

FORTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of informal planning Meeting Held Tuesday 12 May 2015

PRESENT: Councillors: S Tomkinson (Chair), D Toon (Vice Chair)
2 members of the public

Carol Little (Clerk)

1. **Apologies for Absence:** M Smith, Peter Hammond, D. Carver

As the meeting was called ahead of the next scheduled meeting the absence of other councillors and their apologies it was accepted that they were likely to be away. Although there was not a quorum the Chairman decided that an informal meeting should take place and welcomed the members of the public to the meeting.

2. The clerk confirmed that Councillor Smith had called in the plans and it was agreed that she would contact the planning officer the next day to request an extension for our comments.

The Chairman advised that the purpose of the meeting was to formulate a response to Planning Application 15/22374/FUL at land off Sutton Lane and Guild Lane, Aqualate also referred to as Elephant House. It was decided that points would be logged, shared with other Councillors and another meeting be called ahead of the deadline. The Chairman referred to an email from Cllr Smith explaining that this application is a paragraph 55 application, the first of its kind in the Borough. He also made it clear that comments should refer to the plans only not personal views or preferences.

In looking at the criteria for paragraph 55 applications the following observations were made.

- This did not appear to be an isolated location. The land is on the periphery of the village adjacent to a resident's farmland.
- 5 residents in Lower Sutton had already approached Councillors to express their concerns about the scale of the project and the incompatibility of the design with the location.
- Councillor Toon explained that whilst plans are available to view on line, actually locating them through the search engine was problematic and did not allow access with ease. Despite being familiar with the location he had found it difficult.
- Councillor Toon explained that he had already spent several hours looking into this proposal and explained that the Birmingham School of Architecture were involved and, in the absence of being able to speak to the council they had contacted MADE (an organisation dedicated to improving the quality of our towns, cities and villages) who have advised them to adhere to the required criteria and given them points to consider and constructive criticism. Reference was made to the projected energy performance, solar panels and the use of elephant grass.
- The plans referred to the design being along the Roman road and referring to the preservation of a large oak tree. It was pointed out that the tree is in fact half dead already.
- The plans illustrated how specific extensive planting would form part of the development. It was observed that the extent of such growth would take years to

achieve. The plans also referred to the planting of miscanthus grass to enable a carbon neutral project. It was felt that this was at odds with the planned garaging for 4 luxury cars.

- It was observed that the client pursuing this venture had 2 previous planning applications granted which had not been pursued despite being renewed.
- It was also felt that building on the Sutton Sump would be questionable with the potential problems arising with water, particularly in the winter.
- Whilst conscious of the need for a 'Grand Design' it was felt that the structure was not in keeping with the traditional styles in the village and the visual impact of this very modern house was therefore of great concern. It was agreed that the house could have still achieved it's carbon neutral goals in a more sympathetic style.
- The drawings do not reflect accurately that the plot is in the middle of a flat site with just one tree.
- The proposal to create a haven for wildlife was not new to the area. A local farmer grows a crop of organic wheat each year and an acre of land is left for wildlife attracting owls and deer.

The meeting was closed at 7:50

12. Dates of Future Meetings 2015 - 4th August 2015, 17th November 2015.

The meeting was closed by the Chairman at 20:55 pm