



**EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE COUNCIL  
HELD AT THE RIFLE HALL, LONDON ROAD, HALESWORTH**

**Present:** Councillors;

Annette Dunning, Peter Dutton, Anne Fleming, Rosemary Lewis (Chair), Karen Prime, Jill Reece, Jackie Wagner, David Wollweber (Vice-Chair).

**In Attendance:** Nick Rees (Town Clerk), Phillppa Welby (Assistant Clerk), Adrian Fairburn (PHS), John Bush (Architect), 27 members of the public

**Minutes**

1. **Apologies:** Cllrs; J Hewett, R Kellett, J Moseley, M Took
2. **Declarations of interest:** Cllr A Dunning (lives near Old Station Rd)
3. **Public Session:** The Chair invited questions from the public for the Developer and the Architect: A number of residents took this opportunity to ask questions on the following and Mr Fairbank answered all questions comprehensively and in detail but summarised and shortened here for the purposes of these minutes: Whether there was a medical centre on site? *No, this was not deemed necessary*, was the access off Norwich Rd was deemed safe and suitable? *The access was designed in accordance with Highways specifications for visibility etc.* Did the Developers consider that proper consultation had been undertaken? *A short consultation and leaflets had been distributed locally.* Would the development be significantly altered at a later date, i.e. increasing the height and stories? *This was a full and detailed application, significant changes were not planned.* What does the code 8720 which related to mental health issues mean exactly and who are the units aimed at? *The development was aimed at the over 60s who needed a certain level of care and assistance.* Why was the Police recommending a gated community and CCTV surveillance? *The Police recommendations would be explored in detail but the recommendation to gate the southern entrance was contrary to our ambition to provide permissive paths through the site.* Has the developer considered other sites in town or elsewhere? *An approach was made by Suffolk County Councillor Gavin Bultitude to explore suitable sites in Suffolk for this development and this site was deemed most suitable.*

Councillors raised more concerns; whether these units would be filled by local residents, since the pandemic similar existing facilities in the town had spaces available, the suitability of the site in terms of its distance from the nearest hospital, the lack of doctors and staff to service another health related facility and other planning considerations as described below.

4. **Planning Application DC/21/3016/FUL** Assisted Living Development (Class C2) comprising; 80 Assisted Living Units, Communal/Health facilities, access,

roadways, parking, open space and landscaping. Land West Of Norwich Road Halesworth Suffolk: The Chair thanked Adrian Fairburn and John Bush for attending the meeting and answering questions for the residents and councillors and they then left the meeting. Many of the Council members were impressed with the designs, drawings and the specification and appreciated the willingness of the developer to engage with the Council. However, after further debate and consideration of the residents comments it was **RESOLVED** unanimously that the Council **recommended refusal** of the application DC/21/3016/FUL on the followings grounds;

- a) **Local Plan and the Settlement Boundary:** This application lies outside the settlement boundary and it is not identified in the Local Plan as a suitable site. The developers admitted they were fully aware of this but nevertheless had pre-application discussions with ESC (East Suffolk Council). It was not clear what advice was given but the Town Council strongly believes that these factors alone should be sufficient reason to refuse the application
  - b) **Cumulative impact;** the adverse effect on the town of further developments in addition to those already planned and in particular a disproportionate number of applications relating to accommodation for the elderly, assisted living, care homes, etc
  - c) **Green Space:** The loss of another important large green space in the town and its effect on the natural environment.
  - d) **Local infrastructure:** The Council believes the local infrastructure (referring to doctors, nursing, etc) is not adequate to service this development and also taking into consideration that Halesworth is understood to be the furthest town from a general hospital in the country. It was therefore surprising that the developers, who had been looking at suitable sites in throughout Suffolk, chose Halesworth as the preferred option.
  - e) **Surface water runoff:** This site is one of the highest points in the town and despite the calculations provided to support the application; the Council is concerned that the surface water retention schemes may not fully mitigate the flood risk to the properties further down Old Station Road and in Wissett Road.
5. **Patrick Stead Hospital Building:** To receive any updates from NHS Property Limited and whether there has been any interest declared or any interest received to form a community group and to consider any alternative options: The Chair recognised that the Patrick Stead Hospital was an iconic building, and had a special place in the hearts of the people of Halesworth. However, a project to save the building for community use was probably too daunting for a voluntary group to take on alone and the Council did not have the expertise or resources to lead on a project of this size but would provide support if required. The Chair explained that the Council had met with the group involved with saving the Southwold Hospital back in 2017 but although this had been helpful it also emphasised the amount of work and expertise needed to undertake a project like this and the PSH was actually much larger. The Council had over a period of time attempted to see if there was sufficient interest from the community, through parish & forum meetings and via social media etc but there had been very little enthusiasm for the task. There was no interest registered again at this meeting to form a group but there still remained a little time left. It was hoped that whatever its future, the facade would be retained so that the character of the building remained.
6. **Correspondence:** None
7. **Items for the Website/Noticeboard/Newsletters/Library:** an update of the decisions and outcome of the meeting would be posted in due course