

**MINUTES of a MEETING of FAKENHAM TOWN COUNCIL**  
**held at Fakenham Connect, Oak Street, Fakenham**  
**on WEDNESDAY 1 FEBRUARY 2017 at 7.00pm**

**PRESENT:**

Cllr G Acheson (Deputy Town Mayor, Presiding)

Cllrs A Edwards, T Duffy, J Sandford-Cooke, R Crook, N Westmancott, G Foortse, R Smith, M Coates, J Dougall, C Rockett

Town Clerk: L Jennings

Administration Assistant: A Kerrison

District Cllrs: J Punchard, A Claussen-Reynolds, R Reynolds, J Rest

Press: J Harding

Public: 25 members of the public

**200 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs J Holdom, S Mears, A Vertigan, G Thorpe, I Grand, and County Cllr T Fitzpatrick

**201 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest

**202 NNDC's PROPOSED PLANS FOR THE RE-DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHFIELD CAR PARK**

The proposed plan for the re-development of Highfield Road car park has been put forward by advisors engaged by NNDC. Their proposals are due to be discussed by cabinet on Monday 6<sup>th</sup> February 17. The purpose of tonight's meeting is to formulate the Town Councils response to these proposals.

NNDC have stated that as their funding from central government decreases they need to sell assets to create capital and look for new income streams in order to maintain services without raising community tax. Highfield Road car park has been identified as one of the assets that could be sold off for re-development as housing of approximately 44 apartments for the over 55's. This would be as part of a 2-3 storey structure. Some parking would be made available to the residents of Church Lanes who currently have access to the car park to park their cars. There would be no provision for parking for residents of other areas such as Queen's Road who also currently use the car park. It was noted that NNDC own this land and are acting on behalf of the whole district and not just the residents of Fakenham. It was also noted that there are plans to build approximately 1000 new homes in Fakenham in the future, and it was argued that the Town will need more car parking spaces, not fewer.

**203 TO ALLOW 10 MINUTES FOR ELECTORS QUESTIONS**

The following questions were asked by electors;

- What could the land sell for? It was thought probably about £1.5 million. The cost of the redevelopment is thought to be in the region of £7 million.
- Could NNDC sell the land with planning permission, as this could raise more money? No, the land would be sold to a developer who would then apply for planning permission as drawing up plans and seeking permission is costly and time consuming.
- It was suggested that NNDC sell off Cromer pier instead as this costs a lot of money to run and would raise capital.

- Is the developer likely to be a private firm or someone like Victory housing? It was thought that it is more likely to be a private firm.
- As there are lots of new housing developments planned for Fakenham wouldn't it make sense to retain the car park rather than build on it, as the residents of these developments will need somewhere to park when coming in to town?
- Is the idea just to build the 44 apartments, or are there plans to put other buildings on the site as well? It was noted that once the land has been sold the developer would be able to apply for permission to build what they wish.
- It was pointed out that putting the height restriction barriers on the Highfield site must have cost money. Surely the plans for the re-development were already in place when these were put up? It was agreed that individuals on the council would agree with this.
- A resident stated that they did not feel that the town council had done enough to try and prevent the loss of the car park over the previous months.
- Would the Town council be able to raise the money to buy the land and retain the car park for Fakenham? It could be a pay and display and the money raised could be used to repay the loan. It was thought that this was not an option as it would be too costly.
- Do councillors agree that the town needs this car parking? If so will their opinion carry any weight with NNDC? It was stated that the town councillors could not prevent the sale, but could make a fuss.
- Is the site designated as a lorry park? No. Another resident stated that before the bypass was built this was a lorry and bus park. The bus stop outside it is called the Highfield Road Lorry Park bus stop. It was noted that the site could not go back to being a lorry park as there is now a 7.5 ton weight limit in place.
- It was noted that the site is a valuable asset to the town. Since the barriers have been in place it has become less so as the accessibility has been reduced. Do NNDC have an alternative site that could be sold off instead? It was noted that there was nothing of the value of Highfield Road.
- A resident asked about the possibility of the new development overlooking the houses on Church Lanes. It was noted that the town council could comment on the plans when they become available, they can object but it is NNDC's decision. They also asked what will happen to the cars that currently park on the site. The park is full most of the time. They were concerned that these cars would park in nearby streets which are already congested, causing problems with access for emergency vehicles etc.
- A resident of Church Lanes said she had applied for permission to have a dropped curb by her property to have access for her car. This was refused by NNDC and she was told she should use the Highfield Road car park.
- If the development goes ahead and the car park is lost, could the town council push for the re-instatement of the town centre parking? There were approximately 30 short stay parking bays behind the war memorial, an area which has now been pedestrianised.
- Residents felt that if it came to a choice between the loss of the car park in Fakenham or Cromer, Cromer would get priority over Fakenham.

