

Stottesdon and Sidbury Parish Council

Extra ordinary Parish Council meeting held on Thursday 12th March 2020 at 7.30pm in Chorley Village Hall.

Present: Cllrs D Young (Chairman), C Smith, B Montague, D Powell, S Allen, R Abbiss, S Crawford, B Hamilton-Russell.

Shropshire Cllr M Shineton

Clerk: Mrs F Morris

Parishioners: 54

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and explained the procedures/remit of the meeting. The PC is a consultee, the same as Highways, Police, etc but the final decision on the application is made by Shropshire Council.

He added that Councillors have read the comments on the planning portal and SC confirmed that they also read all the comments.

15 minutes parishioners time is at the start of every PC meeting, which should apply tonight, but as this is the only item on the agenda, our Standing Orders can be suspended to allow a longer discussion period with the agreement of the Councillors.

Clerk commented

"Please remember that the Cllrs are residents in the parish and do not get paid for this. Not all of the present Cllrs were elected – some have been co-opted.

We have 2 vacancies on the PC – 1 for Sidbury and 1 for Stottesdon – details from Clerk or Councillors.

When making a comment if you want your name to be recorded in the minutes please say this when you begin speaking.

Clerk added that the following had been brought to her attention:

"There is some support in and around the parish for this application, but these people cannot attend the meeting or do not want to attend the meeting.

She added that it had been noted by residents that the Eddies-Davies family (current owners) have brought a lot of employment and facilities (Ginny Hole, Adventure Centre etc) which many children have benefited from over the last 30 years and felt that some of the comments being made are very unfair".

0) Public participation (7.36pm):

The following points were raised by members of the public:

- One special needs child having to travel to Shrewsbury with 6 others to a specialist school every day, leaving home at Chorley at 7.30am and returning at 5pm which made it 3 hours travelling time where he could possibly be educated at this facility in the local community.
- At previous meeting it was stated that this home could house sex abusers, this has been refuted, but resident made the comment that Willowdene work with people who have had their lives ruined through no fault of their own.

Chairman read out a report from Anthony Eddies-Davies giving the facts about the Old Vicarage; He said "I wanted the Parish Council to have this information as part of the consultation process. I wanted to add some factual comments in relation to the use of the property for use under the categories C2, C3 and D1 as I have run.

Last year at the national conference, I was awarded the 'UK and European Instructor/Trainer of the year' accolade for the training work given to the emergency services and government agencies, with much of this work being run from The Old Vicarage and the surrounding area. (some of the paramedic teams that had to enter Grenfell where at Ginny Hole in our tunnel system 2 weeks beforehand, training in casualty evacuation! - and the majority of the local flood rescue teams responding in recent floods have been trained by us.)

These comments are to add perspective but more importantly FACTS to the current planning application in respect of the same property that has operated for 30 years under the categories of use (C2, C3 and D1) as this application. Whilst I can understand concerns from those in the village, it

must be taken into account the previous 30 years (and still current use) of the property. Over the last 30 years the business has provided education and visits to over 30,000 people based from The Old Vicarage. This has included a considerable number of children in the care system whose stays range from a day, to residential visits with their own carers, through to ourselves providing the long term provision for children in care. The longest period of care included 6 children at any single time, ranging from ages 5 to 18, with the longest duration of stay being 8 years.

Through my Sons and Wife's current businesses, Stottesdon still provides facilities for children in care and last week provided educational experiences to 15 of these children within the community.

My own family of 6, up to 40 residential visitors at any one time, and 8 live in staff have been in resident at any given time at this address through this 30 year period of business (not including the additional 12 staff that came in/out on a daily basis).

There are concerns of policing and the effect on the village – In 30 years I never once had to call the police as a result of any child behaviour of those visiting or in long term care. To put this into perspective, as the joint licensee of one of the village pubs for 2 years - I had regular police interaction as a result of village disturbances!

For clarification - the community may have witnessed many emergency vehicles to The Old Vicarage, this is nothing to do with the children that visit – it is because I am a National trainer in technical rescue to Paramedics, Fire and Rescue, Police, special operations and home office agencies – they regularly came to The Old Vicarage for specialist training.

As for medical care – my family of 6, all of the children in long term care and all 8-permanent live in staff were registered with the medical practices (and those on long term stays registered as temporary residents).

As the CFR coordinator for the ambulance service for a number of years for this community, I can give all actual figures for response time in relation to the village. As a medical training provider, it's worth also mentioning the level of training I currently provide to children's care home staff already based in Shropshire, is generally of a higher standard than the training I provide main stream school teachers in Shropshire.

Schooling – 4 of the long-term children in care were encouraged and welcomed to the primary school by the community at a time it was facing closure through lack of numbers! Some went onto local secondary school and colleges.

Many have questioned - why Stottesdon? Maybe ask the 30,000 children who have enjoyed experiences here, and the children in care, who as a result gained national educational accreditation, some awarded by Royal family members.

Whilst I have entered into a preliminary sales agreement of The Old Vicarage with Compass Care, (subject to Planning) it is ironic that this prolonged planning period has now drawn more interest from national businesses that should Compass not be successful, intend to operate under the existing C2, D3 and D1 without the requirement for further planning. These operations would in my opinion have a much greater impact on the village than the current planning proposal.

