

Minutes of the meeting of the planning committee of Kirby Cane & Ellingham Parish Council at Kirby Cane Memorial Hall on Monday, 20th February 2023 at 7.00pm

Present:

John Cook Lesley Lodge James Lally Kerry Mallard
Julie Pickering Michael Skipper

Also District Cllr Brendon Bernard, the clerk to the council, Jane Love and 14 residents

1. To receive apologies for absence:

Apologies had been received from Cllr Iain Wright.

2. To receive declarations of interest from members on items on the agenda, and any requests for a dispensation on those interests:

No interests were declared.

3. To approve the minutes of the planning committee meeting on 20th July, 2021:

The minutes of the meeting on 20th July 2021 were agreed to be correct and were signed by the chairman of the planning committee.

4. Opportunity for public participation:

Residents actively put forward their views on the two sites that had been favoured in the SNC Village Clusters Housing Allocations Plan (VCHAP) consultation.

5. To discuss the soundness and legality of the Village Clusters Housing Allocations Plan (VCHAP) put forward by South Norfolk Council:

Cllr Skipper and the clerk explained that the current Regulation 19 consultation on the VCHAP was a technical requirement of planning legislation concerning the “soundness and legality” of the VCHAP itself, rather than the characteristics of the two favoured sites themselves. The parish council had responded to the Regulation 18 consultation in July 2021, and some of the comments made at that time seemed to have been taken into consideration when the VCHAP was amended. However, the meeting failed to see how a plan could be considered “sound” when it largely disregarded vital issues relating to amenity and daily life in the village, such as road safety and the ability of the sewerage system in particular to cope with additional development, as well as the inadequacy of wider public services such as health and education. Mill Road is the village arterial highway, and is already considered by residents not to be fit for purpose, especially around the junction with Mill Lane, where one of the preferred sites is located. By failing adequately to address these issues, the plan was therefore unsound because it did not fulfil one of the basic objectives of the VCHAP, “to protect village communities and support rural services and facilities”.

Proposed site a) SN0305, land south of Mill Road, Ellingham

The meeting remained concerned that Mill Road was too narrow to accommodate existing traffic, let alone a potential of at least a further 50 cars per day following development of the two sites. Please note that in the 2023 site assessment document, in spite of the fact that the NCC Highways score is Red, the site score for this section is given as Amber, presumably because it is the only viable site possible and a Red classification may rule it out for development.

Regardless of improvements to the area around the access to the site, Mill Lane as a whole was too narrow, and western end towards the school plagued with hazards, leading to the dangerous junction with Church Road. Concerns were also raised about the junction onto the A143, where joining vehicles have to deal with poor visibility while trying to turn into 50-mile-an-hour plus traffic.

Nearby residents voiced particular concerns about the ability of the sewage system in the area to deal with existing demand, let alone an additional 25 properties. The site assessment document scores this site as Amber for wastewater, although the HELAA score is Green – residents do not understand how this site is considered to be at 70% capacity by the Environment Agency when they are regularly subjected to overflowing sewage pipes and are unable to flush their toilets.

Proposed site c) SN3018, Florence Way, Ellingham

As previously mentioned, this site would inevitably put more pressure on the dangerous junction of Mill Lane and Mill Road, and is classified Red by NCC Highways, although once again a HELAA score of Amber is given – the existence of a footpath from Florence Way to the Mill Lane/Mill Road junction is really inconsequential as this has no bearing on the ability of cars to access the site safely. Concern was also raised about the ability of the existing private highway infrastructure within the Florence Way development to cope with the extra traffic that would be required.

6. To consider any other elements of the consultation that may require comment:

The parish council had received the response to the VCHAP Regulation 19 consultation compiled by the Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) which challenged the soundness of the VCHAP because it has been decoupled from the Greater Norwich Local Plan, which has had a different consultation timetable, rendering both “unsound”. Furthermore, the CPRE’s challenges to the GNLP included questions relating to overall numbers of houses provided by the plan, which, if found to be unsound, would impact the number of houses allocated by the VCHAP. This is particularly true of greenfield sites, and both the Ellingham sites are greenfield, with the land south of Mill Road (SN0305) in particular being classified as grade 3/4 agricultural. The committee agreed with both these assessments, and asked the clerk to refer to these in the parish council’s responses to the VCHAP consultation – specifically that if SNC had sufficient sites elsewhere in the district and these village clusters were therefore surplus to requirements, the plan was unsound as it did not fulfil the stated objective of “meeting housing needs”.

7. To receive items for information:

The clerk would report residents’ concerns about TPO trees in Yarmouth Road, Ellingham, which they feared may be dangerous due to lack of maintenance.

8. Date of next meeting – TBA

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.15pm

Signed.....
Chairman

Dated.....