**204 TO ALLOW 10 MINUTES FOR DISTRICT/COUNTY COUNCILLORS TO ADDRESS THE MEETING**

District Council Reynolds outlined the history of the Highfield car park from its time as a lorry park to the present time. He said that in order for it to remain as a car park the surface would need to be upgraded, which would be very costly, and it would cost approximately £6,000 per year to maintain. To transfer the space to a paid parking area was not financially viable. He said that a survey carried out by him and Dist. Cllr Claussen-Reynolds found that this car park was mostly used by the

residents of Church Lanes and the people catching the Norwich city football bus. Cllr. Reynolds said that the future use of the car park needs to be looked at as it is a very unsightly area on the edge of town. He thought that accommodation for the over 55's would be welcome in Fakenham which has an increasing elderly population.

Dist. Cllr Claussen-Reynolds wondered whether some coach parking could be made available on the Queen's Road car park.

Dist. Cllr Rest felt the car park was only used a lot because it is free and that people would not pay to use it and then walk in to town. The ground structure is weak and would need re-enforcing. If it were to become a paid car park then bays would have to be marked out. The site would not generate enough income to make this a viable option. With regard to the proposed 44 apartments, he said that it was expected that 80% of these would be taken up by local people who would then sell their own properties, making these available for others. In answer to one of the elector's questions he said that NNDC would not sell the land with planning permission as there was too much work involved to be able to do this. However, permission would not be given for any unsuitable building. He felt that the people living in these apartments would not need/use cars as they could walk or use public transport. Cllr Rocket asked where he could see the literature for the figures Cllr Rest had quoted. Cllr Rest said the figures were in the report from the company used by NNDC to advise on the commercialisation of its assets. Cllr Rocket asked if he could see this report, but Dist. Cllr Rest said that this was NNDC council privilege. Cllr Rest was asked if NNDC had already spoken to developers regarding this site. He said they had. He was also asked if NCC could buy the land, but it was stated that they did not have the money for this. Cllr Rest was asked if a stricture will be put on the land to make sure that the development is what NNDC want it to be i.e. for those over 55. He said it would. Cllr Rest was asked if NNDC had done any research with local businesses as to the effect on their trade since coaches had been prevented from parking on Highfield Road. He said they had not. Cllr. Rocket said that he had done this research and businesses had seen a drop in trade because of this, especially during the period of the Christmas Tree Festival and Thursford Christmas show. With regard to properties on Church Lanes being over looked by the development, Dist. Cllr Reynolds pointed out that the Fakenham Town Council will be able to comment on any plans once they were available. Dist. Cllr Punchard stated that the overlooking of properties would be considered at the time of planning application. District Councillors were asked if a time limit would be put on how long the land could remain un-developed once planning permission had been obtained. They did not think this would be a problem as the company doing the building would want a return on their investment as quickly as possible. However, time restriction would apply. Cllr Crook said NNDC's proposed plan had been based on the consultant's report. He asked how much the report cost, and when this information would be available, whether the impact of 44 apartments for the over 55's on the local surgery had been investigated and where the cars displaced from Highfield road would park? Cllr Punchard said that the GP surgery would be able to cope. He is chair of the local patient group and the GPs at the surgery currently had list sizes below the national average of 1600 per GP.

