

**Notes of the Public Meeting held in the Sancroft Hall, Fressingfield
on Tuesday 18 November 2014
to inform residents about a possible planning proposal for the development of land
near School Lane**

The meeting was chaired by Prue Rush, Chairman of Fressingfield Parish Council

In Attendance: District Councillor Marilyn Curran; Philip Isbell, Corporate Planning Manager MSDC & Babergh DC; Julie Abbey-Taylor, Strategic Housing Officer MSDC & Babergh DC; Peter Davidson, representing the land-owners; Carol A Smy (Clerk)

89 members of the public

14.1 The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and expressed the wish that it would be conducted in a respectful and open manner.

14.2 Peter Davidson, representing the owners of the piece of land in question (the Wilson family) explained he was presenting the proposal as the Baptist Chapel wished to build a new place of worship on a part of the land at issue. The land extended to 2.7 acres. The Chapel wished to purchase a plot of land somewhere in the village to build a new chapel, car park and play area. The chapel building would be so constructed as to provide for wider use and would have auditorium space plus meeting rooms and activity space. The current chapel was a listed building but was now too small for the various activities and could not comply with full disability access. This would be a modern, fully functioning building that could be used by the school for various activities that the school building could not accommodate. The car park would be used by the congregation for part of the time only and would be made available to the school for parents to use at the start and end of the school day thus removing traffic and congestion from Stradbroke Road. The Play Area would be modern and accessible. The Chapel would be prepared to take over the management and maintenance of the footpath leading to the school. The land left over from this proposed project could accommodate up to 18 houses.

14.3 Questions were invited from the floor:

1. a safety issue was raised over open access to the footpath
fencing would provide added safety for the school
2. concern was raised about open access
access to the school could be controlled. The footpath would provide a safe route for pedestrians between New Street and Stradbroke Road
3. 18 houses would lead to more cars using School Lane for access thus causing more traffic and danger and it was stated the residents of these houses would not drive with due care and attention with regards to the school and other near-by residents
This was deemed disingenuous as new residents were no less likely to have regard to the school children than others
4. It was stated that the designation of the land in question had been queried twice and a response had not been received
PI responded that the land was outside the settlement boundary and was, therefore, countryside
5. It was stated that the designation of the land affected its value
*PI stated that countryside affected possible development. Another Local Plan would not be produced as per the last one (1998) but residents had to consider what development they wished to see and what were they prepared to live with bearing in mind the need for new homes. The District Council was required to hold 5 years' supply of land (which it just about had) without which the presumption would be to grant planning permission for suitable applications. Residents must look to growth to support the village in the future and the consequences of growth versus stagnation must be addressed
JA-T stated the piece of land in question had the potential to be an exception site. The last exception site in the village, Post Mill Lane, was greatly over-subscribed by those with a direct connection to Fressingfield so a need had been clearly demonstrated. There were cross-subsidies to support affordable housing and there was a need for smaller affordable homes of various types*
6. Why was land being taken from the school?
*Mark Taylor, Head of Fressingfield Primary School explained that the footpath would not encroach upon the school's estate but the school would no longer bear an insurance liability to those using the path.
PD explained that a plan for a footpath had not been laid out, as yet, but the suggestion had been put forward that the Chapel would bear the cost of fencing and making the area secure and would maintain a path which, in addition to giving secure access to the school, would provide a safe walkway between Stradbroke Road and New Street.*
7. Had any other proposals been received or were there any other sites that could be developed within the village?
Nothing had been proposed officially either to the Parish Council or MSDC. Several land bids had been submitted in the past.
8. Before taking this proposal forward why could not residents have the opportunity to see all possible proposals at the same time so they could be judged against each other?
It was explained that for development proposals to be considered the land owners had to come forward with such a proposal first and this had not happened to date.

9. If a Neighbourhood Plan were to be completed for the village then development could be controlled so was this part of the PC's planning?

A Neighbourhood Plan was considered too expensive, currently, in terms of time, money and labour. It remained to be seen what the next Parish Council might wish to do.

10. Was there other access to the land in question? The questioner understood there was a 'ransom strip'

There was no other access and no 'ransom strip' existed.

11. If this plan were to proceed there was danger from new traffic; current users of School Lane and its surrounds were very aware of children. Construction traffic would equal danger. New residents would not give thought to children. The emergency services would not be able to have ease of access.

Another member of the audience stated it was spurious to presume new residents would not demonstrate care and attention. Yet another stated he worked with children and young people and the possible changed footpath would be far safer for them and other pedestrians and the proposed enhanced Chapel building would offer something of benefit for all children and young people in the village.

It was stated that traffic calming and speed restrictions were a matter for Suffolk County Council and the Parish Council had only a degree of input and influence.

12. It was stated from the floor that this proposal would bring large amounts of traffic from Stradbroke Road into School Lane.

Previous response refers

13. Concern was raised about a 'piece of woodland' that was important to the villagers who lived by it.

Protected species would be affected.

It was stated that the land had been cleared. It was stressed, again, the piece of land at issue was in private hands; it did not belong to the Parish, District or County Council.

14. Had an ecological survey been undertaken? Habitat had been taken away so a survey would not give a true result.

Such surveys would not be done until a planning application had been submitted. These were undertaken at times specific to the species to be monitored.

15. One member of the audience stated that without new housing 20 years ago he would not be able to live in Fressingfield and without more building his children would not be able to live in the village they grew up in and people must think less about their views and more about the young people who could not afford to live in their home village.

16. Another said he had been waiting for 10 years for a home and would love to see more affordable housing in the village.

17. Concern was raised about the suitability of the site.

18. What would happen to the existing Chapel building and Play Area if these plans went ahead?

The Chapel was a listed building and would be left, hopefully to be used for something beneficial but the Trust deed regulated what could and could not be done. The current Play Area needed a deal of work; this was not meant to denigrate the sterling work undertaken by those in the village who had taken on the task of maintaining it.

19. Concern was raised about infrastructure, particularly the effect on the Medical Centre.

More money would be available to the Medical Centre if there were more patients. And the school roll needed to be maintained and increased if it was to continue to thrive.

20. One person asked if a new Chapel had to be built on this particular site and followed this by an extremely offensive remark and a response was, therefore, deemed unnecessary.

MC reiterated that it must be remembered that a need for housing in the village had been demonstrated. 65 people applied for the 13 houses at Post Mill Lane.

JA-T stated that plans had to meet strategic needs

21. What would happen now?

PI stated that a planning application would be dealt with if it were to come in. Consultation would take place with the Parish Council. Views of residents would be considered if they were submitted to MSDC's Planning Department.

There was the right to speak at the District Council Planning Committee meeting, should an application be made. It was noted that Cllr Curran would not sit on any Planning Committee meeting that debated an application in her area.

The meeting closed at 19.35hrs.

C A Smy

**Carol A Smy MILCM
Clerk to the Council**

24 November 2014