

**Keswick and Intwood Parish Council Special Meeting on 26th September 2012.
Minutes of the Meeting held at the Reading Room, Keswick at 19.00.**

Meeting to consider: Planning Application 2012/1429.

Location: Land at Low Road, Keswick, Norfolk.

Proposal: Residential development (Use Class C3) of 9 dwellings including 2 affordable homes, landscaping, associated access onto Low Road, and associated carriageway works to Low Road; and provision of a village green space adjacent to the Keswick Parish Reading Room.

Present: Ruth Ripman (RR) (Chair); Brian Morrey (BM) Kevin Hanner (KH); Therese O Leary Jones (TJ) and Phillip Brooks (Clerk). Diana Bulman (DB) was co-opted to the Council.

Also Present: Garry Wheatley (GW) (Councillor Cringleford Ward) and Judith Virgo (County Councillor Humbleyard) (JV). Apologies were received from Christopher Kemp. Thirteen members of the public were also in attendance. Also in attendance was Matt Bartram (MB) (Heritage Developments).

Lord Dannatt (who appointed the Landscape Partnership in March 2011 to investigate development options for a site along Low Road) sent his apologies for being unable to attend but submitted his views by e-mail which were read to the meeting by the Clerk.

1. To consider apologies for absence: it was resolved to accept apologies from Tim Love and Linda Thursby.

2. To receive declaration of interests: RR declared that her husband is a partner with solicitors Mills and Reeve who represent the Gurney Estate. She reminded the meeting that the Monitoring Officer at South Norfolk Council did not consider this interest to be prejudicial.

3. Resolution to adjourn the meeting for public participation.

3.1 GW outlined the current situation regarding progress with the South Norfolk Local Plan and the Site Specific Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document. He also answered questions insofar as how this related to the proposed development boundary for Keswick to allow for limited infill development in accordance with Policy 16 of the Joint Core Strategy. MB presented the new plans to the meeting and answered questions put to him.

3.2 The Parish Council heard the views of residents and resolved to considered the Application in two parts:

- *Residential development of 9 dwellings including 2 affordable homes, landscaping, associated access onto Low Road, and associated carriageway works to Low Road.*
- *Provision of the Village Green Space adjacent to the Keswick Parish Reading Room*

4.0 Residential development of 9 dwellings including 2 affordable homes, landscaping, associated access onto Low Road, and associated carriageway works to Low Road.

The views of members of the public attending relating to this part of Application covered the following topic areas:

- the proposed implementation of Policy 16 which identifies Keswick as an “Other Village” is not deemed to be in accordance with the Joint Core Strategy (JCS) which determines that Keswick shall have a defined development boundary within which very limited infill building can occur without affecting the form and character of the village. The proposed nine dwellings at Fir Hill were argued by one resident to represent an increase of some 25 per cent in the number of properties within the defined boundary. It is believed that such an increase is in excess of what is reasonably described and understood as “very limited infill development”. A further point made in this regard is that being classified as an “Other Village” means that a small development is allowed plus infill building which are not the same things. In this context the Fir Hill development would be classed as a small development rather than “infill” thus allowing planning applications from residents wanting to build in their large gardens

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(In relation to detailed arguments presented by some members of the public, RR reminded everyone that Parish Councillors were not experts in planning legislation and that the Application would be considered by Councillors on its merits and impacts for the village rather than becoming overwhelmed by narrow or specific points of planning law.)

- the style of properties within the intended development does not accord with the form and character of the village. The majority of houses along Low Road have their front facing the road and are set back with good size gardens to the front and rear. The intended development is different. The semi-detached houses numbers 6, 7, 8 and 9 on the site plan face Low Road but the southern aspect means their back gardens face Low Road. Although these back gardens are hidden from view in summer by the deciduous hedge which it is intended to maintain, the view will be different during the winter months. Moreover, although the gardens to be provided are described as generous, they are not in keeping with existing properties. With most of the remaining detached houses located behind the front row of semi-detached properties, the intended building plan gives an overall impression of density which is totally different from the rest of the village
- the intended development will blight the vista by blocking off the desirable and pleasing view of Fir Hill currently enjoyed from that part of Low Road. This restriction of view undermines the landscape quality of the area
- the timing of the Application is considered inappropriate. The required response time to the Planning Department at South Norfolk Council makes it entirely possible that the Application could be considered at a Planning Committee meeting before the period of Consultation closes for the Site Specific Allocations and Policies Development Plan Document. Residents would much prefer the Application to have been considered after the final comments are received on the pieces of land that evidence shows are the most appropriate for future development
- traffic using Low Road continues to be an absolutely critical issue for residents and in this regard there is concern about the validity of the traffic volume figures used in the Planning Application. Residents seek assurance about the relevance of the times the

reported data was collected. They want to be sure it is representative and includes peak traffic periods including school term time when the road is especially busy. In the Parish Council's submission to the previous Planning Application 2012/0714, it was stated that parts of Low Road are positively dangerous, especially for pedestrians. This is not only the Council's view – an official at Norfolk Highways Department has expressed a similar opinion. Although Low Road is a 30 mph area it is patently obvious that the limited speed is regularly exceeded. This excess is confirmed in the *Design and Access Statement* submitted with the Planning Application where it is shown that 85% of speeds are 33.5 mph westbound through the Parish and 36.2 in an eastbound direction. Moreover, there have been several accidents recently as a result of speeding in the vicinity of the "S" bend near Low Farm where cars have been simply travelling too fast for drivers to properly negotiate the bends. Furthermore, heavy goods vehicles which are totally inappropriate to be using Low Road add to the problem. Evidence of this heavy goods use can be seen by the banks and verges damaged by their tyres. Previously the Parish Council said it was of the opinion that a condition for the approval of any significant residential development must include proposals for traffic calming which will be effective in reducing speeds to 30 mph through Keswick village and possibly even to 20 mph in the vicinity of the site. The vehicle activated speed device proposed in the revised planning application is not considered to be an adequate calming measure. Introducing a chicane or prioritised stretch of single line traffic would be more appropriate in securing the desired effect of reducing the speed of traffic close to the proposed development; and

