

# HALSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF THE PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY 10 APRIL 2015 IN THE PAVILION, STATION ROAD, HALSTEAD AT 18.00

**PRESENT:** Cllr. Terry Brooker, Chairman of the Planning Committee  
Cllr. David Tylor, Chairman of the Parish Council  
Cllr. Sheila Bent  
Cllr. Barrie Blundell  
Cllr. Karen Grosvenor  
Cllr. Christine Halliday

**IN ATTENDANCE:** The Clerk, Cllr. Baldwin in the public gallery  
The meeting convened at 18.00

**1 APOLOGIES.**

All members were present plus Cllr. David Taylor. Members signed the attendance register.

**2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Nil

**3 PLANNING APPLICATIONS RECEIVED**

**3.1** The Planning application below was discussed in great depth and the following response was agreed unanimously.

SE/15/00628/OUT
FORT HALSTEAD, CROW DRIVE, HALSTEAD TN14 7BU
Outline planning permission for the demolition of buildings and development of a mixed-use development comprising a business area (Use Classes B1 and B2 with ancillary energetic material testing) of up to 27,000sq.m GEA, 450 residential units, a hotel of up to 80 beds, a village centre (Use Classes A1-A3, B1,D1 & D2) use of the Fort area and bunkers as an historic interpretation centre (Use D1) with ancillary workshop space, and works associated with the development including roads, landscaping, security fencing, formal and informal open space, pedestrian, cyclist and public transport infrastructure, utilities infrastructure, sustainable urban drainage system, cycle and car parking (with all matters reserved); and detailed approval for two access points at Otford Lane/Crow drive primary) and Star Hill (secondary)
<b>Reasons:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>HALSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL STRONGLY OBJECTS TO THIS PLANNING APPLICATION.</b></li><li><b>Green Belt:</b> because the proposed development will be on previously developed land, Council believes that the following policies apply to the majority of the open space at Fort Halstead: GB1; EN23, conserving and enhancing the historical environment'; EN17B conserving and enhancing biodiversity. Council therefore believes that the square footage and building volume proposed for the new development should not be greater than the figures which apply to the current site.</li><li><b>The Core Strategy:</b> document adopted in 2011, included the requirement of provision for 3,300 homes which would be delivered at the rate of 163 homes per year up to 2026. Fort Halstead was not included in these calculations until an Appeal Inspector approved that these proposed 450 homes should be included. Council believes that the time and expense of preparing the document (Core Strategy) was totally wasted if the decisions and findings can be ignored and over ruled so easily.</li><li><b>Contamination:</b> Council is very concerned that the surveys carried out were not thorough enough and that there should be some information available as to what substances were identified and how the clearance will be achieved; An independent body should be used to carry out the work and who will be 'signing off' and taking responsibility for the site being 'contamination free?' A report was prepared on the history of Fort Halstead by English</li></ol>

Heritage in 2009, revised in 2010. Page 6, para 2 'Fort Halstead and High Explosives Research' relates: 'In January 1947, the British Cabinet took the decision to proceed with the development of an atomic bomb and in May the task was given to William Penney, Chief Superintendent Armaments Research (CSAR) who was based at Fort Halstead (Gowing 1974, 4420). Penney was a physicist and had been a leading member of the wartime British Mission to the United States Manhattan Project that was responsible for creating the first atomic bombs.' Page 6, para 3 states: to accommodate Penney's team at Fort Halstead a fenced enclave was created centred on the Mobilisation Centre and a group of buildings to its immediate north. Within these structures were housed electronics, engineering, mathematics and theoretical physics departments ..... by the end of 1950 the atomic bomb project dominated work at Fort Halstead with 600 working on the project.... this was a closely guarded secret with all government orders routed through AERE. Council received a letter in March 2007 from Simon O'Donnell who worked for Hines, at that time would-be developers of Fort Halstead. The letter was to Mr Fallon MP. Quote: 'I notice that the story on page three of your latest newsletter headlined Toxic Check for Fort Halstead concluded with the statement that the site is highly toxic and unsuitable for new housing' Council believes that outline planning permission should not be granted until a full programme of remedial works is proposed and agreed, with the proviso that the remedial work should be assessed and agreed (and perhaps undertaken) by a totally independent organisation. It is extremely important that remedial work should not be undertaken in phases or stages, but the entire site should be completely cleared of any contamination before any development is started.

