Parish Council of Waresley-cum-Tetworth

Minutes of Special Planning meeting held on Thursday 19th October 2017, 8pm, Waresley Village Hall

Present: E Jack, J Lawson, J Archer, H Richardson, Richard Jerman
In attendance:, District Councillor R West, District Councillor B Boddington, Pamela and Ian Boon, David Morgan, Ian Jack, Chris Sparkes, Gilly Bakewell, Craig Safford, John Boddington, Phil Tiley, Sandra Gardner, Geraldine Fensome, Neil Howe, Stephanie and Malcolm Garden, Cherrill and Chris Skey, Margaret and Doug Scott. Plus 2.

Minutes taken by J Archer

120. Apologies for absence None received

121. Declaration of disclosable pecuniary interests – none.

122. The minutes of parish council meeting on 28 September 2017
Not read out as this is a special meeting

123. Open Forum
No Items raised

124. Planning: Consultation: Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) October 2017 – Section E Small Settlements with reasonable sustainability – Waresley

E Jack explained that Huntingdonshire District Council had launched a consultation on HELAA opportunities in the district. In Waresley, as well as some other local villages, potential sites had been identified. At this point these are not planning applications merely the identification of certain sites that, at some point in the future, could be put forward for planning consent. To view the full document follow this link - http://consult.huntingdonshire.gov.uk/portal/pp/helaa/helaa-10-2017 and search for 'Waresley'

Whilst the Parish Council will respond formally as the representative body in Waresley the consultation is open to all individuals. Response involves the use of an online questionnaire

Considerable discussion followed and may be summarised under the following headings:

1. Should Waresley have been considered for such a development as we do not qualify under the HDC definition a "Small settlement with reasonable sustainability"
This means it must have four of the following: a primary school, GP surgery, public hall, food shop and public house all available within the village. Since Waresley only has three at best we should not have been included.

There was unanimous agreement within the Parish Council and within the Parishioner group that we do not qualify and hence the site should not have been included in the consultation. However Councillor West warned that the key question was one of sustainability and HDC may be able to overrule such an objection if they wished. Nevertheless the Parish Council agreed to put forward this error as our first line of objection in our consultation response

2. The consultation envisages up to 36 houses could be built on this site - is this reasonable?

There was a view within the Parish Council that some new housing would be beneficial but that 36 houses would be wholly disproportionate particularly as the current housing stock is only 80 houses. There were similar views in the Parishioner group.
The Parish Council agreed to object on the grounds that the number of houses suggested would destroy the current character of the village. In addition it would also introduce an extensive source of light pollution which has been avoided to date.

3. The consultation assumes that access to the new site would follow the existing track - is this likely to be safe?

It is well known that the majority of accidents at the bend further to the west of this proposed access are due to excessive vehicle speeds. In addition, unless virtually all the trees were removed and the bank levelled, visibility would be poor. There was universal agreement that such an access point was unsafe and the Parish Council should include this observation in their response to the consultation

4. Is the proposed density of housing (around 12 per acre) appropriate

Waresley is a classic country village with small pockets of high density housing but with an overall feeling of space and expansive views. The position of such a large, ultra high density, site right in the middle of the village would destroy this feeling.

5. Part of this site is within the defined Conservation Area and all of it is outside the Village Limits. Is this appropriate?

The Parish Council are firmly of the view that the existence of the conservation area and the Village limits are primarily responsible for the current condition of our village environment. That view appeared to be widely shared by the Parishioner Group.
Not only would breaching both these previously sacrosanct conditions lead to an inappropriate development in the middle of the village it would also establish a precedent which is likely to unleash quite a number of similar requests. The parish Council will highlight this concern in our response

6. Further concerns.

There was some discussion in the Parish Council and in the Parishioner Group about the claim in the consultation document that this development would "reduce the need to travel" as it "within 400m of a bus stop" Whilst this is true, one bus a day is hardly a useful service and could not possibly reduce the need to travel. The Parish Council will point out this error in our response.
There was also concern raised that the proposal implied that 'The Avenue' is an accessible open space. It is a private woodland with no public access. The Parish Council will seek to correct this aspect in our response.

Action - E Jack to complete the online questionnaire reflecting the comments documented above

125. HELAA Sites outside the Parish

E Jack identified two further HELLA sites which might affect Waresley' They are:

- A site on Waresley Road adjacent to the Baldwins development in Great Gransden.
- The development at Abbotsley Golf Course where 1600 houses are envisaged.

Both were briefly discussed with a general feeling that the Waresley Road site would have access problems due to the width of the road and the idea that virtually a 'new town' of 1600 houses could be built so close to the planned 'Loves Farm 2' development was completely unsustainable. E Jack advised that she will look into these proposals more carefully before responding

The meeting closed at 21.45