

Rockland St Mary with Hellington Parish Council

Minutes of Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 1st March at 7.30pm in The Parish Room, Rockland St Mary

(Subject to amendment until signed by the Chair at the next meeting)

Parish Councillors present Joanne Norris, Jack Trutch, Janet Rogers, Juliette Harkin, Paul Francis
County Councillor Cllr N Stone and Cllr J Sayles – Apologies sent for absence
District Councillor Kay Mason-Billig – arrived at 20:23pm
Also in attendance Vic Thomson – apologies sent for absence
Members of the public (MOP) Charlotte Rust – Parish Clerk and Steve Gildersleeve – Caretaker
Twenty-Five

1. To receive and approve apologies for absence.

Approved.

2. To approve minutes of Parish meeting of 1st February 2023.

Approved.

3. To receive declarations of interest from Members & consider requests for dispensation.

Cllr J Trutch declared his interest for VCHAP site VCROC2.

4. Reports from:

4.1 District Councillor, Cllr Vic Thomson

The Clerk provided an overview of Cllr V Thomson's report and a copy will be added to the Parish Council website:

- SNDC agreed 2023/24 budget and have not increased the District Council Tax.
- Community Resilience Plan.
- Active Norfolk and Waveney (NoW) is a co-ordination centre for physical activity referrals from the NHS.
- Yours Sincerely project including a newsletter posted to community groups and individual residents throughout South Norfolk who have registered to receive the free newsletter.
- SNDC trying to be a 'Mindful District' by offering community groups and small businesses two types of free mental health training and support from our Help Hub, we will support towns and villages to achieve 'Mindful Town' or 'Mindful Village' status, with the tools to develop a community-led network of Wellbeing Champions.
- Town and Parish Forums.
- Warm rooms available.
- Garden Waste invoices arriving between 2nd-6th March.

4.2 County Councillor, Cllr Kay Mason-Billig.

- Norfolk County Deal – details on Norfolk County Website.
- County Council Tax increase of 4.99%.
- Grants available for events being held for the King's Coronation.
- SNDC will be holding a litter pick in 2023, details to follow.

4.3 Parish Clerk

Email management for March rolled over to April.

Letters posted regarding the Blackhorse Dyke Car Park parking issue and overgrown hedge/branches.

Further updates to the website.

Wherryman's Way meeting 24/03/23 – Cllr J Norris volunteered to attend. Clerk to forward the meeting log in details.

4.4 Cllr N Stone – Green Lane Playing Field and Rockland St Mary Primary School.

None.

4.5 Cllr J Trutch – Footpaths

None.

4.6 Cllr J Norris – Environment and wildlife matters.

None.

4.7 Cllr J Sayles and Steven Gildersleeve (SG), Caretaker – Blackhorse Dyke and Staithe Car Parks, defibrillators.

SG has been levelling out the gravel at Staithe Car Park.

SG waiting for confirmation regarding the fencing at Staithe Car Park. SG to update Parish Council.

Defibrillator – Power supply had been turned off, all rectified.

5. Adjournment for Public Participation (15 minutes allowed for). This provides an opportunity for members of the public to raise questions about and comment on items on the agenda before the Council make decisions.

Please see Appendix 1.

6. South Norfolk Village Clusters Plan (VCHAP).

Please see Appendix 1.

7. To discuss any plans for the King's Coronation, May 2023.

7.1 Coronation event at Black Horse Dyke – 7th May 2023.

Clerk informed Cllrs that there had been a request to close Blackhorse Dyke Car Park for this event. APPROVED.

The Parish Council has a list of volunteers who will be running this event and the Parish Council have sufficient Public Liability Insurance.

8. Planning:

8.1 To receive any new planning applications and make comment.

8.1.1 2023/0302 – Single storey extension to include garden room and pool spa.

No comments.

8.2 To receive the results and updates on any outstanding applications.

8.2.1 2022/1259 – Change of use and erection of two log cabins for child care business. Approved with conditions.

No comments.

9. Finance:

9.1 To note the bank balance.

RSMwH General - £12,049.01

RSM CIL - £3,457.22

Hellington CIL - £0.00

9.2 To note any receipts.

DATE	INCOME	TOTAL
23/02/23	Salvation Army – Jan 23	£20.36

9.3 To note any grants.

None.

