

EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL HELD BY ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE
In accordance with (The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus)
(Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales)
Regulations 2020)

Present: Councillors;

Ben Chadwell, Tony Allen, Annette Dunning, Peter Dutton, Rosemary Lewis, Karen Prime, Jill Reece, David Thomas, Maureen Took, David Wollweber (Chair), J Wagner.

In Attendance: Nick Rees (Town Clerk) County & District Cllr Tony Goldson, 50+ members of the public.

Minutes

The Chair, Cllr Dave Wollweber, welcomed everyone to the meeting and was pleased to see so many people attending. Normally he said, these meeting would be held in a public space but due to the current restrictions the meeting had to be conducted via video conferencing and would be recorded for administrative purposes. This was not an ideal solution but he hoped everyone would be patient as there was a large number of people present and this occupied two screens for the Chair and the Clerk to navigate. The Chair explained that purpose of the meeting was primarily to consider the outline application for a supermarket on the former long stay area of the Thoroughfare car park. The Chair advised that the public and councillors should be aware that although there had been considerable speculation on which supermarket chain might be interested, there was no confirmation that any particular company was currently involved or interested with this application. At the start of the meeting the Chair would set aside sufficient time to allow everyone who wished to speak at this meeting but he also encouraged residents to leave their comments on the East Suffolk Council's planning portal. The Chair explained that Halesworth Town Council's role was only advisory and it would be East Suffolk Council, as the official planning authority, who would ultimately determine the application.

1. Apologies: Cllr Anne Fleming
1. Declarations of interest: To receive declarations for pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests: Cllr K Prime as a business owner in the Thoroughfare and Cllr M Took as a business owner associated with the Co-op food store.
2. Public Session: To receive any comments from members of the public: The meeting was attended by 48 members of the public including one member of the public representing a Thoroughfare business and also included Joyce Moseley, Chair of Halesworth Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. The Chair took comments in turn from all those wishing to be heard. 15 members of the public expressed a variety of opinions on the application and these comments are summarised below:-

Joyce Mosley, Chair of Halesworth Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, advised that during the group's recent consultation, the question was put as to 'what three things residents would most like to see in Halesworth', out of 812 responses, 249 identified more shops and 114 specifically mentioned another supermarket.

Summary of comments made against the application:-

The negative effect of a large supermarket on the uniqueness of the town; the threat to the livelihood of independent shopkeepers; the carbon footprint of the building and its impact on the environment; the size of the supermarket being disproportionate to the requirements of the town and its population; the unsuitability of the site and the overbearing size of the structure; the fundamental change to the connectivity and aesthetics between the Thoroughfare and the existing area; the loss of independent shops; the loss of the historic building occupied by Huggy's Bike Shop; the loss of an opportunity to develop the site into an attractive public area; the profits would go out of the town to a multi-national company; insufficient parking spaces for the size of the supermarket.

Summary of comments made in favour of the application:

A second supermarket would provide more competition and residents would benefit from lower prices and a greater selection; the location would be beneficial for most of the businesses as it would improve footfall to the town centre; it would reduce the number of residents who regularly travelled to other towns for their weekly shopping and/or have home deliveries, which would increase footfall and reduce car usage; it would benefit those not able to drive and who were reliant on ever decreasing public transport services; it would offer some security to the town if the existing supermarket decided to close; it was an opportunity to improve the town and attract more visitors; time for Halesworth to move with the times, businesses and residents would quickly adapt.

After the public session was concluded the Chair advised that the Council would now consider the application.

3. To consider the following Planning Applications.

- a) DC/20/3819/OUT | Single storey food store, with associated parking and recycling area.
| Land at Saxons Way (Thoroughfare Car Park – South side) Halesworth Suffolk

