

Chedburgh Parish Council

MINUTES

of a Meeting held at the Erskine Centre, Chevington Road, Chedburgh on

Monday 13th August 2018 at 7.30pm

Present: Councillors: Michael Chester (Chair), Margaret Rickard, Pat Fisher, Alan Noyes, Sam Parrett and Clare Varney.

In attendance: Maximilian Clay (Clerk)
12 Members of the public.

31. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Teresa Landymore, and these apologies were approved.

32. Declarations of Interest

- a. There were no declarations of Pecuniary Interests.
- b. There were no declarations of Other Disclosable Interests.
- c. Cllr Rickard declared that she would abstain from participating in item 29, DC/18/1294/FUL and Cllr Noyes declared that he would abstain from voting on item 29, DC/18/1018/FUL.

33. Public Forum

Several members of the public raised issues relating to Item 29, DC/18/1018/FUL. The first speaker felt that the Council was not in a position to consider the matter because issues around flooding were not yet fully resolved, especially following a recent meeting with the County's flooding Officer. The Chair asked the Clerk to advise on this.

The Clerk pointed out that the Planning Authority in this matter is St Edmundsbury Council, not Chedburgh Parish Council which is simply a statutory consultee, along with agencies such as the Environment Agency. In previous applications relating to the Queen's Hill site some responses from other statutory consultees caused the application to be varied. This had meant that at some stages of that long and complex process information from consultee responses had inevitably become very entwined and the application information itself. This was because an understanding of the variations to the application relied on understanding some of the consultee responses from which they were derived. This unhelpful complexity was one of the reasons for withdrawal of the previous application and re-submission as a more clearly defined, fresh application. In the current case the Parish Council is in possession of the complete application as it stands and this constitutes the full information necessary for its consideration. Should the Council have concerns about flooding issues but wish to support the application it could make such support conditional upon compliance with any subsequent recommendations from the Environment Agency.

Other issues raised by the public included the potential effect on the bus service through Chevington, road safety on Queens Hill, a perception that there would be business activity seven days per week, concern that the two new buildings planned in previous proposals for the site had now been merged into one larger building and that this didn't seem to have any sensible rationale, and matters related to the construction of the manège in relation to flooding.

The applicant responded to the matter regarding flooding by explaining that the meeting with the Flooding Officer had happened without her knowledge and that it had therefore not been conducted on site. She understood that the flooding officer had been led to understand that the bund in the north eastern corner of the site had not been taken into account in the plans and previous flood assessments whereas she believed that it had. A further meeting, on site, had now

been arranged to clarify and resolve these issues. With regard to the bus service she pointed out that the bus company's concern was in regard to large vehicles and that the proposal involved only a very small number of such movements that were not directly under her control and that even including movements of the horse box there would be an average of less than one movement per week. With regard to general concerns about traffic, the applicant stated that car users would be her own staff and the students attending study weeks and that they would all be asked to approach from the north to minimise traffic through Chevington. During this response there were several interruptions from the public benches and the Chair had to ask a member of the public to remain silent several times. On the third such request for silence, the member of the public left the meeting of her own accord.

Responding to the question about the new building, the applicant stated that the reason for bringing the buildings together had arisen from feedback from the public and planners to reduce the visual impact of the new-build. The re-design had cut down the spread and mass of the buildings as well as incorporating a further reduction in the overall size of the dwelling.

A member of the public argued that if traffic avoided Chevington then it would need to use Weathercock Hill and that she felt that as people tend to cut the line of the bend adjacent to her property there, this would increase safety hazards.

The Chair of the Community Interest Group that has bid for the Marquis Cornwallis Public House spoke in opposition to the planning application to be considered under Item 29, DC/18/1294/FUL. He pointed out that there was no basis for the change of use in the context of planning regulations and that the assertions of both the owner and his agent regarding the viability of the pub were incorrect. He cited the history of trading at the pub, relevant regulations and the results of public consultations in support of his view. He also highlighted the issue of the split in ownership that had been made between the pub and some of its land, albeit that this appeared to keep ownership within related family interests. In doing so he pointed out that the whole of the site is listed as an asset of community interest, not just the building itself.

34. Planning and Environment

DC/18/1018/FUL - Planning Application: Land At Queens Hill.

(i) change of use of site from agriculture use (Sui Generis) to equine educational establishment (Class D1); (ii) conversion of existing agricultural storage barn to stables, tack room and storage; (iii) 1no. manege; (iv) 1no. rural worker's dwelling and (v) 1no. classroom building.

There was lengthy debate. A member suggested that there were no reasons to object to the application provided that the Planning Authority ensured that any grant of permission was subject to compliance with whatever flood mitigations that the Environment Agency recommends, once the final position was established.

Another Councillor acknowledged that the applicant had made significant efforts to address the concerns articulated by the public. She also noted that the bus operator was the same operator who ran the school buses (also serving Chedburgh) and that there had been no suggestion that these would be affected. She commended the idea of a bus stop to serve the application site.

