

IXWORTH AND IXWORTH THORPE PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting of Ixworth & Ixworth Thorpe Parish Council meeting held in Ixworth Village Hall on Wednesday 2nd April 2025 at 7:30pm

Present: Councillors (Cllrs) Lord (Chairman), Tony Molloy, Sam Linton, Terry Lilley, Kate Rees and Stephen Mann.

Also Present: C Cllr Spicer, D Cllr Griffiths and sixteen members of the public

Abbreviations

Cllr/Cllrs – Councillor/Councillors, PC – Parish Council, WSC – West Suffolk Council

The Chairman opened the meeting by confirming the resignation of Cllr Pam Shelton. In tribute, the Chairman wished to recognise Pam's service to the Parish Council of more than 20 years and throughout this time, she had also supported many other village causes including the Women's Section of Ixworth and District Royal British Legion, Ixworth and District WI and the Village Hall Management Committee. On behalf of the Parish Council, the Chairman wish to record the Council's heartfelt thanks to Pam for her generous service to the Parish Council and the community as a whole and wished her well for the future.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from the following Councillors –

Cllr Black – work commitments – apology accepted

Cllr Rowe – overseas – apology accepted

The Clerk was unable to be at this additional meeting due to pre-existing annual leave and it was agreed for this meeting that minutes would be taken between the Chairman and Cllr Rees.

2. Declarations of Interest

No declarations were made.

3. Planning

The Chairman confirmed these planning applications would be deferred for consideration at the next Parish Council meeting scheduled for Wednesday 9 April.

4. Public Forum

The Chairman introduced the purpose of this additional Parish Council meeting was to enable the public to make its representations to the Parish Council in respect of the outline planning application for up to 160 houses at Land off Bardwell Road, known informally as "The Langridge" (Planning Application Ref: DC/25/0370/OUT). The Chairman clarified that an outline planning application essentially enables a landowner and any agent to promote land to a developer/builder that has planning consent on it that would lead to a commercial sale of that land. Typically, a full planning application would then be required to consider the more precise details as to the type/mix of housing, style, site features etc. In this planning application, the method of access into the development site is excluded from this and that shall be fully determined at the point of this planning application. Due to the scale/size of this development, it is widely anticipated that the final determination of this application will be carried out by the Development Control Committee of West Suffolk Council. The Chairman also confirmed that the Parish Council are only a statutory consultee to this process and that whilst our representations are expressly taken into consideration by the Planning Case Officer, we do not make the final decision on whether planning consent is granted or refused.

Representations from the public were well measured and considered in terms of the views that were expressed that included:

- Transport/Highways

The suitability of the proposed access into Bardwell Road. Many people stated that this appeared unacceptable due to the volume of traffic that would eventually be moving in/around this site. It was stated that with the extent of school traffic that generates in the immediate proximity of the proposed access, which includes many school buses being held on Bardwell Road owing to insufficient capacity at Ixworth High School would render such an access arrangement insufferable and ultimately dangerous. With the A143 bypass already congested between the two roundabouts at peak periods, many felt that traffic would

simply enter/exit the site through the High Street and the village which is already suffering with longstanding congestion of parked vehicles. If an access point to this development was directly onto the A1088, it may alleviate the full extent of vehicles that will seek to shortcut through the village. Furthermore, it was felt that the Persimmon site (Land off Crown Lane) would also significantly exacerbate this issue as well. Although a 40mph speed limit is proposed on the A1088, many felt this did not go far enough in mitigating the issues and impacts that traffic arising around this development would create. The Chairman stated that when the applicant first began engaging with the Parish Council, it was intent on creating a roundabout off the A1088 into the development which was warmly welcomed since it would not only create the right type of access into the development but also introduce an opportunity to slow down an otherwise fast-stretch of road.

The Chairman clarified that remarks made by the applicant to the Parish Council that this is the only permutation of highways access in order for it to be lawful was grossly misleading and inaccurate. The Chairman clarified with West Suffolk Council Planning Officers on this and stated:

“Planning law states that the development plan is the starting point for decisions and planning applications should be determined in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. However, that is not the same as other development proposals being unlawful. They may not be compliant with the policy and ultimately might not be acceptable but that is not quite the same thing.”

The Chairman clarified that we have seen earlier policies around the Persimmon site indicate what the arrangements for highways access to be only for them to be completely overturned so there is a precedent for planning policy not to be followed when material considerations indicate otherwise.

