

## MINUTES

PLANNING & HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE held at THAXTED GUILDHALL on THURSDAY 8<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2019 AT 7:45pm

**PRESENT:** Cllr V Knight (Vice Chairman) Cllr T Frostick, Cllr W Brazier, Cllr D Morgan, Cllr R Barrington, Cllr A Frater, Cllr R Williams, Cllr I Stewart

**Also Present:** Peter Neal

### 1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr J Spencer (Chairman)  
Cllr A Howells  
Cllr A Wattebott  
Richard Haynes

### 2. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

To receive disclosures of interest in items on the agenda

### 3. PUBLIC REPRESENTATIONS

To receive public representations for a period not exceeding ten minutes on matters relating to the Agenda

### 4. COMMITTEE MINUTES

To **APPROVE** and sign as a correct record the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 11th July 2019

### 5. PLANNING APPLICATIONS

To agree the Council's observations on the following applications:

#### a) UTT/19/1597/FUL

**PROPOSAL:** C2 residential care home for up to 3 children with 24 hour care. Alternative scheme to that approved under UTT/18/0851/FUL

**LOCATION:** Adj To Bluebell Cottage Cutlers Green

**RESOLVED** to **STRONGLY AND UNANIMOUSLY OBJECT** on the following grounds

We have major concerns that the specification of the house would not meet the standards for high level dependant residents. The bedrooms and bathrooms are clearly not suitable.

There are no design features to support care being delivered on site, and virtually none to support someone who may need personal care delivered in their room environment. The building clearly doesn't achieve M4(2) (accessible and adaptable buildings) or M4 (3) (wheelchair user dwellings), which means anyone with any level of disability or mobility issues would not be able to use most of the property. The design of the property would not allow for these standards to be retrospectively achieved either due to restrictions in size and design. Here are 5 easy to cross reference against the standard for why The Warrens' potential as C2 is very, very limited:

1. None of the bedrooms have the required 300mm nib to the door's leading edge (nearly every room in the house would fail this key test for anyone with mobility issues).
2. The corridors are not wide enough to allow for a wheelchair turning circle, or indeed for any specialist equipment to be easily moved around.
3. A stair lift could not be installed as there is insufficient space at the bottom of the stair and the bottom of stair conflicts with the main entrance.
4. 3 of the 4 bedrooms are either of insufficient size or irregular shape to allow assistance features to be added or indeed to allow a carer to access around the whole bed fully.
5. Bathrooms are of insufficient size to allow for assisted bathing or even to allow support to use the WC etc.

In fact the upper floor dependency of dropped eaves for the chalet design would be the worst possible for care provision as it lowers the floor to ceiling heights in parts of the bedroom where carers might need to use mobile hoists and would need maximum head clearance. There are other very strange arrangements in the provision of accommodation that suggest whoever submitted the application has not even thought it worth their time to replan the original submission to indicate any change of use to C2. For example:

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A) This is now proposed for 4bed 7-person occupancy. Dining arrangements are only adequate for 6 persons?  
B) Separation of space at ground floor does not work for care provision. Where is the care team's separate office/bedspace for overnight? The potential room is currently drawn as a communal 'snug'.

b) UTT/19/1809/FUL

**PROPOSAL:** Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of 1 no. new dwelling

**LOCATION:** Bluebell Cottage Cutlers Green

**RESOLVED to STRONGLY AND UNANIMOUSLY OBJECT on the following grounds**

On the conditions that the Parish Council feel this is over intensification of the area and against the neighbourhood plan. A desecration of the street scene which has history

c) UTT/19/1864/FUL

**PROPOSAL:** Construction and operation of a solar farm comprising arrays of solar photovoltaic panels and associated infrastructure (inverters and transformers, DNO building, customer switchgear/ control room, cabling, security fencing, CCTV, access tracks and landscaping) on agricultural land off the B1051. The Development would have an operational lifespan of 40 years.

**LOCATION:** Terriers Farm Boyton End We have received the above application and would welcome

**RESOLVED to STRONGLY AND UNANIMOUSLY OBJECT on the following grounds**

Scale bulk and massing is far too great for a small community like Thaxted to absorb, it's an industrial block on the heritage landscape and the land will be rendered unsustainable for food production in the future. Visters and the plateau will be highly disturbed irrevocably. The potential loss of public rights of way which hasn't been addressed, this is a historical sight

The impact of this development on the Thaxted landscape could be dramatic and the application requires very careful consideration. I've had a preliminary look at what has been submitted and there are many serious deficiencies and uncertainties which need to be highlighted. There is a danger that the Thaxted community could be lulled into a belief that green energy is good therefore let's not bother about the consequences which will only be realised after the thing is built.

Essentially it will occupy about 130 acres of Grade 2 agricultural land in a very sensitive landscape. It will involve 125,856 solar panels and a host of infrastructure, housings etc.. No proper plans are provided with the application in relation to buildings or infrastructure.

The first issue is impact on footpaths. It will affect the amenity of PROWs 49-25;49-27; 49-28; 49-29; 49-67; 38-32; and 38-36. Some footpaths will be altered out of all recognition. It is all very well to say that landscape screening will be put in place but we all know that that takes about 15 years to be of any use and in any case a narrow path running between two hedge lines is totally different to a path adjacent to an open field. It is therefore important that the Thaxted P3 have this brought to their attention if they are not already aware of it. There is then the general impact on the landscape. The work done by Liz Lake for the NP does not quite go out that far because that study dealt with the Thaxted 'hinterland'. The adjacent local landscape parcels (LPLCA 10 and 11) were however both classified as having a 'high sensitivity' to change and a 'low' or low-medium' capacity for change. There is no reason why land just to the east should be any different. There is however, firmer evidence provided by the work done by Chris Blandford Associates for the local authorities in north-west Essex in 2006. In that study this area is identified as a part of the 'Thaxted Farmland Plateau', where it is stated that the landscape pattern is 'sensitive to potential large-scale development' and has 'a relatively high sensitivity to change'. The guidance is to 'conserve the open views'.

The next point is with regard to land quality. The land will be taken out of agricultural production for 40 years. This is Grade 2 land, classified as 'best and most versatile'. The use of Grade 1 and 2 land is in both Local Plan and NPPF terms essentially a last resort. A ministerial statement (HCWS 488, 2015) from DCLG states 'Meeting our energy goals should not be used to justify the wrong development in the wrong location and this includes the use of high quality land. Protecting the global environment is not an excuse to trash the local environment'.

Chairman's Signature

It goes on to say 'Any proposal for a solar farm involving the best and most versatile agricultural land would need to be justified by the most compelling evidence'. The fact is that the applicants have provided no compelling evidence. They say that they have done an options study (although this has not been submitted) and they say that there is no alternative site within a 2 km radius. They also complain that most of the land in Uttlesford is Grade 2. Basically, so what! This doesn't have to be in Uttlesford. There are masses of more suitable sites in Essex and hundreds of other sub-stations that they can connect into. No evidence has been provided of other options considered and why they have been dismissed. This is essential in the light of the ministerial statement.

Another point is that landscape impact images have been provided but these do not illustrate the panels! They are just photos of the existing landscape with a line showing the extent of where they will be which provides no indication at all of how they would sit and the impact they will have.

The applicants refer to the public consultation exercise. The fact that I knew nothing of their stint in the Day Centre until after the event really is indicative of how low key, they managed to keep this.

#### **6. Neighbourhood Plan Delivery Group**

To receive an update from NPDG on matters connected to planning and highways only.

Nothing to report, the chairman asks that the Neighbourhood plan delivery group see the newsletter for their comments on matters connected to highways and parking.

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