

None

3/040919 To approve the Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting on July 3, 2019

The Minutes were approved.

4/040919 To receive comments from members of the public on matters on the Agenda, and reports from the District Councillor and County Councillor

Cllr Field reported that some bus routes being changed by the County Council will undoubtedly put pressure on the 111 service and this should be monitored. The District Council is heading for an underspend for the year. The draft Local Plan consultation is under way and closes on September 30. A local industrial strategy was agreed at the last cabinet meeting, and Mid Suffolk has official declared a climate emergency.

5/040919 To receive and consider a Neighbourhood Watch report

Colin Burrows was unable to attend but his report was read to the meeting. It was noted that Mid Suffolk now has two Police Community Support Officers, funded by the District Council, who can be called in via the District Councillor.

6/040919

To discuss the Parish Council's response to the Mid Suffolk Local Plan (the consultation ends on September 30)

Following discussion it was agreed to comment along these lines:

The Council welcomes the definition of Somersham as a hinterland village and the planning constraints and opportunities offered by that description.

However the Council would like to draw attention to one error of detail on the settlement boundary indicated on the map. The garden which is part of the house known as Peripull, Mill Lane, should be included within the residential boundary rather than being shown as agricultural land.

The Council also wishes to challenge the inclusion in the settlement boundary of the land south west of Main Road which is the subject of planning application 18/03114 (42 new homes).

As stated in its comments on the original planning application, the Council does not agree that this land is suitable for development:

- Inadequate provision has been made for the dispersal of flood water on the site, where there is an existing problem regularly affecting Main Road
- There is inadequate provision for the disposal of foul water from the site
- There are serious problems of access to and from the site and Main Road. Visibility of 90 metres in each direction from the entrance to the site has not been established. Increased traffic in these circumstances causes unnecessary danger to drivers, pedestrians and cyclists
- The close proximity of the site to Grade Two listed buildings - the Duke of Marlborough Public House and Kings Cottage, Lower Somersham Post Office, Street Farm - is incompatible with the setting and outlook of those properties and therefore directly conflicts with an essential element of the heritage listings.
- The Parish Council is also reflecting the near-unanimous view of local residents, expressed at a special meeting in June and in frequent messages and conversations, that the above planning problems should lead directly to refusal of the application.

In addition, and crucially to the viability of the site, no adequate solution has been offered to the problem posed by the fact that the Pump House Corner "pinch point" on Main Road severely restricts access from the site to the vast majority of village amenities, including the school. This is a dangerous stretch of road which is too narrow to provide safe access for pedestrians, cyclists, cars and commercial and agricultural vehicles, and the structural constraints of the buildings on either side of the road mean that suitable improvements are apparently unachievable. This lack of access means that the proposed development site is literally and practically unsustainable, as there is no adequate transport and travel link from the site towards the rest of the village, and onwards to the A14 and other destinations.

The Parish Council therefore requests that the settlement boundary be revised to exclude the site of 18/03114.

7/040919

To discuss the Parish Council's response to the consultation on proposed routes for an Ipswich northern bypass (the consultation ends on September 13)

It was agreed that the Parish Council would express no view on this matter.

8/040919 To consider updates on current planning applications, including:

DC/19/02850 - Cobb Cottage, Mill Lane, Somersham, Conversion of garage and storage building to residential annexe with associated alterations – *granted*

DC/18/05313 Outline Planning Application (Access and Layout to be considered) Erection of 32 dwellings on Land On The South Side Of Bildeston Road, Offton, IP8 4RR - *pending*

DC/18/03114/15 Land South West of Main Road, a development of 42 new homes – *pending*

DC/18/03681 Land adjacent to Little Park Bungalow, Flowton Road, erection of three dwellings – *refused*

After discussion, and following a detailed presentation by Chris Hakes on the Pump House Corner pinch point, it was agreed to comment on the proposed road layout changes relating to 18/03114/15 as follows:

It is understood that these proposed changes are intended to make that section of the road safer for all users, and particularly pedestrians. Improvements are essential because that route provides access for residents from the planned new housing to the vast majority of the village's amenities, including the shop, Church, playing fields, garage, Village Hall and crucially the school. It is quite wrong to suggest (as was stated at the July development control committee meeting) that village facilities are to be found on either side of the pinch point; in fact only the pub and the Baptist Church are on the same side as the proposed 42 new homes.

Having studied the plans it is the clear and unanimous view of the Parish Council that the intended "improvements" in fact risk making the situation significantly worse. Narrowing the roadway to create a pedestrian route (albeit one which is not protected in any way from passing traffic) will create a vehicle space of only 3.5 metres. This width is generally accepted as being unsafe; it is neither wide enough for overtaking nor narrow enough to be clearly only suitable as a one-way route. Any roadway at this location needs to be able to accommodate pedestrians, mobility scooters, wheelchairs, cyclists, cars, vans, lorries and agricultural vehicles. The current configuration is unsafe; the proposed layout is worse. In addition, there is no alternative viable pedestrian route which bypasses the pinch point altogether - although the present circumstances do offer a unique opportunity to improve the road layout for the benefit of all residents in the long term.

In order for the 42 home proposal to be approved, a safe route for all forms of transport must be provided along Main Road towards all the village amenities and onwards towards the main transport and travel routes of the A14 and elsewhere. At present this is simply not the case, and therefore the Parish Council is opposed to the road layout change, as it is to the development overall.

9/040919 To consider an update on installation of the new Speed Indicator Device

The SID device has been delivered. Following new County Council procedures on the siting of posts, James Caston and the Clerk will discuss exact positioning and take steps necessary to progress.

10/040919 To receive reports from Parish Councillors on meetings attended and to consider an update on the Land Trust

No meetings had been attended but progress has been made on the Land Trust and the Parish Council is responsible for nominating three new trustees. An appeal would be included in the next edition of The Link.

11/040919 To receive a financial report from the Clerk including any payments due

A current bank reconciliation was presented showing a balance of £13,730.95 and this was confirmed against the bank statements by Cllr Whiting.

The online cash book is available for inspection on the website and via the link provided to Councillors.

Payments were made in August as follows: Rod Caird, clerk pay, £284.00; MSDC, bin emptying, £432.00; MSDC, election costs, £104.78; Vertas, mowing, £452.99; Somersham PCC, churchyard mowing, £84.00.

Payments in September were: Rod Caird, clerk pay, £284.00; HMRC, PAYE, £5.60; Somersham PCC, churchyard mowing, £84.00.

Payments were made under sections 111 and 112 of the Local Government Act 1972.

12040919 Correspondence and urgent matters to be brought to the attention of the Parish Council

None at this time.