9.4 To approve any payments of invoices and other expenses received since last meeting.

FOR APPROVAL						
	DATE	EXPENDITURE	PAYMENT METHOD	TOTAL	VAT	P/R NO
S Gildersleeve	01/02/23	February Invoice	BACS	£309.75	NIL	
C Rust	01/02/23	Clerk March expenses	BACS	£21.38	NIL	
NPTS	07/02/23	Clerk End of Year Finances Training	BACS	£30.00	NIL	

<u>TO NOTE PRE-APPROVED PAYMENTS</u>						
C Rust	28/02/23	Salary and WFH allowance - Feb	SO	£395.88		
C Rust	28/03/23	Salary and WFH allowance - Mar	SO	£395.88		

10. To discuss items to add to the agenda for next Parish Council meeting.

Annual Parish Meeting

Payments

11. Parishioners final word.

None.

12. To confirm next meeting on Wednesday 5th April 2023 at 7.30pm at The Parish Room, Rockland St Mary.

Confirmed.

The meeting closed at 20:55pm.

Appendix 1 – Overview of VCHAP discussions

The Clerk received correspondence from two parishioners via the contact form on the Parish Council website and one parishioner via letter. There were twenty-five parishioners present at the Parish Council meeting held on Wednesday 1st March.

For transparency, Cllr J Trutch declared his interest for VCHAP site VCROC2.

The Vice-Chair invited parishioners to put forward their comments. At this point, the Clerk asked all in attendance if they had any objections to her recording this part of the meeting to use for reference in collating responses. **NO OBJECTIONS MADE.**

What is the Parish Council's stance on the proposals?

Each councillor has their own personal view but the response submitted by the Parish Council will be based on the views of parishioners that have been recorded. Communications received so far had not favoured one site over the other, or indeed both sites. The concerns raised by parishioners so far fell into distinct categories, these being inadequate infrastructure, problems associated with increased traffic and the damage to an area of natural beauty.

Cllr K Mason-Billig strongly encouraged that all in attendance make their own personal submissions. The Clerk suggested creating a Facebook post, with commenting allowed, to assist parishioners make their submissions.

VC ROC1 – LAND SOUTH OF NEW INN HILL

Wildlife/Ecological Impact

The site is less than 350 metres from Hellington Nature Reserve and Rockland Broad. Rockland Broad is part of the Broads National Park and has internationally recognised environmental designations: Broadland Ramsar Sites, Broadland Special Protection Area and the Broads Special Area of Conservation. The site is within a 3km "buffer distance" to these. Rockland Broad is also a designated SSSI and is part of the Yare Broads and Marshes SSSI.

Site VCROC1 is very close to a self-designated wildlife conservation area. Of particular importance is that the site acts as a green buffer corridor between the denser housing of the main village and the much more loosely spread, small pockets of housing on the outskirts of the village. The area is popular with local and visiting birdwatchers and naturalists due to its wide variety of flora and fauna. Numerous animals' inhabitant this area including bats and Skylarks - a bird on the red list of globally threatened species - have continually nested since 2018 in this zone marked for development.

There has been a significant increase in visitors/tourists to this end of the village (since the Covid pandemic) which has not diminished. Any housing development (both during construction and after) would place further pressures on, and so displace, wildlife such as bat population and Skylarks, by depleting their food sources and from the negative impact of building and human intrusion on their habitats. Currently, the green space helps maintain the sense of an open, rural and tranquil landscape for both people and wildlife.

Heritage Impact Assessment/Listed Buildings

Concerns have been raised about the extent of the research done into the potential ecological damage caused by this development. Part of the site is immediately adjacent to three attractive Grade 2 listed buildings which can be seen from the footpaths to the side and from a distance. These historic buildings would no longer be visible if the site were to be developed. Their heritage significance, both architectural and historic, is inextricably linked to their rural and agricultural setting and would therefore be adversely affected if surrounded by a housing development. Being at the very top of a hill - "fairly prominent on a ridge", any development of the site would be seen for miles

around and be hugely detrimental to the existing landscape and open skylines in an area known for its natural, unspoilt beauty.