The design of the new buildings was not felt by another member to be truly in the vernacular of Suffolk and was felt to be lacking in creativity. He did not consider black boarding to be a finish much in use locally, although other councillors pointed to examples in the village and along the road from the application site at Weathercock Hill.

A councillor expressed concern about the sloping terrain where the new building was to be sited, as he felt that the necessary levelling of the building could lead either to one end being significantly higher than it may appear from the elevation drawings and/ or one end having to be dug into the ground to a level that may reach the water table.

Other councillors acknowledged the seriousness of this concern. Reference to the application drawings revealed that the difference in ground levels from the highest point of proposed building site to the lowest was 1.21m and that the slab level for the building was minus 80cms (31 inches) from the higher level and plus 41cms (16 inches) at the lower level. Councillors decided that this was satisfactory.

The issue of road safety was raised; a councillor felt that the assessments of the County Council's Highways Officers should be given less weight than the views of residents because such large numbers had expressed disquiet on this matter. He also felt that the traffic survey was inadequate, that the evidence that there had been a proper search for alternative suitable sites was not convincing and that the financial benefit of the proposal, as set out in the application, would not have any local impact. One member wished to see the final recommendations of the Environment Agency regarding flooding, before making a decision. Other Councillors argued that whilst public concern about road safety needed to be considered, greater weight should be placed on the assessment of the qualified experts and that reliance on the implementation of the recommendations of highways and flooding specialists respectively would be sufficient to support the application.

The Chair pointed out that this application was by definition only really suitable for a countryside position and that change and progress was always a feature of country life - he pointed to the fact that there would be none of the modern housing in the village if no change were ever permitted. While he shared some of the concerns expressed earlier in the meeting about matters relating to highways and would also like to see a more distinct separation of the dwelling and business elements of the new build, overall he felt positive about the proposal but would prefer to see the recommendations relating to flood risk and mitigation before deciding the matter.

The Chair moved a motion that the matter should be remitted to a future meeting, so that the Council could consider the final flood mitigation issues; this did not find a seconder. The Council then resolved to support the application, subject to the implementation of the relevant recommendations of the Environment Agency concerning flood risk mitigation being included as conditions in any approval granted by the planning authority.

The Council went on to vote on three further motions and resolved:

- ◆ To ask the Planning Authority to give consideration to whether a greater separation of the two elements of the proposed new building is desirable - i.e. either a gap between the dwelling and teaching facility or the removal of the linking doors between the two areas.
- ◆ To ask the Planning Authority to give serious consideration to the introduction of bus stops, with any necessary bays or road widening, proximate to the entry to the application site, so as to encourage the use of public transport by those attending study weeks at the site.
- ◆ In the light of the level of concern amongst residents relating to existing road safety along the stretch of Queens Hill from the junction with Queens Lane to beyond the bend on Weathercock Hill, and also the possible exacerbation of this by any increased levels of traffic created by the proposal, to ask the Highways Authority to consider a reduction in the speed limit on Queens Hill to 30mph.

DC/18/1294/FUL - Planning Application: Marquis Cornwallis, The Street, IP29 4UH. *Change of use from public house (A4) to 1 no. dwelling (C3).*

The Parish Council considered this application. In debate councillors pointed out that the Pub (including associated land, which is not part of this application) is registered as an Asset of Community Value and there is substantial support for it to be retained as (the only) pub in the village. Change of use would lead to the loss of an important and valued community facility.

A Community Interest Group has secured pledges from local residents and other financial support to enable a bid and it has plans to re-open the pub. This Council referred to the Community Interest Group's letter of objection and thought that it should be commended to the Planning Authority.

It was noted that 32 Objections had been lodged with the planning authority, citing the above factors. Although the applicant's agent had sought to repudiate the objections and had stated that no one had come forward to purchase the pub, in fact, the Community Interest Group has made a bid at market price (and above the price for which the pub was purchased approximately two years ago, despite the current condition of the building being considerably worse than at that time).

A councillor noted that the applicant also suggests that the village hall (The Erskine Centre) is licensed and could serve as an alternative to the pub. There was general agreement that the Hall serves an entirely different purpose from the pub, is not open except for specific booked activities and has no license.

It was pointed out that contrary to planning requirements when justifying such a change of use, the pub had not been marketed for a year, having been presented in various formats and taken on and off the market during the past 7 months. Councillors felt that there was circumstantial evidence to suggest that the owners of the pub had contrived to bring about a situation that could be used to justify change of use and that there is clear evidence that nothing had been done to make the pub an attractive going concern for at least the past 18 months. Also contrary to planning requirements, no proper financial or business information had been submitted to support the assertion that the pub is not economically viable.

In addition it is noted that other planning concerns have been raised by statutory consultees, concerning archeological, contamination and heritage issues.

For all these reasons the Council agreed that a change of use was neither justified nor necessary and resolved to **object to the application**, citing those reasons.

The meeting closed at 9.05pm.

Signed as a true record by authority of the Council:

..... Chair

..... Date