

## Notes from meeting with County Council

Meeting held in the Parish Office, Cottenham on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2016 at 7.30pm

**Present:** Cllrs Mudd, Morris, Nicholas, Young, CCC Cllr Hickford, CCC Cllr Harford and the Clerk

- Cllr Morris outlined how the meeting came about following the Assets & Investments Committee meeting earlier this year. CCC Cllr Hickford wanted to see how CPC and County could work together regarding their proposed development.
- Following the public meeting held last year the Parish Council is rejecting all large scale planning applications. This is also backed up by the results of the Neighbourhood Plan where residents were strongly against large developments but wanted better facilities without relying on developer contributions.
- CPC is currently looking at sites for affordable housing (using Community Land Trusts) and there are several locations which are more sustainable than the proposals from the speculative developers.
- CCC Cllr Hickford outlined why County were pursuing the development. Essentially they are having to be more commercial due to Government funding cuts. Statutory requirements have grown and are more costly to provide.
- Cllr Young asked why County weren't interested in providing a Community Land Trust (CLT). CCC Cllr Hickford said that it doesn't maximise financial returns but there is a balance to meet and this would have value to the community including Cottenham. CLT's are nice to have but they don't suit County at this time. Where they are different to speculative developers is that they would like to provide as much affordable housing as possible. It was mentioned that CLT's are working in East Cambs. CCC Cllr Harford stated that setting a CLT up now would set the project back some way. Cllr Young didn't accept the argument that it was too late to set up a CLT and County is still a speculative developer. Fully appreciate the budget constraints but if County is not a social provider and purely out for financial gain then they have lost their way. CCC Cllr Hickford stated that all they've done is look at how they can save money. They are in a dire situation and don't know how to fix it. They are only just fit for purpose and if they could do things differently they would. Can't entertain a CLT in Cottenham at this time but in the near future there could be a possibility of something on a different site. The site would need to be big enough to have the leeway to provide a CLT and on a medium sized site such as the one proposed for Cottenham it isn't possible.
- Cllr Mudd asked for clarification of the site itself. Both Cllrs Mudd and Nicholas were involved in the setting up of the lease of the '3<sup>rd</sup> field' from County. There is a break clause to say that the land has to be used for school provision. Looking at the proposed design some of the site is within our 3<sup>rd</sup> field. Cllr Morris also confirmed that there had to be an educational purpose for the land then a replacement given; Officers should be aware of this. CCC Cllr Hickford to check and revert back.
- Cllr Mudd asked where is the land to be swapped? Is it as one block or in bits to include informal spaces within the proposed development? CCC Cllr Hickford to check and revert back. Cottenham is currently 2 hectares short of formal recreational space which is why we approached CCC to buy or lease adjacent land some time ago, a request which was ignored. If we do the swap we are still left short of land.
- CCC Cllr Hickford wanted to know whether it was possible to provide recreational space elsewhere in the village. Cllr Young stated that we are investing a lot of money in the current recreation ground and need one fully integrated site. By developing the County site they are missing a golden opportunity so why not move the development site? Formal sports need to be in the same area and this is why we asked to buy the additional adjacent land; that request was ignored. Cllr Morris stated that if we use Sport England guidelines the recreation ground location meets requirements for 90% of the village. Cllr Mudd mentioned that although the rugby club train at the Recreation Ground there is no space for them to play there hence our need for more space.
- CCC Cllr Hickford thought most people were for the idea of moving the school. Cllr Morris stated that according to the Neighbourhood Plan the majority of residents are against more changes to the school.
- It was noted that the other developers had gone through the same initial meeting as County and had only had one meeting.

- Some discussion about what County could do for Cottenham. CCC Cllr Hickford asked what County could do differently so that both parties get what they want? Cllr Morris suggested an alternative layout including purchasing a neighbouring field. Stephen Conrad is understood to have already approached the landowner. Additionally Ramphill Farm had 5 acres of land which could be used. The owner has recently applied to have the agricultural restriction removed. CCC Cllr Hickford will look into this further.
- County are shutting off the Parish Council's requirement for the additional 2 hectares of land by developing.
- It was mentioned that the proposed SUDS wouldn't work. The land is below the level of the drain and other developers have had to increase the size of their balancing ponds accordingly. The land also drains very badly. These SUDS schemes could contribute to the flooding of Cottenham. There is information relating to drainage missing from the application. CCC Cllr Harford will follow this up with SCDC. There will be a pre-commencement condition regarding adequate drainage so that SCDC can approve the scheme. The balancing pond has to be maintained forever and County have a poor track record of maintaining things.
- Cottenham needs more formal recreational space and there is a logic to have just one site.
- County need to bring the development online asap for financial reasons.
- Belief that County shouldn't rush through the development just for the sake of it.
- CCC Cllr Hickford didn't believe there was flexibility in the timescales. CCC Cllr Harford said the applications would be accepted against the 5 year housing supply shortage only if they can start building within the necessary timescale. Cllr Morris felt that County were 9 years behind being able to sell the houses because they were already in the wake of the other speculative developers even if they got permission.
- Cllr Young asked what the general approach was – is this site considered an easy site for development? CCC Cllr Hickford confirmed that it was considered an easy option.
- Cllr Mudd asked if there was a masterplan for County. No.
- It was noted that the 5 year housing supply may be sated in the next 12 months. As a result there may not be time to get the application through appeal by then (Gladman appeal not due until May 2017).
- Cllr Harford mentioned the need to look at the covenant on the land because it could slow down the application.
- Cllr Morris wanted to know if there were 'Chinese Walls' between departments? There has been an email asking for other developers traffic data; this request was rightly refused. CCC Cllr Hickford stated that it was good that the request had been refused but bad that the question was asked in the first place.

Meeting closed at 8.37pm.