

Benhall & Sternfield Parish Council Planning report : Mar 2024

Cycling/walking: On 18 January, the day after our last PC Meeting in January, we (Chair, Bev Barclay – and Councillors, David Secret, Sue Nicholson and Deborah Dann) had a site visit arranged with ES DC, Seamus Bennett for our longed for cycling/walking route between Benhall & Sax. Nick Khan, ES Strategic Director also came. At the end of the visit they asked us to prepare a document and map/plan for them to present to a meeting 4 days later. Our aim was to prove to them this route would be perfect as a guinea pig. You've all received a copy of the document/map. The very exciting news is that this route is now the subject of a high level feasibility study at ES Council, with a view to it being used as a trial run for their strategy. What a turnabout from being told that as this route would be 'leisure only' it had been deleted from the list of routes to be considered.

Shotts Meadow extension: Following previous reports you will know that, whilst this project is effectively 'pre-approved' as it is in the Local Plan, there are a number of significant issues to overcome such as integration into the village, access to the village, safety re the railway line, and access from the 1121. It is worth noting that Highways, a key Statutory Consultee, have put a holding objection onto the Application. So nothing can move forward until they have come to an agreement with ES Council and the landowner. We have been trying to arrange a site visit with the Planning Officer for some months and this was finally agreed for 19 Feb. On 14 Feb, we (Councillors, David Secret and Sue Nicholson) met with 2 current residents of Shotts Meadow to ensure we understood the ownership of access and any particular concerns they had about the coming development. The ES Planning Officer was helpful and we felt understood the issues clearly. The access to the village is now likely to be the current footpath from the railway bridge by Whitearch into Mill Lane. To be upgraded to a bridleway – with hard surface – to be suitable for cycling. The Planning Officer agrees that a construction plan will be needed.

12 Benhall Green: AirBNB usage contrary to Planning Permission. Chased again, asking what the deadline is for the owner to either apply for Planning Permission or to stop using as AirBNB.

DC/24/0121/CLE | Certificate of Lawful Use (Existing) - To create a separate dwelling from an annex. No building work involved. | The Stables Low Street Benhall Saxmundham Suffolk IP17 1JF . I apologise but I missed this one (firstly I waa away,

then did not have access to the Clerk's login to the Consultee intray during her handover). There is a very complicated background to this and it is clear that the owner has ignored the restriction on the use of the annexe, which is currently occupied and has been for almost 4 years. This was picked up by a neighbour. I received a phone call from a concerned neighbour but unfortunately too late for us to respond. I am sure ES Planners will deal with this accordingly (especially as there were previous enforcements for other issues).

Whitearch: (park homes and holiday static caravans). another very complicated one which goes back some 7 years. The key problem has been that Permission was incorrectly granted : the Applicant wanted to have holiday static caravans with very restricted occupancy but the restriction was not included in the Planning Permission so those units could become park homes with year round occupancy (the key differences are: a) holiday units cannot be used as a main home and proof of main home is required. No council tax is paid. The construction can be of a lower standard, including reduced insulation standards b) park homes have a higher construction standard, can be used as main homes. Council tax is paid. These units are several times more expensive to purchase than holiday homes on the same size site.

There is currently an Application under consideration at ESC for resiting of units as the owners fear the effects of the nighttime Sizewell rail traffic. It may be time to consider reconsidering our objections to the site becoming wholly park homes (though ESC have agreed with us). With the 850 plus homes being built within a mile and a half of Whitearch, including affordable housing, it is difficult to argue more are needed. We included in our response to the Application that we would be open to making a site visit and reconsidering our objection. Whitearch have asked their Planning Agent to take pre-application advice from ESC. In addition, the Whitearch owners were concerned that EDF/Sizewell had not been in touch with them to discuss the nighttime trains. I contacted Sizewell, who responded quite quickly, reassuring us and Whitearch that they would be consulted.

South Saxmundham Garden Neighbourhood: Saxmundham Town Council are having regular meetings with Pigeon – at least fortnightly. As mentioned before, Pigeon's aim is to build the commercial areas on the west side of the A12 before the residential. They are doing their best to ensure there is no coalescence with Benhall. There are plans for cycling/walking routes – so I have alerted them to our project (Saxmundham DC John Fisher joined us on the site visit) as there should be the opportunity of linking the various routes together.

New Application:

**DC/24/0767/FUL | Extension and Alterations to Existing Dwelling. | Mill Top House
Mill Lane Benhall Saxmundham Suffolk IP17 1HF** Application to extend existing bungalow to 2 storey house with extension. By the time of our meeting I will have made a site visit (from the outside) and we may request a site visit via the architect onto the site.

Sue Nicholson

07 March 2024