

BRANDESTON PARISH COUNCIL

The Minute of the meeting held on Monday 28th September 2020 via Zoom video call due to Covid 19 restrictions.

Present: *Councillors Baker, Fletcher, Locke, Summers (acting chair). Also present one member of the public and Clerk Catherine Bacon.*

6/20-21/1 Chairman Cllr Summers welcomed Councillors and the members of the public to the meeting.

6/20-21/2 There were apologies of absence from Cllrs M Mitson-Woods (ill) and Williams (holiday).

6/20-21/3 There were no declarations of interest

6/20-21/4 It was resolved that the Chairman should sign the Minute of the Meeting held on 14th September 2020 as a true and accurate record.

6/20-21/5 No issues were raised.

6/20-21/6 The Government's 'Planning for the future' consultation proposes reforms of the planning system to streamline and modernise the planning process, bring a new focus to design and sustainability, improve the system of developer contributions to infrastructure, and ensure more land is available for development where it is needed.

Cllr Summers stated that this is a huge topic, one which would take at least an hour for an expert to present. Whilst the headline topics are initially cause for concern there are so many conditions for permitted development that each application meeting the conditions will be have to be considered on its own merits. In her opinion, in a parish such as Brandeston, there should be little immediate cause for concern. A link to the White Paper August 2020 will be forward to all parish cllrs. Cllr Summers encouraged all PCs to become familiar with the changes and investigate areas of interest.

Cllr Summers summarised key points as follows:

Major overhaul of Use Class Order – New Planning Use Class Order Table to be emailed to all PCs.

plus:

1. Zoning – European style development zoning giving developers outline permission whilst requiring them to secure reserved matters.
2. Renewal – Build Better, Build Beautiful, a presumption in favour of development.
3. Stripped back planning – web-based, colour coded plans. Sustainable development uses, limits on height/density within zones.
4. S106 & CIL replaced with a nationally set levy. (S106 scrapped.)
5. Top down housing targets – government-imposed targets on local authorities based on existing homes in area, projected requirements and changes in affordability.
6. Councils no longer to have duty to co-operate with each other as numbers/targets set by government/top down.
7. Green Belt & AONB still in force and protected.
8. Design codes – local codes.
9. More 'permitted development' taking into account the local design code.

10. Digital planning, online, easier to use, transparent.

Cllr Fletcher queried how the white paper would affect the potential future planning applications of change of use of sites within the village (e.g. pub, village hall, church) if this should arise. Cllr Summers found that each of these venues had changed categories within the white paper. **It was agreed that Cllrs Summers and Fletcher would undertake further research into the white paper.**

6/20-21/7

- a) **DC/3535/QFF5L2QXLRD01** Land on The Brandeston Road Between Earl Soham and Brandeston Suffolk; Proposed Affordable Housing Development on the Brandeston Road, Earl Soham, with 13 separate plots

Cllr Summers explained that the site for the planning application is a rural 'exception site' that is outside parish/village boundary and hence the reason Brandeston PC is a consultee. Exception sites are small sites used for affordable housing in perpetuity where sites would not normally be used for housing. Rural exception sites seek to address the needs of the local community by accommodating households who are either current residents or have an existing family or employment connection. Small numbers of market homes may be allowed at the local authority's discretion, for example where essential to enable the delivery of affordable units without grant funding.

The Clerk shared the plans on the screen for the benefit of the public and to enhance points of discussion.

The Chairman asked Cllrs for the views on the planning application.

Cllr Locke believed the houses are out of character for the area and believes two-storey/maisonettes buildings would be more suitable. She also raised the issue of lack of provision of pavement and access to safe walking from the site.

Cllr Baker concurred with Cllr Locke. He raised the definition of 'affordable' – what is classed as 'affordable'? He questioned whether the properties will remain affordable in the long term.

Cllr Fletcher also considers 3-storey residential is not suited to this site. Occupation is likely to be targeted at families, he raised the lack of footpath connectivity for children to walk safely to Earl Soham Primary School. Also noting that the plans show no disabled and wheelchair access. Cllr Summers stated that all new housing developments are now required to provide disabled access as part of building regulations and so clarification on this would be required. Cllr Fletcher also noted that all the houses are lime-rendered in white which would be a blight on the landscape. He suggested that a compromise would be to have some in brick to be in keeping with nearby properties.

