

FLORE PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE PARISH COUNCIL HELD IN THE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH SCHOOLROOM ON 29th JUNE 2022 at 7.30 pm

PRESENT: Councillors: Mr Andy Anderson, Mrs Kathryn Baines, Mr Kevin Beasley, Miss Freya Davies,
Mr Geoff Fellows, Mr Tom Higginson, Mr Simon Levell, Mrs Chris Littlewood
Unitary Cllr Mr Charles Morton
11 Members of the public

Acceptance of Apologies for absence: Cllrs Mr Geoff Holden, Mr John Thomason
Unitary Councillor Mr Phil Bignell

825.0 **Declarations of Interest under the Council's Code of Conduct, regarding business tabled for discussion.** No declarations declared.

826.0 **Public Forum:** Everyone present had come to speak about the planning application. Concerns were expressed about: lack of infrastructure for the village having another 45 properties, sewerage, development outside of our Plan, the green space being left could be built on after this proposed development is built, smells from the attenuation basin, play area close to existing properties, application littered with errors and inaccuracies, land slopes and views are spoilt, wildlife existing on the current land, inappropriate development and the possibility that it will set a precedent for more development, if it gets the go ahead.
Chair thanked all for coming along and advised them to write directly to the planning officer, the more objections noted, the better.

827.0 **PLANNING**

Application: DA/2020/0479. Land to the east of Brington Road. Outline planning application of up to 45 dwellings, to include 40% affordable dwellings (7 one bed homes, 5 two bed homes and 6 three bed homes), infrastructure and open space. (All matters reserved other than access). Amended description.
DA/2020/0479: Land to the east of Brington Road Flore.

This application deviates only in detail and numbers from the last submission by the developer and Flore Parish Council's objections remain equally strong and pertinent: it does not accord with planning policy in both the Flore Neighbourhood Plan (Made September 2016) and the adopted Daventry Settlements and Countryside Plan (Part 2) 2011-2029 (Adopted February 2020). There also remain further grounds for objection in addition to clear, and overarching, policy grounds.

1. The Flore Neighbourhood Development Plan

The Flore Plan, which was Made in 2016, is an integral part of the planning process. The Plan, which has a very high level of community support, through policy F2 – scale and type of new development – established a development area boundary for the village which, through a revision made in the Settlements and Countryside Plan, now includes the two latest housing developments, both completed in the last four years. This application is located entirely outside the development area boundary and is therefore contrary to policy F2. Furthermore, the application is contrary to policy F4 – affordable housing and rural exception sites – as it comprises 45 dwellings with some affordable housing.

The recent history of development within the village is also a material consideration as a consequence of cumulative impact. The village has recently had two major residential developments, DA/2014/0454 on land off Brockhall Road and DA/2013/0703, which is the recently completed Bovis homes development off the High Street. These two developments added 97 new houses to the village, which increased its size by nearly 18.5%, which is a considerable addition to any community. It was as a consequence of these two applications and the potential continued outward extension of the village that the Flore Plan actively sought to encourage new development within the Flore Development Area boundary: there will be such a development on the site of the demolished garage on the High Street of a further 10 dwellings which will raise the increase in size to almost 20%. The addition of a further 45 dwellings would bring an increase in six years to 28%; this cumulative effect has been relevant in recent appeal cases.

Furthermore, a recent High Court ruling (in favour of East Cambridgeshire District Council) gives added weight to the importance of adherence to Neighbourhood Plan policies (see our previous letter of objection to the earlier application by this developer in 2020).

2. DDC Settlements and Countryside Local Plan (Part 2) 2011-2029 (Adopted February 2020)

This is a key planning policy document that reinforces the made Flore Plan and its planning policies. It has also recently been adopted which gives the Plan considerable weight.

Vision and Objectives

As a starting point it is important to consider the Plan's vision and objectives which all of its policies underpin and support. A key aspect of the Plan's vision is for new development to be focused on the town of Daventry and that rural areas will support a network of vibrant communities. Villages will retain their local distinctiveness and character.

