



Loddon Parish Council

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Notes of the Public Meeting organised by Loddon Parish Council, held on Wednesday 11th August 2021, 7.00pm at The Hollies, High Street, Loddon to discuss Planning Application 2021/1569, Development of Land North and South of Norton Road, Loddon.

Parish Councillors present: Cllr Kay Mason Billig, Chairman (KMB), Cllr June Strickland, Vice-Chair (JS), Cllr Jane Hale (JH), Cllr Stephen Jones (SJ), Cllr Michael Martins (MM), Cllr Arthur Morris (AM), Cllr Mervyn Pointer (MP), Cllr David Tarry (DT), Cllr Sophie Waggett (SW), Cllr Margaret Wallace (MW) and Cllr Alan Wildman (AW).

Present: Georgina Hirst (LPC officer) and sixty-seven members of the public.

Welcome

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the public meeting and thanked them for attending. KMB noted that all Parish Councillors were attending the public meeting, this reflects how important this issue is for the Parish Council. KMB informed those present that the meeting would be recorded by GH, LPC officer. No-one else present stated that they wished to record the meeting.

The public meeting was organised to discuss the outline planning application for up to 130 open market and affordable dwellings, with all matters reserved except access at Land North and South of Norton Road, Loddon, Norfolk. An outline application asks South Norfolk Council (SNC) to agree in principle to the development of 130 houses on the site, which is 6.07 hectares. The application contains 87 marketable and 43 affordable dwellings with a mixture of 1, 2, 3 and 4 bedroom properties.

KMB explained that the developer has not sought the views of the Parish Council. Loddon Parish Council's Planning Working Party may meet with the developer, dependent on the outcome of this public meeting. The developer declined to attend this public meeting. The developer has also not sought any pre-application advice from SNC, which is unusual for a development of this size. KMB noted that the application is detailed, therefore any response from SNC must be carefully considered, otherwise the developer may appeal, in which case the decision would be made by a Planning Inspector rather than District Councillors.

The site is not allocated for housing in the Greater Norwich Local Plan (GNLP), there are other sites in Loddon that are allocated for housing. The developer submitted this site for consideration for allocation, it was rejected on three grounds: Highways, Visual Aspect and Proximity to the Broads. <https://www.gnlp.org.uk/sites/gnlp/files/2021-01/Loddon%20%26%20Chedgrave%20Booklet.pdf>

As of the 10/08/21, there were 46 objections from residents against application 2021/1569 on the SNC online planning portal. On 11/08/21 there were 60+ objections.

On the same webpage of the planning portal are objections to the planning application from some statutory consultees; of particular note are objection responses from Norfolk County Council (NCC) Highways and CPRE (The Countryside Charity, formerly known as the Campaign to Protect Rural England).

<https://info.south-norfolk.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=QVMHV3OQK3200>

KMB introduced Parish Councillor SW, who by profession is a Planning Manager. KMB then opened the public participation section of the meeting and requested that those who wished to speak give their name and the name of the road they reside on.

Public Participation

██████████, Norton Road

██████████ noted that the response from NCC Highways stipulates the required minimum width of the carriageway is 5.5m with a continuous footway of 1.8m width, Norton Road does not meet either of these requirements, hence NCC Highways have rejected it.

██████████ quoted the developer's description of Norton Road as a rural country lane, used by a low level of traffic, cyclists and walkers, it is 3.5 m wide, widening to 4.5m, and is not wide enough for two cars to pass.

██████████ explained that the proposed access to the field on the north side of Norton Road is in the centre of a z bend with blind corners to the east and west. The access to the south field has a blind corner to the east and the road width at this point is 3.5m. ██████████ quoted national statistics that the development of 130 dwellings generates 606 new movements in and out over a 12 hour period.

██████████ highlighted the proposal recommends a shuttle working build-out on Norton Road, to join a new pathway from the development to the existing pathway which starts at 34 Norton Road, this proposal would narrow the road to a single track with west to east priority. ██████████ pointed out that the developer's consultant report states that this proposal will not inconvenience new and existing road users and the consultant's report concluded that "there are no identifiable transport related grounds for rejecting this application". ██████████ disagrees with the consultant's opinion.

