

Present: Councillors;

Peter Dutton (Chair), Anne Fleming, Keith Greenberg, Rosemary Lewis, David Thomas, Maureen Took, Paul Widdowson, David Wollweber (Vice Chair).

In Attendance: Nick Rees (Clerk)

Minutes

1. **Apologies:** Cllr Sandra Leverett, Cllr Tracy Gardner, Cllr Andrew Payne, Cllr Keith Forster
2. **Declarations of interest:** Non-pecuniary interests; Cllr Widdowson for 3.1.

The Chair explained that this was an extraordinary meeting to primarily consider the planning application for up to 200 dwellings to the land south of Chediston Street. The application would be considered separately in the categories listed below and there would be an opportunity for members of the public to put forward their comments under each section.

3. **Planning Applications:** To consider the following:
 1. **DC/17/3981/VOC** - Outline Application (Some Matters Reserved) - Construction of up to 200 dwellings including car parking, open space provision with associated infrastructure and access | Land South Of Chediston Street Halesworth Suffolk IP19 8TU

The Council had noted there had been 19 neighbour responses against the development and that but that there had only been 5 Consultee responses; Highways, Fire and Rescue, Environmental Health, Crime and Archaeology. The application was then considered by categories in the following order:-

The Clerk recorded the names of residents that made comments but they are not named individually in the minutes. A short summary of residents and Cllr comments for each section are noted below.

1. Access, traffic & parking. Residents expressed concerns regarding the following; Increased traffic at the junction with London Rd which already caused difficulty. Increased traffic towards the site along Chediston Street, the Council were already aware of speeding problems in Chediston Street at the present time. Chediston Street is deemed to be unsuitable for the main pedestrian route into town, particularly for children going to school. Concerns that drivers will find alternatives routes via Dukes Drive to avoid the London Rd Junction. All North bound traffic will have to use Saxon Way so any traffic incidents would cause serious delays as there is no other suitable alternative North bound route. There is no provision for

cycle ways which is already a problem for cyclists traveling North. There are currently difficulties for pedestrians and mobility scooters crossing Roman way and the increased traffic would exacerbate the problem. Poor line of sight due to the hill increases the danger for pedestrians and mobility scooters. Concerns over the lack of parking provision both on site and for the increase in vehicles in the town. It was noted that the access road off the B1123 would only be for construction traffic and that would leave only one access to the site.

2. Housing mix (affordable, rented and mixed ownership), layout and density. Residents and Cllrs expressed concerns that there was a disproportionate amount of 4 bed houses (25%) and this did not reflect the Town's need for more affordable housing. In particular the Council considered that shared ownership houses were the only realistic method for local residents to get on the property ladder and acquire their first homes. The Council were under the impression that WDC did not adopt the same policy as SCDC on allocation of affordable rent, namely a system that favoured residents from the local area first and then progressively from a wider area. It was hoped that once the East Suffolk partnership was in place this would be addressed. The Chair also noted that, although the site was 9.1 hectares, the development space was only 5.1 hectares which related to a high housing density of 39 dwellings per hectare. Residents expressed fears that the 4 bed houses would become holiday homes.
3. Surface water and flood risk. Many residents present at the meeting relayed accounts of serious flooding problems on occasions in the past, particularly in Chediston Street but also other areas such as Dukes Drive. The Council were concerned that the permeability tests were not realistic and that the proposed provisions to contain the water would not be adequate.
4. Sewerage and utilities. The Chair noted that Anglian Water had confirmed that the sewage system was not adequate and a new sewer pipe (600mm) would need to be laid alongside the existing sewer. Residents on Chediston Street were concerned that this could mean serious disruption for their own properties in order for the new sewer to be laid through and under their gardens.
5. Visual Impact: The Council heard from several residents of neighbouring homes concerned that their views would, due to the steepness of the hill, be completely replaced by houses. Whilst the Council and the residents were informed and were aware that 'Loss of View' was not a non-material consideration, the overall effect of the new development would be considered as a loss of outlook for a large number of existing property owners. A resident noted and read extracts from **WDC's Planning Policy DM22 which restricts development in the countryside and it would appear that this application would contravene that policy**. It was also noted by the Chair that the development **should be considered under WDC's**

current Local Plan and not the new draft Local Plan. In which case this site had not been identified as suitable location for 200 houses. It was noted that previously a small area of the site, known as site 163, was considered under Site Specific allocation for development of around 60 houses.

6. Environment and archaeology. It was noted that the site had previously been identified as a Red Archaeology site. It was also noted that parts of the hill had been built up with construction waste from the previous Hopkins Homes site and therefore the Council were sceptical that the archaeology survey had taken the excess soil in to account when conducting their tests. Cllr Took raised the problem of the huge dump which had been used for many years, which overlapped the site, this dump had been used for burning carcasses and other purposes and would no doubt be contaminated. However it was not clear that this had been taken into account by WDC Environmental Health and by the developers.
7. Cumulative impact. The Council heard from two residents who articulately expressed the importance of the hill in terms of its natural beauty and prominence for the residents of Halesworth from various viewpoints. One resident referred to **WDC's Planning Policy DM27, protection of landscape character, 'Development proposals should demonstrate that their location, scale, design and materials will protect and where possible, enhance the special qualities and local distinctiveness of the area'**. It was considered that this development did not comply with this policy. Another resident summarised his view that the development had very little benefit to the community and did not offer the right properties for the younger demographic but at the same time it had several disadvantages; harm to the countryside, more traffic, higher flood risk and urban sprawl. The Council had concerns over the existing infrastructure which has been noted and recorded on many occasions. The Council's own comments to the agent, and copied to WDC, prior to the application had already noted many of the points raised in this meeting.

It was then RESOLVED that the Council recommended refusal for the following reasons (which are further detailed in the minutes), **Traffic and Access problems**, insufficient **Surface Water** containment and increased **Flood risk problems**, **Sewage and Utilities issues** which also impacts on the flood risk, **Environment and Archaeology**, the lack of comprehensive surveys to determine what the site will be built on top of, **cumulative impact on the infrastructure**, particularly health and education services which are already overloaded, **density design and appearance**, taking on board the comments regarding 'outlook' and suitability of the housing mix.

2. **DC/17/4210/FUL** – Single storey extension and garage, 34 London Road, Halesworth. It was RESOLVED that the Council recommended **approval**
4. **Correspondence** – There was no other correspondence to consider.

The meeting was closed at 8.40pm.