

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;

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

In Attendance: Nick Rees (Town Clerk) County & District Cllr Tony Goldson, 24 members of the public.

Minutes

The Chair, Cllr Dave Wollweber, welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained that there would be an opportunity for residents to have their say during the public session.

1. **Apologies:** None, absent Cllr Chadwick
2. **Declarations of interest:** To receive declarations for pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests: Cllr Dunning; Non-pecuniary interest as previously a former trustee of Campus and has property overlooking the site. Cllr Dutton; non-pecuniary interest as previously a Trustee of HCSL. Cllr Thomas; Non-pecuniary interest as Chairman of the HCSL (Halesworth Community Sport & Leisure) which has land neighbouring the site. Cllr Fleming; Non-pecuniary interest as trustee of the HCSL. Cllr Allen; whose partner is a trustee of Halesworth Campus.

Cllr Allen asked the Clerk for confirmation as to whether he would be able to vote. The Clerk advised that as the interest was declared as non-pecuniary it was permissible to take part and to vote however, in the Clerk's opinion it may be better not to do so. It was difficult to offer advice as some interests were greater than others and ultimately it was a matter for each Cllr to decide.

3. **Public Session:** To receive any comments from members of the public: The Chair took comments in turn from all those wishing to be heard. Members of the public expressed a variety of opinions on the two application and these comments are summarised briefly below for each application:-

DC/21/0027/FUL Retirement Community Development: Sheer vastness of the development was completely out of place and not in keeping with the surrounding properties and the area. Loss of Open Space land. Height of proposed buildings were too high and overshadowed neighbouring properties and land. Questions as to whether the additional 100 extra care units would be part of the housing allocation for the town. Questions as to whether the 100 apartments could come under the C2 classification. A possible negative impact on medical services due to a lack of skilled staff, which is the case at the moment. A total lack of public consultation and engagement by CMC. Concerns over the impact to the neighbouring parish of Holton.

DC/21/0007/FUL Change of use to sports facilities: Questions as to the environmental impact and suitability of the 3G pitch, concerns over the control of micro plastics in surface water runoff. Concerns that the Campus project is not representing the wishes of the majority of the community. Lack of public consultation over the most recent plans. Concerns that the project is now focussed on a much smaller group rather than providing facilities for a wider range of residents. A suggestion that the County and District Councils should get involved with the project directly.

4. **To consider the following Planning Applications**

- a) **Ref. No: DC/21/0027/FUL** Hybrid Planning Application for Retirement Community development to include (i) Full Planning Application for 54 bed care home (Block C), associated landscaping, parking, access from Norwich Road and waste storage and (ii) Outline Application with all matters reserved for 100 Extra Care apartments and communal facilities (Blocks A and B) and administration, training and staff accommodation building (Block D) Planning Application Halesworth Campus (Former Halesworth Middle School Site) Norwich Road Halesworth Suffolk IP19 8PY

The Chair of HTC's Planning Committee confirmed that his understanding was that ESC (East Suffolk Council) were looking at the C2 classification and if it met the C2 classification criteria.

Regarding the application Cllr Dutton proposed a series of objections which were later detailed in the resolution below;

After some further debate where some Cllrs expressed their support for healthcare facilities in principle but on a far less imposing development. Other views were that the two applications were not compatible; on the one side a retirement and care facility necessitating peace and quiet and on the other; sports facilities which would naturally produce significant levels of noise at times from in and around the pitches. Concerns with the loss of open spaces and the change this would have on the character of the town as seen from the main approach along Norwich road.

The Chair concluded that the debate had appeared to have come to a conclusion and asked the Council to consider Cllr Dutton's proposal and it was then **RESOLVED** that the Council (by 9 votes to 2) recommended **refusal** of the application **DC/21/0027/FUL** for the following reasons:-

I. Scale and Dimensions

- a. Monolithic and overbearing - too urban for the approach road to a medieval market town.
- b. Too high - the neighbouring water tower is an inappropriate reference point

II. Layout and Density

- a. Very high density in Blocks A & B along Norwich Road. Care home and palliative care too close to proposed rugby/football training pitches.

III. Appearance and Design

- a. Too urban and out of keeping with the Suffolk vernacular architecture.