- inextricably linked with the traffic situation is the safety of residents living in and around any development that takes place. The *Design and Access Statement* refers to access to the site being designed in consultation with and to Norfolk County Council highway standards. Combined with other references to safe vehicle movements and volumes, the document refers extensively to traffic issues but appears silent on the matter of pedestrian safety. Bearing in mind the location of the proposed site in relation to the "S" bend in the road, the adjacent access to Low Farm and the lack of pavements nearby, it is believed that no reference to ensuring the safety of pedestrians and other vulnerable road users is a significant omission.

4.1 At the conclusion of the public participation section of the meeting residents were asked for a "show of hands" to indicate their support or otherwise for the Application. This indicated that eleven people were against the proposal and two were reluctantly in favour (their reluctance being based on traffic related issues). The Clerk declared that of the nine responses from people who had been unable to attend the meeting six were against the proposal, one was in favour and two were against the proposal for traffic and highway related reasons.

4.2 Whilst it was recognised that the revised Planning Application met some of the concerns expressed in the Council's response dated 15th May 2012 to the previous Application 2012/0714, Councillors attending the meeting still had reservations about five issues which prevented them from approving the proposal in its present form. These were stated as being:

- first and foremost, the volume of traffic using Low Road – traffic has been an on-going problem within the Parish which has greatly influenced the thinking of Councillors in considering this Application. The volume of traffic using Low Road continues to increase. Moreover, it is now often used by drivers as a diversion for the

A 47 bypass, especially when traffic there is disrupted. The Vehicle Activated Speed Sign proposed in the Application is not considered adequate to remedy the situation

- consequent on the traffic situation is the safety of residents and other vulnerable road users - the Application documents refer extensively to traffic issues but appears mostly silent on the matter of pedestrian safety. Considering the location of the proposed site in relation to the “S” bend in the road, the adjacent access to Low Farm and the lack of pavements nearby, this omission needs to be addressed by the developers if the support of Councillors is to be secured
- the development not being in keeping with the area – the style and properties of the intended development do not accord with the form and character of the village
- the plan represents an over development – the increase in the number of properties in the area combined with the intended building plan gives an impression of density different from the rest of the village; and
- the Application is premature – Councillors would much prefer the Application to have been considered after the final Site Specific Allocations Consultation comments are received on the pieces of land that evidence shows are the most appropriate for future development.

(The Clerk told the meeting that TL had submitted his comments by e-mail which the Clerk read to the meeting. His comments were that he was against the Application but should it proceed he was of the opinion that adequate traffic calming measures in the form of chicanes or road narrowing strips must be in place before any building commenced. He also had the concern (shared by some other Councillors) that if this Application did not proceed the village could find something more disagreeable being imposed as part of South Norfolk Council having to meet government housing targets.)

4.3 In response to RR asking the five Councillors present to vote on the Application the following declarations were made:

- RR and BM were reluctant supporters of the new proposal but continued to have overriding concerns about the traffic and safety situation.
- KH, TJ and DB were against the proposal but recognised some possible benefits arising but would have much preferred the Application to have been considered after the Site Specific Allocations and Policies Consultation closed when the options for future development might be clearer. (In this regard Councillors recognised the need for more new housing to meet local targets but wondered whether this might be better and more agreeably met through separate individual infills rather than a single development such as was being proposed.) DB had a particular concern that the rural nature of the village would be spoiled by the intended development.

The vote was therefore lost by 3 votes to 2.

5.0 Provision of the Village Green Space adjacent to the Keswick Parish Reading Room

5.1 It was suggested to the meeting (by a member of the public) that the proposed inclusion of the village green space as part of the Planning Application was possibly a contravention of existing planning legislation. To be compliant it apparently needed to be shown that the village green space was:

- wanted
- necessary
- directly related to the development; and
- in scale and proportion to the development.

5.2 Resolution to adjourn the meeting for further public participation.

RR invited members of the public to comment on the proposal. This elicited the following comments:

- there are adequate play and recreation facilities at nearby Cringleford
- the car park facilities at the Reading Room would not be sufficient to support the village green facility (the new overflow car park was provided for users of the Reading Room and is already extensively used)
- with no pavements available from the Reading Room towards the Mulbarton Road, there would be obvious safety consideration for people walking towards the proposed green from that direction
- more important things were required in the village - typically better footpaths in the vicinity of the listed brick wall alongside Low Road and towards the bus shelter on the Mulbarton Road; and
- concern remained about what might happen after the ten year maintenance period provided by the Heritage Developments.

5.3 A further show of hands indicated unanimous rejection of that part of the Application relating to the proposal for a village green.

5.4 On the basis of this response Councillors resolved that it would be right to disconnect this part of the Application from the main development and for the village green (or any other subsidiary development related to the Application) to be treated as a separate entity. It was also resolved to undertake a consultation with all residents about the desirability or otherwise of creating a new recreation area in the Parish before considering the matter further.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 21.15.

*Phillip Brooks
Parish Clerk
1st October 2012*