██████████ noted that there have been two previous applications, in 1990 and 1991, both of which were refused on Highways grounds, that the road was too narrow for entry and exits onto Norton Road.

██████████ and ██████████ have collected over 130 signatures on a petition against the application. ██████████ said that the decision is due by SNC in October, although it may go to Committee. With the support of the Parish Council, he hopes the application will be rejected.

JH stated that a petition will only count as one complaint and therefore encouraged everyone to make individual representation by placing a comment on the online planning system or sending emails or letters to SNC stating their opinions and reasons the application should be refused.

██████████, Norton Road

██████████ queried a statement by KMB in the welcome about an objection being wrongly worded and possibly giving the developer grounds to appeal the decision. He asked for clarification on this.

SW explained that an application may go to appeal based on the reasons for refusal which are put forward by SNC. A planning officer's refusal should be well worded and relate to specific planning policies. If the application goes to SNC's Development Management Committee, then District Council Committee members' reasons for a refusal must be legally sound. District Councillors will have legal support in making such a decision. The application will not go to appeal based on the information in objections from residents.

KMB explained that Loddon Parish Council is only a consultee on planning applications. SNC must have legitimate reasons for a refusal decision. SNC is assisted by lawyers in their decision. There have been other planning appeals previously, however it is usual for SNC to win.

██████████, **High Bungay Road**

██████████ asked for clarification of the relationship between SNC and the Broads Authority in relation to planning decisions and if SNC is overseen by the Broads Authority?

SW answered that SNC and the Broads Authority are two separate planning authorities. The Broads Authority can comment on this application due to the proximity of the site to the Broads but the decision on the application will be taken by SNC. KMB added that the site is within the SNC planning area.

██████████, **Milton Drive**

██████████ asked what possible appeal the developer could make against the Highways advice?

SW answered that the reason for refusal, if made on Highways grounds, will be the deciding factor. SW expected there to possibly be more back and forth between the developer, the developer's engineers Create Consulting Engineers, and NCC Highways. There may be further evidence and detail submitted in response to the NCC Highways objections, although it may be difficult for Create Consulting Engineers to address the fundamental comments within NCC Highways' objection.

██████████, **Norton Road**

██████████ stated his concerns about the corner junction of Norton Road and Beccles Road. Cars travel around the corner above the 20mph speed limit, and he considered it already an unsafe junction.

██████████ said that the Loddon schools are quite full; one primary level school has converted a computer lab to a classroom this year.

██████████, **Beccles Road**

██████████ asked what the application wording 'outline matters reserved except access' means?

SW replied that the application is seeking planning permission for the principle of residential development on the site for up to 130 houses and the means of access. If the application is approved then the next stage will be a reserved matters application whereby the developer will submit more

details including the appearance and siting of the houses, the layout of the development and associated landscaping.

██████████ asked if this could be a tactical application? Could it be possible for site access to be through the other new site, on Beccles Road?

SW replied regarding the site access, that there are two different developers, Halsbury Homes who have submitted the Norton Road application and Hopkins Homes, who have a draft allocation in the GNLP for the Beccles Road site. It could possibly happen if NCC Highways insist on such a scheme; but would be dependent on an agreement between the two developers. Also, if the sites have different landowners it becomes very complicated with option agreements and other matters, so not straight forward at all.

██████████, ***Norton Road***

██████████ highlighted that although the width of the road and footways have already been mentioned, there has been no discussion yet of who might occupy the new houses, such as families with young children walking to school and people with disabilities, possibly in wheelchairs who will be excluded from safely using the very narrow roads and footways, would this contravene the Disability Discrimination Act?

SW commented that the NCC Highways objection is very clear on the substandard nature of the roads. It is for the developer's engineers, Create Consulting Engineers to come up with something which may address the current Highways objection, however looking at the roads and the available land which is adoptable, she thinks it will be very difficult to achieve this.

KMB explained the NCC Highways objection requires a continuous carriageway which measures 5.5m in width and a continuous footway of 1.8m width. Currently the carriageway is between 3.5 - 4.5m width, so unless parishioners want to give up their front gardens, providing 5.5m and 1.8m within the current space will not happen.