Cllr. Edwards asked if any Section 106 money obtained through this development would be used to make improvements in Fakenham. Cllr Rest said that many developers do not do 106 developments. If 106 money was available it would be used for the whole district not specifically in Fakenham. Cllr Edwards also asked if the land will be advertised with restrictions. Dist. Cllr Reynolds said plans would have to go before the planning committee. Cllr Punchard said that Councillors can push for restrictions.

An elector was concerned that that there was no guarantee that any of the money raised from this development would come back to Fakenham but would be

swallowed up by the district. Dist. Cllr Punchard said that council tax had been frozen for the last 7 years and money has to be found to provide services. The elector asked if residents had been asked whether they would rather pay increased council tax than selling off assets. They asked what happens when all the assets have been sold off. A resident of Church Lanes asked if residents would be guaranteed vehicular access to their properties if this development went ahead. Dist. Cllr Rest said that all those who currently have vehicular access would continue to do so.

District Councillors Rest, Reynolds, Claussen-Reynolds and Punchard left the meeting.

**205 TO DISCUSS THE NORTH NORFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL PLANS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF HIGHFIELD ROAD CAR PARK**

It was stated that there had been some dispute in the past as to who held title to the land. It was noted that the land was registered to Walsingham Rural District council in 1954. The cost of contesting whether NNDC are legal owners would be huge and this was not an option.

It was noted that NNDC had said that Fakenham had adequate car parking and that Highfield Road site was not needed. The Clerk had obtained figures that showed that on Queens Road car park 32 places had been sold to season ticket holders, on Bridge Street 27 spaces were sold to season ticket holders and 9 to Kinnerton workers and on the Limes car park 75 spaces had been sold to Kinnerton workers and 12 to season ticket holders. This is a total of 155 spaces not available to shoppers and tourists. She also stated that the parking warden had told her that on a Thursday people coming to the town for the market cannot find a parking space and just leave.

It was felt that NNDC are asset stripping and that there was a lack of collaboration with FTC. The following points were raised;

- FTC needs to represent it's electors views
- If the development goes through then replacement parking will be needed
- The current Millers Walk car park gives 2 hours free parking but this is private land and there is no guarantee that this will remain as a car park in the future.
- With the future development planned for more than 800 houses at the north of the town more car parking will be needed not less
- It was felt that the Highfield site was not used by shoppers but mainly by residents. Car parking spaces would need to be found for all residents who currently use this site not just those living on Church Lanes.
- The loss of the Highfield car park would also see the loss of the public toilets
- Clarification was needed regarding how many parking spaces would be allocated to each of the new apartments.
- No evidence was offered or made available for any of the information given by the district councillors.
- Cllr Rest had stated at a previous meeting that the Highfield site was an ROS6 site and that it had never been a lorry park. Cllr Rockett said he had spoken Mark Ashwell, planning policy manager at NNDC, who said that this has never been an ROS6 site. He felt that the council had been misled by Cllr Rest.
- Cllr Rockett will provide a brief report on the information he has gained so far regarding the impact on local businesses following the loss of coach parking. This will be needed before the NNDC cabinet meeting on Monday 6 February 17.
- Cllr Rest had stated that the Highfield site would need to be resurfaced and marked in to bays in order for it to be a paid park. This is not the case in other areas such as Kings Lynn where parking is on shingled areas which are not marked in bays.

- The feeling in the town is that this development is not wanted. We do not want short term solutions but proper long term strategic planning.
- We need to see the consultant's report commissioned by NNDC and the terms of reference given to the consultants for the report. If this is deemed confidential then a FOI request should be submitted. We also need to see the impact assessment done regarding the impact on infrastructure and the impact on parking relating to the displacement of those residents currently parking on the site.
- We need to be made aware of NNDC's longer term development plans for the town instead of being drip fed information at short notice. More collaborative working is needed.
- We need a bus/coach park in the town. The loss of this has had an effect on the businesses in the town and the town is suffering.

On the proposition of Cllr Acheson, seconded by Cllr Coates and AGREED by all, Cllrs Acheson and Duffy will attend NNDC's cabinet meeting on 6 February to speak on behalf of FTC and to argue the case for keeping Highfield Road car park as it is.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 21:25

Confirmed this

day of

2016

**CHAIRMAN**