Remarks were also made on impacts to the A143 beyond Ixworth and whilst the Parish Council noted this, the Chairman stated that the Parish Council's position can only truly reflect the direct impacts to Ixworth and Ixworth Thorpe and that it would be for the District and County Council's to suitably determine wider impacts beyond

- **Public Rights of Way Access**

Many felt that Ixworth, as it is, has insufficient access to the countryside and this application does little to address this. It seeks to create a “splitter island” from a new pavement created at the back of houses on Thistledown, for pedestrians to link into the existing public right of way known as the Old Stanton Road. There is nothing proposed beyond this. There is then a new circular footpath that runs from Thetford Road to the existing Bridleway and then comes alongside the river back to Thetford Road. Many felt this was simply an ‘upgrade’ in part to what has existed permissively for a very long time in terms of the link between Thetford Road and the Bridleway.

Remarks were then made about the suitability of provisions for safely crossing the A143 bypass at Crown Lane. It was recognised that this development will generate more people wanting to access the countryside who would not just use the small pockets of countryside access in close proximity to this site that are being proposed by the applicant. The Chairman advised the meeting how the applicant had successfully influenced the Planning Inspector who adjudicated the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Plan in diluting the unequivocal need for a footbridge over the A143 and that the applicant had separately stated to the Parish Council that it made such representations because “there was no functional link between this site and the A143 footbridge”. Members present together with most of the members of the public felt this to be a ludicrous suggestion given that pavements across the village lead to this part of our circular footpath network that is widely promoted, and that the applicant simply seeks to preserve profits by not providing a reasonable contribution towards a vitally needed piece of infrastructure. It was clearly stated that until Suffolk County Council provided a position as to the cost for this that it was likely developers would continue to be opportunistic in not providing any contribution towards this.

- **Access to GP Services**

Many present were concerned at the current difficulty in accessing GP services and how this would be exacerbated by this development. The Chairman advised the meeting that some 28 villages access Ixworth Surgery, serving some 12,000 patients across its locality. Stanton Surgery is the nearest surgery whose capacity is full and from Stanton and Ixworth alone, development of ca. 600 homes are forecast. Approximately a third of Thurston's population uses Ixworth Surgery where they continue to experience exponential levels of housing development. The Chairman stated he continues to have senior level discussions with Ixworth Surgery around this predicament and how contributions from developers to a key

service such as this needed to go further. An example cited was the Bloor Homes application in Stanton where approx. £135,000 is to be contributed towards improving accessibility to GP services to be split 50/50 between Ixworth and Stanton Surgery's. It was considered this to be totally inadequate. A member of the public suggested that on this point alone, it should cause any future development to be halted until suitable provisions were provided to mitigate the impact on the services created by this and other local developments.

- **School Capacity**

Land is earmarked within the Persimmon site for a new Primary School (approx. 2.2 Hectares). What is unclear is when this would be brought forward for development and when the need for that would be required. Whilst Suffolk County Council recognises that a need will emerge, it is unclear at what point the need is triggered – for instance, would this development trigger that based upon Ixworth Primary School having rising numbers of pupils? If that were to be the case, The Langridge site may not be able to come forward at the pace intended by landowners/agents if the Persimmon site is pending an application being submitted.

Further general questions and reflections were made around how devolution would impact this application, where it was clarified that it would not since it is a live application having to be determined according to the procedures that are incumbent. A question was asked as to what does the village get out of this development? The Chairman advised that the detail in the application seemed to suggest little more than a reduced speed limit on the A1088 which was extremely disappointing. The applicant is very aware of what the Chairman stated was 'woeful underinvestment' in infrastructure in Ixworth and that the expectations of what they propose fall significantly short of what had earlier been proposed to various community bodies. The Chairman stated that the applicant has suggested it is the deviation in the site allocations in the Parish Council's Neighbourhood Plan that is behind this yet that sought a further 69 homes by including the Dairy Farm site, the latter of which had not been submitted to the West Suffolk Local Plan's Site Allocation Request process. In any case, 160 homes still remain the lion share of what was originally sought in any case and therefore weakens the applicant's rationale for not providing anything substantive by way of community benefits.

In conclusion, the Chairman once more stated the Parish Council's longstanding position that Ixworth needs housing and welcomes the prospect of new housing which is currently an issue for starter homes, homes to downsize into as well as new and improved social housing. However, whilst recognising that need must also recognise the need to balance that with vital infrastructure improvements if Ixworth is to maintain its status as a Key Service Centre. Whilst it is unlikely that Ixworth will get everything it needs out of two major development sites being brought forward for development, that should not dilute our community's ambitions and requirements.

With no further business the meeting closed at 9pm.

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Signed

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Date