Whilst I can whole heartedly understand the community concern, I am alarmed to see that amongst all of those with such grave concerns, not a single person in the community thought it necessary, or has asked me, for any facts or historical information about a business that has operated for 30 years under the same categories of use including children in care and special needs in the centre of their community - and could continue to do so, without requiring planning consent. All of the information referred to above is available to the council on request”.

- Serving and ex Police Officers referred to their comments on the planning portal highlighting their experiences of working with problems caused by Care Homes which could potentially bring in criminals, drug offenders etc to the village.
- Resident commented that a lot of the comments being made tonight and on the website were speculation and considered this to be dangerous.

- Concern expressed that this is next to the Church and an old farmhouse, both Listed Buildings, but feared that if these children went into the Church and lit candles the potential risk of fire to the Church and Farmhouse was high.
- A social worker added that it would be higher risk children who would be placed at this type of home.
- Resident asked why didn't Compass attend as it was felt that they had a 'duty of care' to residents – Clerk confirmed that they had been invited but confirmed that Compass felt no further meaningful detail that we could provide/discuss beyond that already presented to the community at a previous meeting. Clerk had asked Compass questions which had been raised on the website and would read out the responses at the appropriate time during the meeting.
- Resident commented on the current owners of Compass (Private Equity) whose primary aim is to create a profit and not the caring for children. He felt that it was immoral that companies like these were running care homes which were being paid for by the taxpayers. – the applicant is irrelevant to the planning application.
- Resident commented that he would have reservations regarding his children walking home from school if this home was granted permission.
- Another resident said that Limited risk assessments had been carried out regarding the amendments to this application and added that the December meeting was poorly attended as residents were not aware of the meeting. Clerk pointed out this was dealt with at the PC meeting with the meeting being advertised on the website, noticeboard and flyers being put in the shop, Dr's Surgery and Chorley Village Hall on polling day – this went far beyond what the PC needed to do.
- The current owner of the site said children from Care Homes have been at the adventure centre in the village with no problems caused and residents oblivious they were there.
- Police Officer (resident) said that 3 staff to 8 residents is not enough, Children are generally from inner cities. If children abscond then the staff are in crisis. She queried what Police response times would be like.
- Someone commented that the next 30 years should be looked at not the previous 30,
- House prices will fall if this application is passed.
- A House of Commons document referred to – increase of 64% of children in care, not from local area.
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Shropshire Cllr Shineton pointed out that Shropshire has 470+ children in care many being cared for outside the county, with some being miles away from their family and Shropshire want to bring them back and care for them here!

It was also pointed out that if this application goes to committee then residents will have the chance to go and speak.

Resident commented that Shropshire has 3 care facilities proposed by the end of the year.

Shropshire Council has a Duty of Care for Safeguarding and would monitor.

- Resident showed newspaper article where Cruyton Care home in Shropshire was closed down in January 2019.
- Resident stated that a care home in the Corvedale was not properly supervised and residents caused lots of serious damage and he was concerned that the Old Vicarage is next to his farm with a potential risk to animals and straw stacked within yards of the property. 3rd party insurance premiums are very high he added and would increase.
- Fears that this could affect the school. Clerk read the following email from the Head teacher:
"The school is aware of the planning application. The school comments as follows:
 - If the application were successful, we would look to work with Compass to manage any risk that might emerge; if the facility is managed correctly, any such risk should be managed effectively.
 - Concerns over the school not being a secure site (at the front) have been raised. We have thorough risk assessments in place which the school has developed with Safer Schools and the Shropshire Crime Prevention Officer. The risk is continually evaluated and if it were to change the school and trust will consider measures to manage this. If the facility is managed correctly there would be no change to the current risk assessment".

- A Resident felt this was ‘a disaster waiting to happen’ and was concerned for the elderly in the village. She didn’t want children running past her house knocking the door, using abusive language, drugs etc.
- A Cllr commented that Cllrs were not there to judge opinions, but the residents should set up a protest group, which he would join. Resident felt that this comment was not the expected conduct of a Cllr.
- Resident pointed out that she felt some of this is Nimbyism and that these children will be ‘the victims’ and we should be supporting this tremendous opportunity for the children of Shropshire. Early intervention is best all round. Shropshire Council will be the Regulatory body and they inspect premises such as this unannounced.
- Comments were made several times commending the Old Vicarage for all their work and Willowdene.
- Attention drawn to Anne Longfield.

It was said that if the Old Vicarage or Willowdene were running this instead of Compass residents would be happier.

Chairman drew the parishioner’s time to a close at 8.50pm and Cllrs would have a 5 minutes break.

1) Apologies for absence:

Shropshire Cllr Gwilym Butler. **RESOLVED to accept these apologies**

2) Declaration of interests:

The Localism Act 2011, Relevant Authorities (Disclosable Pecuniary Interests) Regulations 2012. Members are reminded that they are required to leave the room during the discussion and voting on matters in which they have a disclosable pecuniary interest, whether or not the interest is entered in the register of member’s interests maintained by the Monitoring Officer.