5. **Employment:** It has been stressed that this development is employment led, with a substantial percentage of employment provided for local people. Council is pleased to hear that QinetiQ will be remaining on site but expresses concern as to how the employment sector will be marketed and would like to know what plans the Developer has in place for this. There is very little information on this topic and it seems that the only new plans relating to employment are for the hotel and the museum. The commercial aspects should be dealt with first before the building of any housing is considered.

It seems that QinetiQ is to be behind a fence topped by razor-wire which will be immediately adjacent to some of the domestic properties. This is entirely inappropriate. Council is concerned that if there is not enough interest in commerce, then there will be an attempt to build more houses. This should not be allowed at any-time, now or in the future.

6. **Housing:** There should be no reduction in the nationally agreed percentage for the number of affordable homes. Surveys have shown that Sevenoaks District is in dire need of affordable housing so it is important that the 40% national percentage should be adhered to. The applicant knew that there was a statutory number and should have agreed to this rather than negotiating for a lesser number with SDC.
7. **Education:** There are some places at Halstead Primary School. Dunton Green School is having to cope with an influx of children with the erection of 450 homes at West Kent Cold Store. Where will the children be sent to school?  
There is already a severe shortage of places in secondary schools in the Sevenoaks area, and a high percentage of local children are already bussed out of area to secondary schools. Planning permission should not be granted for further housing development until this matter is satisfactorily resolved, and local secondary education provision is substantially increased.
8. **Utilities:** It seems that there is to be no gas on the site. The electricity supply will therefore be under strain with the extra homes and businesses having no alternative source of power. The water supply provided by Thames Water will need considerable improvement and Thames Water has already stated that it has identified an inability of the existing waste water infrastructure to accommodate the needs of the application.  
No agreement should be given to the application until a detailed scheme is provided by the developer to show how these problems will be overcome.
9. **Traffic:** Concern is expressed about the increased usage of Polhill, Otford Lane and Star Hill. A survey was carried out on Polhill in 2006 and a full report was prepared noting that

the hill was subsiding and though some remedial work was undertaken there was not sufficient funding available to carry out major work.

The introduction of traffic lights or a roundabout has been considered for the top of **Polhill (A224)** but the Parish Council suggests that no work be carried out until the impact of increased traffic is monitored at that junction. There will of course be a further increase in traffic on the A224 when the crematorium is built.

**Otford Lane** is a winding, narrow lane with many 'blind bends' and few passing places also no footways, and it is likely that this would be the main route to Halstead Primary School.

**Star Hill** is a narrow de-restricted, steep, winding road used by commercial vehicles, cyclists and residents in Knockholt as it is the main route out of the village when travelling to Sevenoaks. There have been many accidents on this hill that are not logged as statistics as few are fatal.

10. **Travel:** Council believes that the developer should investigate and initiate a bus service to the Fort which would encourage people not to use their cars. Discussion should be held with Network rail to ascertain if the time-table could be improved.
11. **Air Quality:** Sevenoaks District, particularly the parishes located near the Fort, have had considerable problems with the quality of the air due to the close proximity of M25, M26, A21 and A224. Several consultations were undertaken and regulations introduced to try and improve the situation. With the introduction of more vehicles the situation can only worsen.
12. **Flooding:** the A224 at the top of Polhill has been flooded on several occasions over the last few years causing the road to be closed to traffic for days at a time. A survey and corrective works will need to be carried out as a matter of urgency.
13. **Traffic movements:** Statistically with vehicles movements for each home at eight per day, 450 homes would equate to 3,600 vehicle movements. The vehicle movements of the 1,500 employees would equate to 3,000 movements. There will also be casual daily traffic movements to both businesses (including the hotel) and residential properties, making an approximate 7,000 movements per day. Plans should include details of how the developer will ensure that local villages will not suffer because of the increased traffic levels. A simple measure would be the introduction of a no left turn sign for traffic leaving the Fort via Crow Road, and wishing to enter Otford Lane.
14. **Management Plan:** The Parish Council notes the developers plan to set up a Charitable Community Trust to manage all the Green Belt areas within the development, the plan being to include the neighbouring Parish Councils in this trust. This development is a commercial enterprise and as such should be managed by the owners of the land. Halstead Parish Council would not wish to be involved with any such arrangement and would not commit to providing any funding, now or at any time in the future, from the Parish Council's Precept raised from the residents of Halstead.

#### 4. INFORMATION

Nil.

The meeting closed at 20.45