

STANSFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the planning meeting held on Monday 12th August 2019

Councillors present: Sarah Hopkins (Chairman), Ed Cardozo, Fran Brown, Julie Ghirardani, Fay Gridley and Robert Dennis.

Also present: Joanne Kirk (Clerk), District Councillor Mary Evans and 38 members of the public

Open Forum

The following issues were raised during the open forum.

- One resident explained the context of the historic willingness of the Parish Council and village to support a limited number of homes. There was agreement that the Parish Council would like to give young people who wish to stay in the village or older people who wish to downsize an opportunity to do so. He does not believe that this development will be the 'thin end of the wedge' as current planning policy would not allow this.
- One resident stated that Rural Vision 2031 declared the piece of land unsuitable for development. Concerns were raised about the increase of traffic in Pippin Post Close and the need for wheel chair access, and the impact on schools and doctor's surgeries. There is also no safe route into the village.
- One resident said her property will be directly affected. She currently has no access to the rear of her property. Things have to be brought through her property or via a narrow passageway. Larger items have to be brought through a neighbouring field and permission sought from the owner. The development will negate her ability to use this access via a field.
- A question was asked about the management of the Open Space on the development.
- Concerns were raised about the access road and the volume of traffic coming up a narrow road. Could the access come off the bottom road?
- Access onto Pippin Post Close is on a difficult bend. With cars currently parked in Pippin Post Close this will make it very narrow for emergency vehicles.
- A younger resident said she would love to be able to stay in the village and supports the application because it may give her a chance to do so.
- One resident said that there is no evidence to show that additional housing is needed. She would like to know why they are two storey buildings. She thinks they are too big and does not believe that design is in keeping with the village.
- Another resident said that West Suffolk Council has a clear planning policy, and this influenced her decision to move here. Any decision taken by West Suffolk Council will be detrimental to the village as it could lead to further development. She has not seen any evidence of a Housing Needs Survey which would support this development.
- Will a Housing Needs Survey be carried out?
- One person has a house on the market at a relatively low price and no one is interested in buying it so who will be interested in these new properties?

District Councillor Mary Evans spoke about the planning process. The decision will currently be made by a delegated planning officer. Mary Evans can ask for the decision to be made by a delegated panel or she can ask for it to be made by Development Control. The site is currently outside out the Housing Settlement Boundary. She also confirmed that West Suffolk Council is currently reviewing its Local Plan.

1. Acceptance of apologies for absence

Apologies were received from John Underdown.

2. Declaration of Interest in items on the agenda

Robert Dennis and Fran Brown declared a pecuniary interest in item 5a on the agenda – planning application DC/19/1329/FUL.

Sarah Hopkins declared a non-pecuniary interest in DC/19/1329/FUL because she is related to the applicant. Fay Gridley declared a non-pecuniary interest as she rents land from the applicant.

3. Dispensation requests

Fran Brown and Robert Dennis submitted dispensation requests to be allowed to take part in the discussions about DC/19/1329/FUL and to vote.

It was resolved that Fran Brown would be allowed to speak and take part in the vote and Robert Dennis would be allowed to speak but not vote. The dispensation will remain in place until a decision is made by West Suffolk Council about this or any subsequent applications for the site or for a period of four years, whichever comes first.

4. Planning

a) **DC/19/1329/FUL - Land off Pippin Post Close, Stansfield - (i) 5 no. dwellings (ii) public open space (iii) community orchard (iv) associated access and parking**

Following on from comments made by members of the public during the Open Forum, the following details about the application were clarified by Robert Dennis.

- Some changes have been made to the original plans. The properties are now all single storey, the community orchard has been moved to provide greater screening from development, there will be access for residents in the High Street to the rear of their properties. This access will not be for parking. There will also be access to the Community Meadow.
- Access to the site during the construction period will be via a separate access road so that site traffic will not have to go through Pippin Post Close.
- Visitors' parking. They engaged a traffic consultant who has said that the development would have sufficient visitor parking however, it would be possible to provide additional parking. The traffic consultant also said that the safety of Pippin Post Close would be enhanced as refuse lorries would be able to turn around rather than having to reverse down the road.
- The purpose of the wild flower meadow and orchard is to enhance publicly available open space in the village and to provide a bio diversity gain to offset against the housing. They will be maintained in perpetuity by the Dennis's and a covenant will be put in place to this effect.
- Drainage surveys have been carried out.
- Access to footpath will be improved.
- The affordable housing will be to rent, not buy. The rent will be set at 80% of market rent and the occupancy criteria will be driven by the parish to serve local need. The other three properties might also be for rent at open market rate or to buy. Although Robert Dennis is not a registered provider, it is hoped that local connection criteria would be established via a S106 agreement.
- The application does not comply with current planning policy, but Robert Dennis feels that this conflicts with the needs of rural villages. He does not feel that planning policy serves rural communities appropriately as it does not allow villages to evolve. He is in constant dialogue with West Suffolk Council and is trying to provide something to meet local need for local people.
- Evidence of need. Questions were asked about evidence of need and the possibility of providing a more detailed survey as the evidence provided does not seem to be sufficiently robust. Robert Dennis explained that it is very difficult to gather accurate evidence as it can be difficult to reach people who have a local connection who have had to move away from the village or who do not feel that they need to register for social housing but still have a need for affordable housing.

Views in the village are mixed. Some people have approached councillors asking for evidence of need, others have said they would like to downsize or live in a property which is fit for purpose. Robert Dennis believes that a picture can only be built up over years, by observing and finding out people's view. Although most of the views expressed at the meeting were negative, feedback at the village consultation was positive.

The Chairman asked the councillors to vote on the application. Robert Dennis left the meeting at this point. Three councillors voted in support of the application, two voted against.

It was resolved that the Parish Council would support the application but with the following amendments:

- The Parish Council recognises that the application in its current form does not comply with planning policy and insufficient information provided about how it can be classed as an exception site, however the Parish Council supports the principle of affordable housing, subject to it meeting local need. The Parish Council would like an S106 agreement put in place to ensure local connection criteria are used to rent out the affordable rent properties.

- The Parish Council supports the idea of a community space.
- The Parish Council would like additional visitor’s parking spaces to be provided to ensure that visitors do not park in Pippin Post Close.
- There must be good access to the site via Pippin Post Close with sufficient space for emergency access.
- The drainage conditions set out in the drainage report should be complied with.

Robert Dennis re-joined the meeting.

b) DC/19/1458/FUL - Lower St, Stansfield - 1 dwelling

It was resolved that no objections would be made, however the following comment would be submitted:

- Access to the road is close to a junction which has a poor visibility splay due to overgrown hedges in a neighbouring property. The visibility splay needs to be protected by keeping neighbouring hedges cut back.

5. Finance

a) Bank mandate change form

It was resolved that the two step authorisation for the Council’s current account would be removed and that the clerk would be authorised to make payments on behalf of the Parish Council, subject to payments being approved at meetings or as set out in the Council’s Financial Regulations, and checks and bank reconciliations being carried out as set out in the Council’s Financial Regulations

6. Any other business for noting or including on the next agenda

It was resolved that the following issues would be raised at the next meeting:

- The possibility of providing dropped kerbs in the village to enable wheelchair access
- Speeding in the village and an assessment for a temporary VAS

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.06pm.

Signed (Chairman) Dated