Objective 9 (housing) of the Plan states that housing will be focused at the most sustainable location of Daventry with limited development in the rural areas to provide for local needs and support local services. Both the vision and objectives are compelling. The most sustainable areas to build within the district are within the town of Daventry which has the capacity and infrastructure to accommodate significant areas of housing development. Any development in the rural areas is less sustainable and prejudices the vision and objectives of DDC/WNC to focus development in the town of Daventry.

Housing in Rural Areas

The Flore Plan closely follows the development principles set out in the DDC Local Plan chapter 5. This chapter places strict limitations on further development in rural areas on the basis that the overall spatial strategy for the district is to direct greater levels of growth to Daventry town. This end will be undermined for as long as developers can exploit greenfield sites on the perimeter of villages where construction is easier, sales easier to achieve and profits potentially higher.

Paragraph 5.1.03 makes the clear point that the requirement for the rural areas has been exceeded as at 1st April 2019 with 10 years of the Plan remaining. This is completely at odds with the developer's misleading assertion that the Flore Plan is out of date by implying that the Daventry area has less than 5 years of forward housing allocations.

Secondary Service Villages

Flore is designated a secondary service village in the Settlements and Countryside Local Plan (policy RA2). In reference to such villages the Plan states that there is no justification for further allocations of housing, and development should be within the confines of the village as defined on the inset map in the Plan – this application clearly is located outside of the inset map boundary.

Moreover, since the adoption of the Local Plan the village has lost several of the facilities which justified the designation, including the garage (petrol station, workshop and shop), the hairdressers, the farm shop and the café, as well as one of its public houses not long prior. There is only one remaining small general convenience shop, one public house and a small specialist retailer serving a small percentage of the local population. The remaining facilities have not been changed for decades, despite the increase in population - the village hall is small and has no parking, the Scout hut is extremely small and unsuitable, the playing field pavilion is now inadequate. There is a need for additional sporting facilities, both indoor (which would require a new building) and outdoor, to meet the demands of the increased population. The school is small and has little or no room for further expansion, and the dentist and doctors in Weedon who serve the village are fully subscribed.

Housing Needs Survey

Although this scheme's housing mix includes a stated allocation of affordable properties based on the result of the recent housing needs survey, it cannot allocate those properties on the basis of individuals or their ability to afford that property – the survey is a snapshot in time and its results should be regarded as useful for the direction of future policy rather than a literal instruction of what to build now. There have been many units included in the two recent major developments in the village, and others will be included in the proposal to develop the garage site (if this goes ahead), which meet the criteria of need for many of the respondents to the survey (with the exception of bungalows) but which have largely been purchased or rented by people from outside the village, in all probability given many are not actually that 'affordable' – and of course the introduction of many new households to the village will generate further demand, so the need is insatiable. Unless it is accepted that villages need to retain a separate identity, and have housing development appropriate to local need, the potential for covering the whole of the countryside with houses is infinite. Flore is on a good bus route giving easy sustainable connection to both Daventry and Northampton so family links would not be too constrained if housing need was met in the urban areas.

Other grounds for objection

Despite the clear and overwhelming policy justification that means that this an application which should be refused, there are a number of detailed issues which we wish to bring to your attention:

i) Highway Issues: The proposed access to the development is off the Brington Road. This is a narrow country road with no footpath and relatively high vehicle use providing access to villages to the north from Junction 16 of the M1 and from the Weedon crossroads. It's straightness encourages high speeds (it is 60mph national speed limit virtually to the junction with the High Street) and it is inappropriate to introduce access to a substantial housing estate there. The location of the access into the site itself is severely constrained by both the width of the Brington Road and the close, and visually compromised, proximity of its junction with the High Street. This access would be used during construction works for the delivery of machinery and all materials in a situation which will be substandard and unsafe. The layout has shows a footpath from the site entrance alongside the road to the High Street but installation would require the removal of a considerable length of important trees and hedging that form a mature green corridor to accommodate a suitable width of path in the existing steep bank.