The Chair asked all councillors to make their comments in turn which are summarised as follows: Cllr Dunning commented that when the relief road was built no consideration was made for the appearance of that area and perhaps it was an opportunity to improve it, but reiterated that the Council did not own the land. Cllr Dunning was happy to look at outline planning but with caveats. Firstly, size and design in a conservation area; the District Council's site specific allocation (development plan document) had identified that a small supermarket up to a 1,000 m² on that land could attract trade to the town. The Retail Needs Assessment identified the need for a store of around 1,500 m². However the current application was for a store of 1894 m². So the Council should consider whether it was an appropriate size and fitted in with its location close to the park and Millennium Green. Secondly, Cllr Dunning wished to include an enforcement of suitable connectivity to the town. Thirdly, the Council should also ensure that the design and appearance is in keeping with the Town, the current Piazza was disappointing and not appropriate for example. On the obvious flood risks to that particular area; Cllr Dunning would also like to see a 'grampian' condition placed on the developer (a restriction on starting the development until such time as the off- site conditions have been met). Finally Cllr Dunning would like to see a contribution from the developer towards a cycle path along the Saxon Way.

Cllr Reece asked whether it was possible to have a condition to prevent an in-store restaurant in order to protect similar local businesses. Cllr Wagner was not convinced that it was possible to prevent an in-store restaurant; the assumption was that it might be Lidl or Aldi supermarket that might be interested but if it happened to be a Tesco or Waitrose store, this was very likely to happen. Cllr Dutton, whilst appreciating many of the comments that another supermarket would be beneficial to the town, was nevertheless not impressed with the design and layout and had concerns about delivery lorry access, parking, deliveries to the rear of existing stores; connectivity and pedestrian flow through the town and generally with the appropriateness of the space available for the scheme. Cllr Thomas, agreed that the store would no doubt increase footfall but also had concerns similar to those expressed by Cllr Dutton. Cllr Lewis had hoped to see a

more integrated scheme involving areas that the applicant either owned or currently had options on. Cllr Allen felt that the development would improve the quality of life for the majority of residents but was also disappointed by the attempt at a Piazza which he felt should be much larger and provide a focal point for the town. Cllr Allen believed that one solution for the shortfall in parking spaces would be to have parking on the roof of the building. Cllr Chadwick questioned whether the Council should try to block any plans for an in store restaurant in order to protect one type of business when it could be argued that other businesses may be equally affected. Cllr Chadwick had listened with interest to all the points made but was not convinced that the benefits had been negated and whilst he agreed that there were issues with the current plans he would expect these problems could be solved. Cllr Chadwick was under the impression that the majority of residents were in favour of another supermarket and so he would support the application.

The Chair concluded that the majority of councillors may be in favour but all had certain concerns with the application. The Chair proposed and it was RESOLVED with 8 in favour and 3 abstentions, that the Council recommended approval of the application DC/20/3819/FUL in principle but subject to a satisfactory resolution of the following caveats*;

1. Design and Appearance: The design and appearance must be in keeping with its surroundings and the Piazza needs more space.
2. Size: The current size, layout and position are too dominant and would be disproportionate for the plot. The Council would like the developer to consider an alternative layout
3. Flood Risk: The Council would recommend that a 'grampian' condition is applied to ensure the necessary mitigation works are addressed before construction work is started.
4. Cycleway: The Council would like a contribution and cooperation to develop a much needed cycleway along Saxon Way.
5. Traffic: The Council is concerned that the current access is not a viable solution for HGV traffic in and out of the site and all traffic
6. Thoroughfare Business: These businesses need to be able to continue to be supplied to the rear of their premises.
7. Parking: There appears to be a shortfall of parking spaces and the Council would like the developer to consider other solutions which would not affect the spaces needed by shoppers using other businesses in the short term car park.
8. Connectivity: More consideration is needed for connectivity of the site with other areas in the town.

[*post meeting explanation by the Clerk which clarified the meaning behind the bullet points from councillor's comments made during the meeting]

- b) DC/20/3837/FUL | First floor extension over existing garage. To accommodate a master bedroom with en-suite. South-west elevation. Dormer window to accommodate a mezzanine floor over master bedroom. | 3 Durban Close Halesworth Suffolk IP19 8DX. Cllr Peter Dutton, Chair of HTC's Planning Committee had visited site and reported that it was a simple extension utilising the existing garage, similar to other extensions in the immediate area. It was then RESOLVED that the Council recommended approval.

2. Correspondence: No other correspondence relevant to the meeting.
3. Items for the Website/Noticeboard/Newsletters/Library. It was agreed that the decision would be advertised in the usual media outlets.

The meeting was closed at 7.53pm