The Heritage Impact Assessment arranged by SNDC fails to comply with the NPPF, as there is no evidence SNDC have adequately assessed the heritage impact. E.G. Old Hall Barn was historically part of the Farmstead, and it is clear that this must keep the association of a listed building and its heritage (i.e. agricultural land that it was/is with). With the proposed site this would amputate the Old Hall Barn and Farmstead, significantly impacting its heritage. Furthermore, there is a covenant from the Land registry stating that no dwelling/housing to be built on that land.

An independent Heritage Impact Assessment undertaken by a resident appears to differ significantly to the SNDC expert assessment. SNDC appraisal is regarded by some as inadequate as failed to acknowledge a listed building (134a), all windows were looking inward to the farmyard but relates to 134a and not Old Hall Barn.

A footpath has been earmarked within 1m of the listed building which provides no safe access on road access proposed.

Road Safety

Road safety is compromised, there would be an increase of approx. 125 vehicular movements with the proposed 25 new houses (2.5 vehicles per property 62.5 vehicles). On a weekly basis 40% of vehicles leaving the village are travelling at greater than 30mph (as recorded by SAM2 in June 2022), 25% of vehicles entering the village are also travelling at greater than 30mph into the village and past Broadfields Way and the newly proposed access route.

NCC Highways has raised concerns about vehicular access and the need for suitable visibility splays – how can traffic volume along this single linear settlement be monitored. Residents have raised concerns about Highways monitoring and volume limits.

Rural Exceptional Site

As advised in 2021 the site is outside the development area, Eel Catcher Close was developed under Rural Exception Site, for social housing only, Eel Catcher Close was (is) an exception site and a public assurance was given of no further development here with two planning applications being refused since the site was built.

The NPPF states ‘developments should encourage villages to grow and thrive’ this development will stifle the village and destroy its character. The revised single scheme 1.47ha is more than the 1ha advised for small and medium villages.

When permission was granted under those terms, the Parish Council and its parishioners were given assurance at a public meeting that this would **not** set a precedent for further development of adjoining land.

PROW – Public Right of Way

The field boundary contains several mature oak trees which should be protected from any development. According to the map the footpath goes through the middle of the site. The field to the west (behind the Old Hall) will be inaccessible to agricultural vehicles. As advised in 2021 the site is outside the development area, Eel Catcher Close was developed under Rural Exception Site, for social housing only, Eel Catcher Close was (is) an exception site and a public assurance was given of no further development here with two planning applications being refused since the site was built. When permission was granted under those terms, the Parish Council and its parishioners were given assurance at a public meeting that this would **not** set a precedent for further development of adjoining land.

Footpaths

The site is over 1km from the GP and shop/post office facilities and over 1.5km from the primary school, so most people who live at this end of the village access these by car. Walking to school is via the existing footpath (much of which does not conform to current safe path widths alongside a busy road) on the opposite side of the road and

involves crossing 3 hazardous roads/junctions (New Inn Hill, Surlingham Lane corner and the junction with School Lane).

The Old Hall Barn is a listed building, the footpath would need to be a metre from the boundary. There is no benefit from introducing the footpath as it ends on the highway with the nearest footpath on the north side of the road, rendering the footpath useless.

Drainage and Sewage Systems

The drainage and sewage systems in the village are already under considerable stress and do not have the capacity to serve another 25 and certainly not 50 houses if both developments were to go ahead. Potentially not been replaced since 1980's and since then there has been an increase in housing.

Area

The revised single scheme 1.47ha is more than the 1ha advised for small and medium villages. The 1ha limit is what is set out in the NPPF Rural housing, Paragraph 69, (see A.7 in the site appraisal/Reg19 document) which highlights "the importance of small and medium sized sites up to 1 hectare in size".

Archaeological

Historic Environment Records should be consulted as within this zone there has been Medical pottery finds, found in 1995 at Eel Catcher Close. Also, various neolithic hand axe finds in this zone.

VC ROC2 – SOUTH OF THE STREET (BEHIND THE SURGERY)

Planning Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework states 'developments should encourage villages to grow and thrive', this development will stifle the village and destroy its character.