IV. Traffic & Parking

- a. 100 residents probably equate to 60+ cars as residents will be mobile so will need more parking places plus spaces for visitors and the public who are invited to use the facilities. Traffic concerns accessing Norwich Road.

V. Drainage and Flood Risk

- a. The surface water drainage report refers to an earlier scheme on Dairy Hill and is irrelevant for this application.
- b. Surface water run-off is a serious problem in Halesworth due to the heavy nature of the soil. A large part of this site will be covered by hard and some permeable surfaces which will increase the need to safely dispose of this additional surface water within the site's boundary.
- c. The only escape is down the drain under Bungay Road. Critical attention needs to be paid to the surface water disposal scheme which still needs to be presented.

VI. Impact on the Community

- a. A care home and 100 extra care rooms will need considerable medical support. Cutlers Hill is currently under severe pressure due to a shortage of Doctors and an already elderly population.

VII. Environment

- a. The heating system is going to be "gas led" with contributions from air source heat pumps and PVs. The plan should be for a non-carbon system.

Although not a planning matter; Cllr Dutton was nevertheless concerned by the conclusion of the Financial Viability Assessment that states "It is therefore our reasonable judgment that a viable scheme is one which contains 100 extra care apartments for market sale at considerable risk to the developer."

- b) **Ref. No: DC/21/0007/FUL** Change of use to sports facilities comprising new grass football pitch adjacent to Harrisons Lane and construction of a new artificial football pitch with associated parking, access, lighting and drainage adjacent to the Apollo Youth Centre and adjacent field to the south Planning Application North Suffolk Skills Academy Harrisons Lane Halesworth Suffolk IP19 8PY

The Council considered the public comments at the meeting and online and whilst discussing the application it emerged that there were two main issues that required a clear understanding and further information.

Firstly there were concerns about the materials used to construct an artificial pitch, whether this was appropriate and necessary in these times of increased awareness of the damage caused by these materials to the environment, to wildlife and to human health. This concern was echoed online and at the meeting by members of the public.

Secondly, councillors were concerned by the control and management of the surface water of the whole site and in particular from the 3G pitch. Cllr Thomas informed the Council that surface water running down Loam Pit Lane is already a serious problem during prolonged rainfall. The planned area to be covered with hard and semi-permeable surface will only make matters worse unless measures are imposed which will effectively remove the risk of surface water flooding. Cllr Allen advised the Council that the pitch was semi-porous so it should not have a significant effect. However, this also brought to light questions of how the surface water management would deal with microfibers from the pitch.

Cllr Lewis drew attention to the uncertainty of the Apollo Youth Club's future as the site was further developed, these facilities would potentially be lost.

Whilst many councillors stated they would like to support the application in principle, these two issues in particular had made it very difficult to make a decision in such a short period of time. The Clerk confirmed that at the present time East Suffolk Council's deadline to submit the Town Council's decision was on Thursday.

It was agreed by all that the deadlines imposed were completely unreasonable in the current circumstances. The Council agreed that it would like these issues to be further investigated before making a decision, despite these deadlines. It was then **RESOLVED** that the Council defers the decision on the application **DC/21/0007/FUL** pending further information and investigation from Campus and East Suffolk Council on the 3G pitch and surface water management. A delay would enable further public consultation to take place so that the Council and residents will be able to make an informed decision on this planning application which is not the case currently.

Concern was also expressed about the road width from the access road to the sports centre eastwards to the junction of Harrisons Lane with Fair View Road. There are proposals to widen Harrisons Lane westwards to Norwich Road but it is not clear if the rest of Harrisons Lane to Fairview Road will also be widened. This stretch of Harrisons Lane narrows as it goes down the hill to meet Fairview Road. It is anticipated that significant traffic will chose this route to and from the sports centre.

In practical terms this decision will require East Suffolk Council to defer the application as HTC does not have the power so to do. However, Ben Woolnough, Major Sites and Infrastructure Manager for East Suffolk Council, was also present at the meeting and informed the Council that he would relay this request to Phil Perkin, Principal Planner and case officer for this application.

5. **Correspondence:** None

6. **Items for the Website/Noticeboard/Newsletters/Library.** It was agreed the decisions would be posted on the website etc as soon as possible

The Chair thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and for the residents input.

The meeting was closed at 8.05pm