Member of the Public 1

The member of the public asked that if the Highways issues were resolved first then would other issues still need to be addressed?

KMB replied that there are three main issues from the rejection of the site for allocation; the visual aspect because the site is on a rise, the proximity of the Broads, and Highways.

The member of the public asked if the application hinges on access and if so, could access be down Sandy Lane, rather than Norton Road. How likely is it that Sandy Lane could be widened as a new access road?

SW replied that the Create Consulting Engineers report is lacking in traffic counts, identifying movements down various roads, and speed surveys. NCC Highways require this information, they will also look at the immediate road network and its capacity, so they will have looked at Sandy Lane and connections back into Loddon. The developers only have an option on the application site. Landownership beyond the application site could be third parties, where the developer does not

have an option. This would all get very complicated and expensive for the developer. The developer is likely to want to focus on developing the site and not being involved in negotiating with several different landowners for an access road along Sandy Lane to the A146, which NCC Highways would probably require to be 8m width, this would be a massive engineering project and cost millions of pounds. Even with this possibility there is still the issue of traffic going back into Loddon.

Member of the Public 2, Norton Road

The member of the public commented that if Sandy Lane were used this would require another roundabout onto the A146 near Hales, he does not think this should be considered.

The member of the public said the village should not be extended beyond the tree belt. He can envisage new householders on the Hopkins site requesting the tree belt be removed. He also fears if the Norton Road application is approved the developer may then look to extend the site in future.

The member of the public asked if SNC take the developer's past performance into account when making the decision on the planning application?

KMB replied that SNC are not allowed to consider the developer's past performance but can only consider the current planning application.

After comments about the George Lane roundabout progress KMB explained that utility companies must have individual time slots to work on the roundabout site, so the work happens in stages. At present, there is a legal agreement in place, which is yet to be signed which underwrites the roundabout's development. The contractor has been chosen. Costs have increased. NCC have assured KMB that the Road Traffic Order which normally takes 12 weeks will be sped up. KMB cannot guarantee an exact start date. The money for the roundabout is held in escrow by NCC. NCC have step in rights to build the roundabout, should the developer's contractors fail to deliver.

████████ pointed out that Sandy Lane is classified in the Create Consulting Engineer's report as a "single track road, mainly suitable for walkers, cyclists and any agricultural equipment necessary for the fields, it is not suitable as a connector to the A146."

████████, Norton Road

████████ and ██████ own the land on the east side of Sandy Lane. Years ago, Sandy Lane was tree lined but trees were removed for the war effort of World War 2. ██████ pointed out that many people use Sandy Lane for walking their dogs and suggested doing a count of leisure usage before thinking of development.

████████ said that he envisages at least 200 cars from the proposed new development using Norton Road, however he does not think there are sufficient jobs in Loddon for residents of the new development.

████████ also said that people are moving out of the George Lane Halsbury Homes development because there is nowhere for children to play, there is a lack of a sizable play area.

KMB replied that people can write or email the Parish Council about issues such as play areas, because the Parish Council is here to address them.

██████████, **Norton Road**

██████████ said that if he was travelling to Norwich from his home his preferred route would be around the roundabout, this would take him through the centre of Loddon and down George Lane. This could potentially also apply to the 180 Beccles Road housing development and the proposed 130 development. Already the traffic in the centre of Loddon is unacceptable, where traffic including buses, has to mount the pavements to get through, with another 300 plus houses it will only be worse with additional cars going through the centre of Loddon at rush hour.

██████████ and ██████████ both commented on speeding cars on blind corners along Norton Road.

██████████, **Kingfisher Walk**

Further to ██████████'s comments, ██████████ considers that the most obvious route, especially using a satnav, when travelling towards Norwich goes down Kittens Lane, past the schools to get to the new roundabout. ██████████ walks with his children to the primary schools and Kittens Lane can be very dangerous at school drop off and pick up times.

██████████, **Oak Avenue**

As ██████████ lives on the George Lane Halsbury Homes site, she is aware of the history of the development. ██████████ asked if it would be worth writing to SNC about the history of the development of the George Lane Halsbury Homes site from her perspective, or is the current planning application only considered on its own merits?