ii) Site Location: The proposed site is a field which, although close to the village boundary, is separated from any village property or street and will effectively be an isolated suburb whose major appeal will be its proximity to the M1 and external road travel links rather than the presence of a local shop - this cannot be commensurate with sustainable development intentions of National and Local Plan policies. It will be difficult to achieve any community cohesion due to the site's remoteness from community facilities, while the site layout is a standard suburban type of arrangement which fails to reference its village context, as set out in the Flore Village Design Statement. The layout and design proposals submitted so far show little evidence of pursuing the national Government's desire to make beauty a fundamental part of the approval requirements.

iii) Drainage: There is an assumption that the surface water outfall will be to existing drains running down Bliss Lane and thereby to the river. These drains are not adopted and of unknown ownership – responsibility for them may fall to riparian owners who have not been consulted. The condition is unknown and this proposal is of serious concern to the village flood warden. We have well documented record of periods when the village hall has been flooded by run-off from the highway as the result of inadequacy of a similar drain. It is not appropriate to consider this issue **after** the principle of a development has been approved, it needs to be addressed at this stage.

iv) Archaeology: Local knowledge of the site is that historically it used to be the village tip and possibly a burial ground for those in the community who could not be buried within the churchyard, hence its name of Bedlam Pit. This aspect too should be considered at pre-planning stage as its impact could be significant.

v) Ecology: The Parish Council fully support the views of Paul Minton, a resident, who has previously objected to the original proposal with a detailed analysis and followed up with further comment in response to the last submission. In addition, the extant proposal to cover a substantial acreage of significant landscape and amenity value countryside (over 80 hectares) in the parish and near to the village with solar panels will incur the loss of even more agricultural land which is likely to become increasingly in demand in the future when the country seeks to feed a growing population in a sustainable way. This solar farm is also very close to this site, and if both it and this proposal were to go ahead, they would seriously impinge on the close rural environment of the village and its setting.

vi) Density: this proposal is for 45 dwellings in the area south of the pipeline which is 10 more than the previous submission. This is a significant increase in density. However, the density indicated in the planning statement of c15.5 dph seems to be based on the total site area including the land to the north of the pipeline. This land north of the pipeline should therefore be designated as public open space or other communal facility. The Planning Statement should be amended to make this clear. Furthermore, the impact of this increased density of the built area is not taken into account of, for instance, in environmental and landscape proposal revision. The supporting material for the application should be amended accordingly.

Conclusion

This Application clearly fails to meet Policy and therefore should be refused. Additional development in a village that has seen considerable expansion in recent years prejudices the aims of DDC to focus development in Daventry. In addition, there are a number of detailed issues that the Parish Council and villagers who have written to you, wish to bring to your attention.

Some of these, such as highways and drainage, are fundamentally important to assess at this stage and **not** as reserved matters. **If the Council were to approve this application the precedent would be catastrophic for the success of Daventry District Council's recently adopted Local Plan and the Flore Neighbourhood Plan.** It would result in serious harm to the character and form of the village, which would have to be compensated for by significant S106 or equivalent mitigation measures, in which case we would like to bring forward our aspirations for inclusion in any S106 agreement to mitigate, but not fully compensate for, the impacts of the proposal:

High Street Traffic Calming

The Parish Council together with Officers of WNC have been developing measures to both reduce the speed of traffic through the village as well as deterring HGV traffic, which despite the opening of the bypass, remains a significant issue for residents, particularly those fronting the High Street. Given the boundary of the site directly onto the High Street this will be an issue of importance to future residents of this scheme. The legal agreement for the Bovis Homes development provided funds (circa £158,000) which are being used to support the first phase of the High Street calming. Future phases are required, and the Parish Council would expect a similar sum to be provided to enable these to be delivered.

Linear Village Green

The application site is remote from the centre of the village. It would be appropriate to reduce this isolation through the development of the linear village green that could help to knit this site into the fabric of the village and mitigate to some degree, it's isolation. Funding could enable better pedestrian connectivity, landscaping and amenities.

Outdoor play and recreation

Measures to improve the range and quality of outdoor sports and recreation both on and off-site should be promoted.

However, by no measure should these issues be used to form any justification for supporting this proposal

Date of next meetings:

26th July – in URC (due to Clerk's holiday)

13th September – in URC (change to 2nd Tuesday in month)