



Ashwell Parish Council

Chairman: Graham Lee (☎ 743126)
Office at Bear Farm, 6A Back Street (☎ 743706)
Clerk: Jane Porter, Deputy Clerk: Laura Brooks-Payne
www.ashwell.gov.uk ✉ clerk@ashwell.gov.uk

Planning Committee Meeting: Wednesday 10th February 2021 at 8.00pm on Zoom.

Present: Councillors Gemma Allan, Martin Hoffman, Graham Lee (Chairman), Norton Mahy (Vice-chairman), David Sims and Mark White.

Mr Stuart Booth representing the applicant.

Twenty-one members of the public joined the meeting.

Part A

1. Apologies. None.
2. Approval and signature of minutes for previous Planning Meeting: None (minutes of Planning Committee 25th November 2020 signed at the December Council meeting)
3. Declarations of interest. Cllr Martin Hoffman declared a personal interest as a close neighbour of the landowner.

Part B CONSULTATION RECEIVED FROM NHDC

1. NHDC 20/03070/FP

Land Development Site off Station Road. NHDC case ref. 20/03070/FP. Full Planning Permission: Residential development of 28 no. dwellings and landscaping including pond, wildflower meadow and woodland and associated infrastructure.

Standing orders suspended for members of the public to speak.

Following a request from the Chairman the applicant's agent answered questions from the public.

Q: What was the tipping point for Ashwell no longer being a village but becoming a town?

A: Ashwell was 'well-served' and identified as a Category A village in the Local Plan.

Q: Had the applicant read and noted the Neighbourhood Plan particularly in relation to the housing needs identified?

A: Yes, the development included a mix of sizes including affordable homes.

Q: Was the parking provision sufficient?

A: Yes, householder and visitor provision was included. There had been no Highways objections so far as he was aware.

Q: How many affordable homes were included?

A: There were 2 terraces of 3 and 4 houses and 4 apartments making a total of 11 units.

Q: The proposed site was outside the village boundary – what was to stop further development extending further in the future?

A: The design included a wood that would form a natural physical barrier. The site was outside the boundary but within the limit set by the 30mph zone.

Q: Residents, particularly on the outskirts of the village, already experienced problems with water and sewage. Would not this development put further strain on this infrastructure?

A: Relevant authorities, such as the county council, were under an obligation to ensure adequate infrastructure. This would be part-funded by developers' contributions but was not a matter for a planning application.

Q: Was the applicant aware that the last 4 houses in Station Road were beyond the current sewage system and had septic tanks?

A: The application process included consultation with relevant authorities. The plans for surface drainage included a pond.

Q: What guarantees were there that the wood and the wildflower meadow would not be built on in future?

A: This would be the subject of a planning condition and there would be a legal agreement for the management of the site.

Q: Was the proposal sustainable? Should agricultural land be used for houses that were not needed by the village?

A: There was a significant need for housing across the district. There had to be a balance between this and the environment; the proposal had been designed with this in mind.

Q: Where was the 'Millenium Wood' that was referred to?

A: This was the existing strip of trees. It was in private ownership.

Q: What was to prevent the applicant requesting a section 73 variation in the future to increase the size of the properties as had happened with the Station Road development ongoing.

A: The situation re Permitted Development rights would be a matter for NHDC.

The following comments were also made by members of the public.

- As the village school was 'practically full' where would the children from the new houses go?
- There was a need for more social housing in the village and not expensive dwellings beyond the means of those in housing need.
- There was a housing need for smaller units particularly for elderly residents but this site was too far from the village centre to meet this need.
- The proposals included the provision of gas to the site. This was not compatible with central government carbon reduction plans that would ban gas boilers by 2030 and greener alternatives should have been included.
- Locating a large housing development some distance away from the village centre would generate additional traffic. This would lead to more congestion in the village centre and was not sustainable.
- The site was located outside the village settlement boundary.
- Concerns existed that there would be future extension of the site to the rear as this was not contained.

Standing Orders reinstated.

Parish councillors were in agreement that the issues raised in relation to the previous application had still not been adequately addressed. The three main issues cited in the previous application that had been refused by NHDC, and an appeal dismissed by the Planning Inspector, remained, ie the countryside, the character of the village, and sustainability.

Parish councillors noted the following specific points.

- Village settlement boundary. The site was outside of this and no evidence of need had been given.
- Education. Since the previous application a significant number of houses had, or were being, built - x30 Claybush Hill, x9 off Station Road, x4 Lucas Lane. These developments had not been taken into account in assessments for school places provision in the previous application or the appeal.

This application for 28 houses would increase the total of new houses to 71 houses, an almost 10% increase on the current housing stock. The majority of the new housing would appeal to young families with school age children. Because the majority of the established housing in Ashwell is occupied by post-family residents the actual impact of the 71 new houses on demand for primary education could be as much as 20%. This is far more than the current school could accommodate.

- Neighbourhood Plan. This had identified the need for dwellings suitable for the elderly; this site was too far from the village centre to be appropriate. There had been a preference for smaller developments.
- Doctors' surgery. Local residents continued to raise issues with accessing this service; the additional strain from a large development would exacerbate existing problems.

A proposal was made, and seconded, that a recommendation be made to refuse the application on the following grounds,

1. Adverse impact on the countryside including loss of agricultural land.
2. Adverse impact on the character of the village. The application was for a significant estate of houses outside the settlement boundary on the fringe of the village.
3. Sustainability issues.
 - 3.1 This number of houses would generate a significant increase in traffic to access the village centre and to access employment elsewhere. The additional strain on traffic and transport was not sustainable.
 - 3.2 There were insufficient spaces for children at the village school and no room to expand. This site would generate the need for many more spaces. The additional need generated by current and recently built developments had not been taken into account.
 - 3.3 Addition to the already strained health service provision had not been considered.
4. The application did not address the needs of the village. The Neighbourhood Plan had identified the need for dwellings suitable for the elderly and of a smaller scale. The mix of houses proposed did not meet the identified need.

It was **resolved** that the proposal for rejection of the application be accepted.

Action: Clerk