KMB replied that ██████████ is entitled to write to SNC, however SNC cannot take comments as suggested by ██████████ into consideration. KMB suggested that it might be more worthwhile to write to the developer.

██████████, **Norton Road**

██████████ commented that often when driving along Norton Road, cars often have to back up or go up on the pavement, this is the only way for cars to get through. If they meet a delivery driver or refuse truck, then cars have to wait and queue up.

██████████ also said that since Covid more people are walking and cycling along Norton Road. If the proposed development happens then Norton Road will not be suitable for walking and cycling, residents will have to travel elsewhere for leisure and children's school journeys will be a longer route by car rather than walking or cycling.

██████████, **Norton Road**

██████████ asked about the impact of the construction traffic if the proposed development goes ahead. He thinks this will cause a problem on the existing roads even before the houses are built and occupied.

██████████, **Norton Road**

██████████ was happy to see so many attendees and would like to know how many people attending are in favour of the development.

KMB said that this question could be asked but it would be putting people on the spot. KMB pointed out that the public comments on the application on the SNC website are all objections.

██████████, **Brownes Grove**

██████████ said that he thinks the discussion has missed something. It is obvious that the road isn't wide enough for the proposed development, however the detailed application indicates significant time and money spent. ██████████ considers that the absence of the developers at the public meeting to answer questions and listen to residents is meaningful. So, what is missing? He considers the application will be thrown out, so why has the application been submitted?

SW replied that the application is not comprehensively prepared and ignores new planning guidance. The application may possibly have been submitted because the option agreement to purchase the land is running out, so an application being submitted and then progressing to appeal would potentially add another two years on to the option agreement.

██████████ pointed out that the display map of the site masterplan shows roads within the development of 5.5m width, so the developers are clearly aware that the access roads are not suitable.

SW replied that internal road layout forms one part of a well designed place. There should also be use of the new national design guidance, including how dwellings are sited and consideration of landscaping. The new guidance states that roads should be tree lined. There is no consideration in the masterplan of where the surface water basin should go, SW suspects it may be in the public open space. There is a lack of footpaths and cycle paths, which NCC Highways have identified as substandard.

Member of the Public 1

The member of the public asked if this application is a first attempt on the site and to expect an appeal? The developer will use the application to gauge public opinion.

SW replied that the application is seeking only reserved matters and access, this is a cheap way for developers to see if they have a chance of establishing the principle of development on a site. If the application is refused planning permission there is no guarantee that it will go to appeal. Some option agreements with landowners require Counsel's legal opinion on the likelihood of winning an appeal. If an application for a development of this size does go to appeal that will mean a Planning Inquiry, at which point the developer will need to appoint a QC, Queens Counsel and provide a full evidence base, which would cost hundreds of thousands of pounds and there is still a risk that the Inspector will refuse the appeal.

Summary

KMB explained that at the July meeting Loddon Parish Council resolved to object to the application. The Parish Council is only a consultee on the application. SNC have agreed an extension of time for comments, the deadline was 09/08/21, however KMB spoke to the planning officer yesterday

and she has agreed that anyone can continue to submit comments by writing, phoning or emailing SNC, by adding comments to the SNC planning portal website or by dropping comments into the LPC office to be forwarded on to SNC. Quote planning application reference: 2021/1569.

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Comments can be submitted until a determination is made. The latest date for determination is 22/10/2021, however if the application goes to a Development Management Committee meeting for decision by District Councillors that is likely to bring the determination date forward to 22/09/2021.

If planning officers are minded to refuse the application without going to the Development Management Committee, the determination date could be as soon as all statutory consultees have submitted comments.

KMB encouraged residents to continue to put their comments in to SNC as soon as possible and to give individual comments. She said this evening's meeting had covered many good points about the pitfalls of the development such as Highways, visual aspect etc. She encouraged people to give their own opinions about the development in addition to valid reasons for refusal. The more upswell of opinion there is will have to be considered by SNC. Therefore, residents should not just rely on the Parish Council's objection but give their own opinion also.

The next Parish Council meeting is on 08/09/2021 and will have the Parish Council's detailed response for discussion at the meeting. All residents are welcome to attend Parish Council meetings or call into the Parish Council office with any issues.

Thank you to everyone for attending.

The meeting ended at 8.02pm.