Vehicular Access

Volumes of traffic converge at this point, Between 10 and 30% of the vehicles entering and leaving the village travel at speeds greater than 30 mph (as recorded by Parish Council administered SAM2 data in 2022)

Flows increase at peak times of the day, including delivery vans to the shop, Post Office vans, the private Our Bus service, large school coaches, Langley School minibuses (at least 12 of these each day), refuse/recycle vehicles, very large farm vehicles along with commuter traffic. Although there is one footpath that runs through the village (rather narrow in places and on the opposite side of the road to the site) which provides a walking route to the primary school, it is necessary to cross the road at a particularly dangerous bend to get to the school. It is not possible to widen the access track to meet Type 6 Highway requirements. It is not clear where appropriate visibility splays can be positioned nor how Agricultural access can be maintained.

Concerns have been raised that the land/road is privately owned, it will be the landowners responsibility for the upkeep of the access route, including surfacing repairs.

Proposed new access between 24 and 26 The Street – Extend the footpath

Road safety is compromised. If both the VC ROC1 and VC ROC2 (2.5 vehicles per property) go ahead there will be a potential increase of 250 vehicle movements daily through the village. 125 along the preferred access road. Due to the linear design the village is already congested with on street parking all day in particular the area from the surgery and shop up to School Lane. The village is the route for Langley School minibuses (6) and there is a regular hourly bus service

The revised proposed access route between 24/26 The Street is 4.5-4.6 m wide. The width of a Type 6 road, recommended by NCC Highways experts is 5.8m. This is inline with the 1998 Norfolk residential design guide – a shared surface road should be 5.8m wide with a 1m surface margin, pavement 25mm high. As the track is flanked either side by housing it seems there is no scope to widen it to a Type 6 road. The properties either side have built onto their respective boundaries. Approaches by the developer in 2021 to sell land were declined.

The current Highways signage confirms there are bends for three quarters of a mile between the point where the proposed vehicle access joins The Street and up to School Lane. This whole section of The Street experiences on street parking all day from customers and delivery lorries to the various businesses, parishioners attending events, parents picking up and dropping off primary school children. There is a regular bus service and Langley School minibuses use this route daily.

Footpaths

Although there is one footpath that runs through the village (rather narrow in places and on the opposite side of the road to the site) which provides a walking route to the primary school, it is necessary to cross the road at a particularly dangerous bend to get to the school. It is not possible to widen the access track to meet type 6 Highway requirements. It is not clear where appropriate visibility splays can be positioned nor how Agricultural access can be achieved.

The suggested improved footpath to No 34 is not achievable. There is no verge to allow for a footpath which would cut through a privately owned, third party, spring fed pond and the highway. In addition, there are two telegraph poles and a NCC Highway warning sign to negotiate.

Ecological impacts

Along the boundary of the site (behind the houses and GP surgery) is an extensive wildlife 'run'. The hedgerow, wildflowers and vegetation that grow quite densely along this boundary provide a safe haven for a variety of animals- including hedgehogs, deer, foxes, and birds. The tree and hedge line along much of this boundary also provide a good screen to hide the houses when the area is viewed from the much-used walks further back.

Potential for increased flood risk from surface water flooding and higher run off levels into Hellington Beck. Increased ecological pressure on Hellington Nature Reserve and the orchid field (less than 8 sites within South Norfolk) adjacent to the reserve.

Assuming deep excavation needed with this development the run off would lead straight into orchid site.

Listed Building

Site covers areas of archaeological and historic environment interest (crop marks, ring ditches).

There is a listed traditional Thatched house building on School Lane.

Drainage and Sewage

The drainage and sewage systems in the village are already under considerable stress and do not have the capacity to serve another 25 and certainly not 50 houses if both developments were to go ahead

OUTSTANDING/UNANSWERED POINTS

- 'Amber' flags regarding Highways and Heritage/Landscape/Visual landscape concerns raised during HELAA/site survey have not been resolved satisfactorily.

- The developments will result in a significant vehicular impact across the whole village.
- The proposals are in conflict with the stated Objective 3 of the South Norfolk Village Cluster plan which is to “Protect the character of their villages and settings” – which are a natural asset for the County.
- The proposals for Rockland St Mary provide no evidence of or commitment to affordable or social housing, as per Annex 2 of the NPPF.