None declared.

2. Planning application:

Reconsultation due to Amendment on application 19/05255/FUL - Old Vicarage Centre
 Proposal: Change of use from a mixed residential, commercial, training and hostel use (Use Class C2, C3 and D1) to a mixed care home and education use (Use Class C2 / D1) and associated works
 This was due to clarification of number of children/staff.

Chairman asked Cllrs for comments.

- Cllr Smith commented again that the residents should form a committee and asked them to do so. Clerk reminded Cllr Smith that the meeting was in progress and that the public were not allowed to speak.
- Cllr Montague thanked the Chairman for calling the meeting back to Council as Standing Orders state that items cannot be revisited for 6 months but this was due to ‘new information’ being received and SC requesting PC’s comments. thus, giving the residents a chance to speak again. She also commented that she understood the concerns of the community and that the Compass website enforces fear of the children. Material considerations can only be considered.
- Cllr Powell agreed with Cllr Montague’s comments.
- Cllr Allen highlighted that there was a lot of passion in the room for and against this application and understandingly so, but the PC must make a decision on planning grounds but could comment on the strong feeling in the village. He said there is approximately 800 people in the parish with 54 people attending the meeting, so this has to be balanced out and how best to put PC feelings to SC.
- Shropshire Cllr Shineton pointed out that the PC are consultees, the legal entity and has to abide by the rules and regulations. but also pointed out that after listening to the comments from the residents nothing came from the floor regarding planning issues. The PC need to consider if the building is suitable for this use and ask for the application to go to committee.
- Cllr Hamilton-Russell accepted that the PC can only make comments regarding material considerations but was not impressed with Compass for not attending and morally wrong that they will make millions out of this.

- Cllr Abbiss commented that looking at the original application it was only a new conservatory roof. She understood the disillusionment of the residents and that the PC should ask SC for this to go to committee. This amendment is for 2 extra children. She also noted that the Clerk had tried hard to get Compass to attend and had also put a lot of work into tonight's meeting.
- Cllr Crawford felt that this should go to committee then the public can attend.
- Cllr Young commented: At the December meeting we considered some material considerations in relation to this "change of use" planning application e.g.
- Noise
- Highway safety
- Traffic
- Alterations to the building in a conservation area

And we resolved that we had no objections to it.

However, we did not consider the following material considerations;

- Government and local planning policies
- Previous appeal decisions
- The Shropshire Core Strategy CS6 states that the site should be easily accessible and mitigates and adapts to climate change. Significant increases in levels of traffic should be located in accessible locations where opportunities for use of public transport and walking and cycling can be maximized and the use of car based travel reduced.

"The site will employ approx. 20 staff who may reside considerable distances from the village and 6 children who will also probably need transporting considerable distances back and forth 5 days a week. And Sam Foster himself said that cars would be required to transport children to other towns in order to entertain them (cinema etc.) This will potentially result in a large carbon footprint - a consideration which is becoming more and more relevant with the emerging climate emergency. It is also worth pointing that our local road infrastructure is generally poorly maintained and not particularly easily accessible especially during the winter months. There are no other transport options in the village unfortunately. Therefore, I'm not convinced that Stottesdon is a sustainable or even suitable location for this type of enterprise due to its relative remoteness and poor access.

He also referenced a SC appeal for a care home for children in Church Stretton in 2011 which was turned down for a similar reason i.e. "the location is not sustainable."

- He highlighted another appeal, this time identified by Compass in support of their case, but which actually undermines it. This one also raises concern with the suitability of the Old Vicarage location. The application was initially turned down by Durham Council because they said the location was not suitable due to its remoteness.

But on appeal by the care home (which was upheld), the inspector said "I find that the appeal property is well related to shops, community and social facilities, and to public transport. As such I find that the appeal site is a suitable location for the development proposed. **This will not be the case with the Old Vicarage application,**

- Lastly he shed light on the NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) which says "a planning decision should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe spaces so that crime and disorder and the fear of crime do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion". And the Shropshire Core Strategy CS8 also has a similar requirement.

Cllr Young said "We're not in a position to judge whether or not there will be an increase in anti-social behaviour or crime etc. but it's apparent from both comments on the portal and during our discussion this evening that there is a real fear of crime. And a fear of crime is a material planning consideration. He added that "we are here to represent our community and we are obliged to bear this in mind when making our decision."

Cllr Montague commented regarding the appeals and pointed out that there are no bus services here.

Cllr Abbiss commented that the numbers have risen from 6 -8 and feared they come back for 10-12. it was also noted that the present owners are in a 'catch 22 position'.

Chairman asked each Cllr for their vote and all voted unanimously to object to the application due to increase in numbers, previous planning appeal results, fear of crime, lack of sustainability, increased traffic, information received and residents' concerns.

Cllr Allen pointed out that whatever happens with this application the property will not be sold as a private house but as a business/institute of this nature.

It was **PROPOSED** by Cllr Montague, seconded by Cllr Powell and **RESOLVED** by unanimous decision to object to this application.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 9.21pm.

Signed: Chairman

Dated:

DRAFT