

**Thorpe St Andrew Town Council
Minutes of the Plans Committee meeting held on
12 December 2016 at 7.30pm**

- 1 Present:**
Mr J Fisher (Chairman)
Mr F Bowe Mr P Berry Mr J Emsell Mrs J Fisher
Miss S Lawn Mr R Robson

Apologies:
Mr N Hancock Mr M Pickess

In attendance:
Mr T Foreman (Town Clerk) Dawn Matthews (Committee Officer)

Also present were
Mr M Johnson and Ms S Simpson – Agents for application 20161896
19 members of the public – for application 20161896

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST IN ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

There were no declarations made

3 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2016 were agreed and signed as a true record.

4 PLANNING ITEMS RAISED BY RESIDENTS

A number of members of the public expressed an interest in speaking and the Chairman outlined the procedure to be followed. The following representations were then made in respect of application 20161896:

Mr M Johnson, agent for the application, outlined the application stating that the vision was to deliver a beautiful development in a woodland setting. As part of the proposal, an area of 160 acres of woodland currently in private ownership, and used in part for commercial purposes, would be made available for public access and transferred to a community trust for future management. The proposal would enhance the existing woodland which did not have formal public access and was not in the best of condition. The development was a scaled down proposal from that previously submitted and was in outline form with detailed matters to be determined. The proposals would be exemplary and would comply with the planning authority policies. Much public consultation had been carried out and the majority of people attending these events had indicated their support for the proposals and letters of support had been received.

Ms S Simpson, transport/highways advisor for the application, made reference to the concerns which had been raised about infrastructure associated with the development. She outlined proposals to deal with access arrangements associated with the development which had been prepared in consultation with tree experts to minimise the impact of infrastructure provision on trees. The “Trodd” was mentioned as a key means of access which it was proposed would be enhanced to provide

pedestrian and cycle access. The proposals would enhance the existing access routes to local schools, would enhance waiting areas for bus transport and would include appropriate provision for car parking for residents and visitors of the woodland. She concluded that the infrastructure proposed would be good quality, well designed and useful.

Mr Johnson and Miss Simpson then answered questions from Town Council Members and the Clerk. They confirmed that 2 or 3 letters of support had been received. They were asked in particular to comment on the proposed arrangements for future management and funding of the woodland as there was much uncertainty about these arrangements. They commented that, following the initial provision of infrastructure within the woodland area, such as paths, gates, fencing etc. which would be funded by the developers, the ongoing management would fall to an appointed community trust using funds derived from a service charge levied on the properties within the development. The charges had been tested and there would be sufficient funds to manage the site. Members of the Town Council pressed this matter further with the agents as they were very concerned that there would not be sufficient funds forthcoming to ensure the future maintenance of the woodland. The agents stated that they could not give an estimate of the likely income from the service charge or the costs of management as these were still being worked up and were dependent on a number of factors still to be determined. They did confirm that the service charges would not apply to the units of affordable housing. Members of the Town Council reminded the agents that these concerns had been raised with them before and yet they had not come to the meeting with any clear information about the viability of funding the woodland management into the future. There were grave concerns that there would not be sufficient funds to achieve the long-term management of the woodland and there did not appear to be any alternative arrangements should the service charges not produce sufficient funding. They were also concerned about the level of service charge which might have to be applied to raise sufficient funds and the difficulties this could cause occupiers. The agents stated that the level of service charge needed would be dependent on the extent to which the infrastructure such as highways and public rights of way were adopted by the highway authority and it was therefore not possible to quantify the service charge at this point. Members of the Town Council commented that it should have been possible in any event to estimate the likely costs of management of the woodland by comparison with other public woodland areas. A comment was made that the principal of securing a woodland area for community use was to be welcomed but there were too many issues still unclear with regard to this situation. Concern was also raised about the fact that the current proposal related to a smaller portion of the whole area of land previously put forward for development and could potentially lead to more houses being built on the two smaller areas than was originally being considered for the whole area. The other area of land, which it was believed had now been put forward as a potential option for future development, was held by different owners to the land the subject of the current application.

Mr T Catmull – commented that he had in the past been opposed to proposals for the Oasis development but in this instance he felt he could support the development as he welcomed the opportunity for the local community to secure future use of the woodland. Development was necessary to enable communities to grow. He had attended some of the consultation meetings held by the applicants to which those with

concerns had been invited to attend to discuss their concerns but he had not been aware of any opposition. He recollected that at one of the meetings there had been mention of a potential service charge of £300 per annum per household which would raise in the region of £60,000 per year for the management trust which, if the necessary infrastructure was in place prior to transfer to the management trust, seemed reasonable. He did however take on board the lack of information available that evening from the applicants and understood the Town Council's concerns. Members of the Town Council stressed the need for the proposals to be viable to avoid a situation in the future where responsibility for funding the management of the woodland fell to the Town Council/local community.

Mrs M George – as a member of the Friends of Thorpe Woodland urged the Town Council to oppose the development. This was the largest area of woodland in the greater Norwich area and a designated County Wildlife Site. The 300 houses were not needed and the provision of formal public access was not worth the loss of 25 acres of outstanding woodland. The building of one house would have an unmeasurably devastating effect on the wildlife in the area. She commented that there had been overwhelming opposition to the development in the past and the latest sweeteners of a reduced scale development and the offer of the public accessible woodland did not negate the impact of the proposal on the woodland as a whole. The woodland needed to be preserved in its present condition.

