

COLNEY HEATH PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE SPECIAL MEETING
Wednesday 26th January 2005 at the Colney Heath Village Hall, High Street,
Colney Heath at 8.00pm.(Open to the Public and Local Residents)

Members of the Planning Committee-Present-Cllr D Crump Chair-Cllr C Brazier

Chairman of the Planning Committee Cllr Jamie Day presided over the meeting

Clerk to the Council-Mr John Dean

Members of the Public 45 local residents of Smallford and area

1 APOLOGIES

There were apologies from committee members - Cllr Corley-Cllr Reeves-other Council members who sent apologies were Cllr Rump- Cllr Clarke-Cllr Henchley

2 DECLARATIONS

Cllr Crump declared a non pecuniary interest in residing nearby.

3 APPLICATION 05/04/2838 & 05/04/2839 BELGRAVE LAND 315 DWELLINGS
To consider a Planning Application from Belgrave Land to build 315 new homes, retail and community facilities on the Glinwell site south of Hatfield Road.

At this point the Chairman opened the meeting gave an overview of the issue with so much public interest at this large development both contentious and alarming to residents due to the scale in an Green Belt area, previously used for nursery and market garden activity established over decades past. Cllr Brazier added the development was just at the OPP stage, the views he would be trying to put to the District Council in the context that this should not be taken in isolation. Other nearby sites such as BT and Oaklands threat to move to Hatfield were obvious target areas for the developers in waiting. The whole area could potentially finish up with 800 homes if this came off. We should be getting this referred to a District Plan Review, in March 2005 and that was his intended mission at District/SADC.

In view of the high turn out of the residents the Chairman said he could not ignore the public feeling about this development and would adjourn the meeting in order to give those people attending a chance to air their views and have them minuted. He would ask the Clerk to note the comments made and resume again in 20 minutes so that members present could consider these important views in their overall decision on the application from Belgrave Homes.

Representatives of Smallford Residents association were present and were opposed to the development wishing to retain the semi rural aspect to the area, and claiming the Green Belt issues should prevail. Other disquiet ranged from increases in traffic, the road structure plans shown on the Developer plan proposal on public display. The Station Road Bridge was highlighted as an accident Black Spot, and if it was removed or re-structured to make safer, the replacement would open the route more to rat run or HGV exposure increasing the local problem. Some residents were concerned how their properties were in places where future planned road structures intruded or threatened the very existence of their homes. Complaints that some of the pre-view documents in circulation from the Developer were misleading in describing the local views, many people had feelings the concept of a Garden Village gave overtones Of a peaceful area, but in fact it would become a busy area dissected by new routes and at worst making the area almost an island development in parts creating future traffic bottlenecks.

The question of how the original glass house foot-print compared with the development proposals and what Belgrave Homes plans clearly show that density ratios were high per hectare, numbers of up to 35 per hectare on this prime 23 acre/hectare? site were suggested as a fait accompli and by various people. A resident claimed the land was a marshland, and had there been a detail study on the wildlife and fauna, the Chairman said that a survey document was included in the package we have received from SADC, he was not an expert but agreed that there could easily be omissions. The Clerk added that if the ground was marsh then residents should ensure that any past local nature records be examined carefully to see if they produced rare species such as the Greater Crested Newt which if found needs serious consideration about its habitat. Examine all old records amateur and professional was urged.

C.9

Continued

The number and position on the site of 40% affordable homes was genuine feeling by some residents and what this encompassed suggested some misgivings but an equal probable misunderstanding on the concept of what "affordable" means. There was indication that they would be positioned in the worst area on the site leaving the waterborne position for the higher priced homes. The amount of surface water run-off, was a valid comment from one resident, the Chairman said the Council had been deluged with a number of weighty documents, one of which might contain the examination to this issue.

A number of residents said the whole site was driven by a profit motive and that the net revenue to the developer could be as much as £15million, he agreed with Cllr Brazier that the whole issue needs greater examination to produce the right infrastructure and deliver a positive benefit to the area. Smallford was a pleasant area with a village post office, a typical semi rural scene that many wanted to see kept. The description of Garden Village and 315 homes was not conducive to this message. Geoff Hurst introduced himself to the meeting as Chair of the Smallford residents association, he too agreed that we are about to be delivered this multiple development which had produced so far very little consultation with local residents. Many of the statements contained in a document included in the developer package had misrepresented the opinions, or delivered inappropriate or embellished views. The overview was that this media was "grossly over padded" with a deluge of mis-statements. The fight is getting this included in the District Plan Review, especially as the ODPM recent media and future suggestions for housing in the s/east could easily include our area as part of that overall demand

The traffic issue needs a survey to ensure the correct figures are fully examined before any new road infrastructure is planned, the numbers do not stack up according to several residents. Cllr Brazier gave his estimates on the figures of up to 1600 additional vehicle movements at peak. A resident commented that the peak hour is now up to two hours long, with almost impossible congestion, at times backing to the A414 and joining the Colney Heath Longabout congestion making a north/south or opposite route almost impossible in under an hour for 5 miles, but still some people continue to persevere this route. In essence it was the general view that this is an ill conceived development, residents were serious about a campaign to get their views heard by SADC Development Control. Cllr Brazier said that no one should be under any misconception that we are bound to see increased development in this area, the pressure on land and all the usual reasons are clear. ODPM announced details frequently as we all know, this is the prelude to considerable development threat any where in Hertfordshire and beyond.

At this point the Clerk asked the Chair to resume the meeting and conclude the business of the member's decision regarding the development as notice was required 21 days after 11th January when we were served notice of the application. Members then debated the issue to resolve and recommend:-

The Parish Council Planning Committee oppose the Development for the following reasons-

1. Loss of the Green Belt
2. The extent of the Development in exceeding the footprint of the existing Greenhouses
3. The Environmental impact
4. Inadequacies in the area of sufficient or future Schooling both Primary and Secondary
5. No local health facilities provisioned
6. Adverse effect on road and infrastructure due to greatly increased traffic flow
7. The new development is remote from the City Centre where residents could be encouraged to use public transport, walk or cycle to St Albans destinations, leaving total reliance on cars inevitable for any journeys to the City.
8. We are of the opinion that this is a speculative Development aimed at attracting London commuters to move out into Hertfordshire in contravention of the HCC Structure Plan. It does not provide or meet the housing needs of the locality for which the Government target of "Predict and Provide" aims to do under the directive of the ODPM.

It is expected that this will be finally debated by all members at full council meeting of 3rd February

Several letters and e-mails were received at the meeting adding to the feelings of the Parishioners and residents attending, numbering some 45 in all.

John Dean
Clerk to the Council 31/01/05