Cllr Summers stated that Earl Soham Parish Council (ESPC) is in the process of putting together a Neighbourhood Plan (NHP) (which has yet to be put to referendum). It is believed that within Earl Soham's NHP three main sites have been put forward for residential development; with East Suffolk Coastal (ESC) requiring 25 houses to be built in Earl Soham of which approximately 8 are likely to be required to be affordable homes, the remaining to be sold at open market value. Cllr Mitson-Woods has emailed the chairman of ESPC to explore their thoughts, though has yet to receive a reply; ESPC meet on Tuesday 29th September to discuss this planning application.

Cllr Summers believes that whilst the architect has put forward an extremely well considered proposal, she is concerned that this planning application is premature, trying to side-step (out manoeuvre) the ESPC NHP. The application is for 13 affordable homes, the mix of shared/subsidised ownership vs rented is undefined, the number of homes is in excess of the number believed to be required by ESC in the whole of ESPC within their NHP.

Is there local demand for this many affordable homes-13? Making particular reference to the site in Cretingham where take-up was slow and the homes built for owner/shared/subsidised occupation are now in rental occupation.

If ESC permits this site, will additional affordable homes be required on the land to be allocated for housing in the NHP?

Cllr Summers also raised the question of delineation between owner occupied/shared/subsidised ownership vs rented; like it or not, those investing their own funds/borrowings in a home invariably seek to live apart from those in rented.

Albeit the PC must consider the application on its own merits: Cllr Summers stated that developers need to make money and that if permission is given for 13 affordable homes, it is probable that the developers would re-apply to amend the application to include housing for sale on the open market as means of raising funds to be able to build the Affordables. (It has been seen on other 'exception sites' that the developers seek to prove the development is economically unviable so planning is subsequently sought for inclusion of a number of open market value (OMV) homes to sell off in order to raise sufficient funds to enable the delivery of the affordable housing. On such a site this might equate to say 8 Affordables and 3-5 OMV homes.)

Cllr Fletcher questioned whether the 3-storey houses within the application are a distraction, with the aim to have these rejected in order to get the other houses passed. He also raised concerns that if these 13 houses get permission and then a further 25, eventually Earl Soham and Brandeston will become joined by increasing developments.

The Clerk noted that there were 6 objections from members of the public at the time of this meeting, raising the issues of lack of pavement provision, traffic speed (site just outside 30mph zone), size of development, the interruption of views across the open countryside and not being in-keeping with local design.

Cllr Summers, providing Sproughton Parish Council as an example, proposed that this application should be objected to, to allow ESPC time to progress with its NHP. (in late 2019 Sproughton PC objected to one large residential development only to be faced with another similar application on the opposite side of the road, decision on this application has been deferred to allow Sproughton NHP Committee time to progress and get the NHP to the referendum stage.)

Proposal for a decision on planning application DC/3535/QFF5L2QXLRD01 to be deferred.
(Not sure of the mechanics.)

It was resolved that the Parish Council recommend DC/3535/QFF5L2QXLRD01 Land On The Brandeston Road Between Earl Soham And Brandeston Suffolk; Proposed Affordable Housing Development on the Brandeston Road, Earl Soham, with 13 separate plots be refused.

Brandeston PC objects on the basis that:

1. Determination of the application ahead of the Earl Soham neighbourhood plan process would be premature and a request for planning application DC/3535/QFF5L2QXLRD01 to be deferred.
2. The development would have an overbearing impact on the setting the Deben Valley, overlooking meadows down to the flood plain in the open countryside.

3. The preparedness of a housing association to invest in an 'exception site' does not demonstrate demand for affordable housing (which should be better identified through completion of the neighbourhood plan process, particularly the number of houses – 13). Provision of similar housing in Cretingham, namely the shared ownership houses, failed to secure uptake.
4. Linear extension of the village along Brandeston Road is inconsistent with historic growth along the A1120 (old Roman Road) and would unnecessarily alter the character and setting of the village.
5. The development is outside the settlement boundary, outside of any restricted speed limit.
6. The absence of connectivity to the centre of the village, with no footpath provision, would put future occupiers at unnecessary risk. It is most likely the that housing of this nature would be typically occupied by younger adults with families and children walking to the primary school.
7. External and street lighting would adversely impact on a rural setting.
8. There is no delineation shown between shared ownership and rented housing. (The shared ownership housing in Cretingham failed to sell.)
9. The lack of mix of design and finish of the housing is not in keeping with the local vernacular.
10. The application does not demonstrate adequate consideration to provide access for all (provision for people living with disability).