

Present: Councillors;

Annette Dunning, Peter Dutton, Anne Fleming, Rosemary Lewis, Karen Prime, Jill Reece, David Thomas, Maureen Took, David Wollweber (Chair).

In Attendance: N Rees (Town Clerk), 4 members of the public.

Minutes

1. Apologies: Cllrs; B Chadwick, T Allen, J Wagner, Dist. Cllr Alison Cackett
2. Declarations of interest: A Dunning, K Prime & D Thomas having met business owners relating to items 3.1 & 3.2
3. Planning Applications: To consider the following:

The Chair invited members of the public to make any presentations on any of the planning applications being considered. The following comments were all made in relation to items 3.1 & 3.2, Miles Ward Court.

Mr Keith Greenberg, representing Halesworth Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group explained that the Steering Group intended to designate the area for B1 use in the Neighbourhood Plan as it had already identified the need to preserve and extend if possible the amount of business units in the town. This was vital in view of the number of houses planned for the town in the near future. The Steering Group had commissioned a housing needs assessment and the survey had shown there was little demand for this type of housing. Miles Ward Court had been set up with the help of EU funding for this specific purpose of job creation and assisting start-up businesses and this change of use completely negated this purpose.

A tenant from Miles Ward Court explained the nature of his business, how his business had grown and how he had been able to employ local people and offer internships. As there were no alternative B1 units in the town this change of use would mean he would have to relocate.

The Chair of the Town Council's Planning Committee, Cllr Dutton, drew attention to the errors in the supporting statement produced by Ben Elvin, in this document it referred to a Secondary School, a Hospital and Bus services to all major towns. None of these were true and all had been lost to the town in recent times. Cllr Dutton also pointed out that there would be many one & two bed residential units available in the town through the three or four major developments but the loss of B1 units were irreplaceable so converting existing B1 units to residential made no sense at all.

Cllr Dunning reported on the history of Miles Ward Court as she had been involved at the start. Funding had been obtained through the EU, WDC and Halesworth & Blyth Valley Partnership. There had originally been an application to convert the units to residential but this had been refused on the grounds that the courtyard was unsuitable. The use as B1 units had been an asset to the town and had acted as a spring board for new companies to get established and create employment. Cllr Dunning explained that there had never been vehicle access to the courtyard and highlighted the potential problem with obtaining parking permits.

1. DC/19/3914/FUL Alterations to and change of use of business units to create 5 no. residential dwellings for over 55s - Miles Ward Court, Market Place Halesworth Suffolk IP19 8AY – The Council considered the comments made by members of the public and members of the Council and it was then RESOLVED that the Council recommended that this application is refused and that the application is called in for determination by East Suffolk Council’s Planning Committee for the following reasons:-
 - a) Highway Safety: There is no access for vehicles and therefore offloading will inevitably involve vehicles parking at the top of the court with potential to block traffic to Chediston Street.
 - b) Traffic & Parking: There is no provision or capacity for parking permits for the ‘Market Place’ which is the address for the property.
 - c) Disabled Access: Business owners state that the slope in the Courtyard is too severe for mobility scooters to operate and they require assistance to get up the slope. The slope becomes treacherous in wet weather, particularly in winter where it is prone to icing up and is especially dangerous for the elderly.
 - d) The layout of the units is unsuitable for residential use.
 - e) Drainage & Flood Risk: The site is partially in Flood Zone 2 and suffers from potentially flooding due to the courtyard being much lower than the adjacent street.
 - f) It will have a negative impact on the community. There are no alternative B1 units available in the town so current businesses will need to relocate out of the town. Conversely there are over 200 one & two bed units planned for the town either in the outline planning stage or as permitted developments.
 - g) The site is subject to a restrictive covenant.
 - h) The Council were in full support of the comments made in the letter from East Suffolk Council’s Economic Development team.

2. DC/19/3915/LBC Listed Building Consent - Alterations to and change of use of business units to create 5 no. residential dwellings for over 55s - Miles Ward Court Market Place Halesworth Suffolk IP19 8AY - It was RESOLVED that the Council recommended that this application is refused and that the application is called in for determination by East Suffolk Council’s Planning Committee.

3. DC/19/3947/FUL Conversion of a double garage into an annex for live-in carer. Selhurst, Holton Rd, Halesworth, IP19 8HG. It was RESOLVED that the Council recommended approval.

4. DC/19/3798/ARM – Approval of reserved matters, Hill Farm Rd, Halesworth. It was agreed that this application would be deferred to Halesworth Town Council's Planning Committee.

4. Correspondence: None

The meeting was closed at 7.10 pm