Mr D George – raised concerns about the impact of the development on the area in terms of the increased number of cars and their impact on the already busy road network which would not be negated by the NDR as it was local traffic. He also referred to the impact of the development on local facilities such as the doctors and the schools which could not cope with an increase in demand.

Mr Bourne – raised concerns about the impact of 300 houses in the middle of the woodland. He had enjoyed the woodland all his life and disagreed with the applicant's comment that the woodland was not in the best of condition. He felt the woodland would be destroyed if it was broken up by the development and did not agree that the woodland would deteriorate if not enhanced by the proposed development.

Ms Leeds – urged the Town Council to reject the proposals, stating that the woodland was a wonderful green space on the edge of Norwich which was particularly special because of its size. It was a haven for wildlife and the proposed development would harm and undermine the quality and ecological value of the whole area. There was no need for development in this location as enough land had been identified elsewhere and the local community had consistently opposed this development over the years.

Mr Beckett – commented that the Friends of Thorpe Woodland had contacted its members to ascertain their views and over 600 had responded to an online survey expressing objections to the proposals. (a copy of these was handed to the Town Council). As a County Wildlife Site, the woodland had strong value despite claims to the contrary by the developer and the development would undermine the value of the area and the habitat. As new developments took place in the surrounding area, the value of the woodland increased. The woodland needed to be managed in its entirety.

Mr Abbott – raised concerns at the incompetence of the applicants in not being able to answer fundamental questions about the costings associated with the proposals. He also raised concerns about the potential future use of the land and was advised that

the applicants had included provision within their proposals to prevent further future development of the site within their ownership.

Ms L Beckett – stated that she had been using the woodland all her life and that public access had never been discouraged. The woodland had a huge educational value for local children and this value was worth more than any development.

Sprowston Resident – a resident from Sprowston commented that the scale of development going on in the area surrounding was such that the value of the woodland as a green space was increasing all the time.

Mr E King – on behalf of young people, acknowledged the importance of building more houses but said that this was not the right place for development. The woodland had existed for many more years than the current population and needed to be protected for the future. The proposals would not enhance the woodland or enrich the area as claimed and the sole reason for the development was purely financial.

In response to a member of the public's comment about the accessibility of the meeting to the local community in terms of publicity and lack of microphones, the Chairman reminded those present that Town Council meetings were scheduled each month and advertised. The Town Council was a consultee in respect of this application and that it would be for Broadland District Council to determine the application. He urged all members of the public to make their representations to the District Council.

5 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

- (i) REF: 20161840 - 28 Broom Avenue – single and 2 storey side and rear extension. Mr Robson commented that there had been some concerns expressed by one of the neighbours about the loss of light the extension would cause - **NO OBJECTION**.
- (ii) REF: 20161848 – 33 St Catherines Road – single storey front, side and rear extensions. Mr Bowe reported that there were no objections from the neighbours - **NO OBJECTION**.
- (iii) REF: 20161896 – Racecourse Plantation – erection of up to 300 new homes and the creation of a new community woodland (outline) The Chairman reported that the Town Council had consulted the Norfolk Wildlife Trust about the development and they objected to the proposal on the basis that the whole of the development was within a County Wildlife Site. The area had successfully been removed from the Growth Triangle Area Action Plan because of its significance and designation. The Trust was of the view that despite the reduction in size, the proposed development would have a significant adverse impact on the Woodland. It was rare for sites designated as County Wildlife Sites to be developed but in the event of the development proceeding, the remainder of the site would remain a County Wildlife Site. The Norfolk Wildlife Trust was of the view that there were some discrepancies in the survey undertaken by the applicants, for example in relation to newts, and were of the view that aspects of the site would be impacted on if the development proceeded. Reference had been made to the issue of whether or not the site should be classified as an Ancient Woodland but in any event the site clearly had significant historical value. He went on to report on conversations held with

biodiversity experts who were of the opinion that the introduction of any development within the woodland would have a negative impact on the wildlife and particular reference was made to the introduction of domestic cats to the area. Having regard to the comments made above and during the public speaking session, the Chairman proposed, duly seconded that an objection be made to the proposed development on the basis of the following. The Town Council unanimously supported the proposal - **OBJECTION**

PRIOR NOTIFICATION

- (i) REF: 20161875 – The Oaks, 16 Harvey Lane – change of use from offices - **NOTED.**
- (ii) REF: BA/2016/0337/FUL – The Island, Yarmouth Road – continued use of Jenner’s Basin for the mooring of up to 25 boats including the construction and installation of 2 pontoons and retention of green container – Having regard to the history of this site, it was agreed to raise no objection to that element of the application which met the requirements of the Planning Inspector but to request that a strict set of conditions be attached to the application to enable enforcement of the planning permission as granted. – **NO OBJECTION IN PRINCIPAL SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS**

PERMISSIONS GRANTED BY BROADS AUTHORITY

- (i) REF: BA/2016/0392/TCAA – The Poplars, 32 Yarmouth Road – TPO consent for work to take place – **NOTED.**

10 ENFORCEMENT NOTICES – CONFIDENTIAL

Members noted the confidential update on enforcement matters.

11 DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

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| 19 December 2016 | Town Council |
| 16 January 2017 | Plans Committee |

The meeting closed at 9:13pm

Signed:

Dated: