

Planning application 3054/15 Erection of 5 dwellings with formation of vehicular accesses, Chapel Lane, Drinkstone

Drinkstone Parish Council OBJECTS to this application on the following grounds:

1. This is NOT a sustainable development in terms of the Mid Suffolk Local Plan 2012, the Core Strategy or the NPPF

Under the MSDC Core Strategy, where the settlement hierarchy has been developed to define MSDC's approach to sustainable development, Drinkstone has been classified as a Countryside Village. (Policy CS1 and CS2), and thus not considered suitable for further development of market housing supply.

Para 17, point 11 of the NPPF states that planning authorities should "actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling and focus significant development in locations which are, or can be made, sustainable"

Drinkstone has no amenities in the village. The nearest amenities are in Woolpit, 4 km away and Rattlesden around 3 km away, along unlit country roads with no pavements. There is no direct bus service between Drinkstone and Woolpit. There are 3 buses a day to Rattlesden, where there is a small community shop and post office. To access these using the bus service would involve a 90 minute round trip.

At present, it is understood that, as MSDC cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing, paragraphs 14 and 49 of the NPPF deems the MSDC Core Strategy "out of date" and each planning application is being dealt with on its individual merits. There is some clarity emerging on what constitutes sustainable under the terms of the NPPF, resulting from actual planning decisions made in the last 6 months.

Drinkstone Parish Council believes that two appeal decisions by the Planning Inspectorate are relevant to this proposal: APP/W3520/W/15/3135468 and APP/W3520/W/15/3137663. Both appeals were dismissed on the grounds of not meeting sustainability criteria. To quote: "both settlements [*where there are amenities*] are more than 2 miles from the appeal site and the connecting routes are unlit and have no footpaths....consequently future occupiers would be likely to rely on travel by private car....future occupiers are unlikely to contribute significantly to the vitality of such facilities". [*The appeal location*] "does not contain any day to day services and facilities such as schools, shops, health care facilities, a garage or public house....consequently....new housing development is not encouraged due to its unsustainable location"

The proposed development in Chapel Lane will, like these, inevitably involve a heavy reliance on the private car, and thus in terms of its location we believe that it does not comply sufficiently with NPPF paragraphs 34 and 35 which seek to minimise the need to travel, and give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements and have access to high quality public transport.

The developer also gives no information on the sustainability of the buildings themselves in terms of e.g. materials, energy efficiency or use of renewable energy. If MSDC were minded to grant this application, we would urge that the developer be required to build to the highest environmentally sustainable standards, to offset the detriment to biodiversity and the impact of increased traffic movements.

2. Drinkstone Parish Council objects of the basis that the detriment caused by this development outweighs the short term economic activity it will generate while being built.

This is contrary to the NPPF's need to provide development that contributes to a strong and competitive rural economy. Given the scale of the development, and the need for occupiers to travel out of the immediate area to work, Drinkstone Parish Council believes that this development does

not comply sufficiently with NPPF para 55: "...housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities. For example, where there are groups of smaller settlements, development in one village may support services in a village nearby"

Since occupiers of the dwellings will be reliant on cars for work, leisure and access to amenities, Drinkstone PC believes that any beneficial effect on the sustainability of local amenities will be small. Occupiers are just as likely to drive further afield for the necessities of daily living, as they are to use more local amenities, so in our view the beneficial impact on services in Woolpit or Rattlesden will be too small to outweigh the detriment caused by the development.

3. Drinkstone Parish Council takes the view that this development fails the NPPF environmental dimension of sustainable development, "protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment, and helping to improve biodiversity, use of natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution....including moving to a low carbon economy", on the following grounds:

The applicants claim that the development will take place on previously used land, and could be considered a brownfield site with "three derelict buildings". There are the remains of a ruined cottage on the site, which has not been occupied for more than 70 years. The other buildings are actually sheds which evidence the use of this site as a residential garden within the curtilage of High Barns. This was the case until the death of the previous occupant when the land was divided and High Barns sold separately. Drinkstone PC believes that this land should not be defined as previously used or brownfield. There is photographic evidence of this site having been a residential garden, therefore we suggest that under NPPF para 48, MSDC would not be able to count this development towards its housing site target, as residential gardens are specifically excluded.

The development will have the following adverse impacts on the natural, built and historic environment:

4. Drinkstone Parish Council objects to this application on the grounds that no appropriate mitigation strategy has been put forward for the protection of an endangered species

The site is adjacent to a breeding ground for the Great Crested Newt and provides a habitat for this endangered species. It is our view that the applicants have not given sufficient information to allow MSDC to determine the likely impact of this development on the endangered species. Drinkstone Parish Council suggests that it may be necessary for MSDC to submit a license application to Natural England to allow the disturbance of the Great Crested Newts. It is felt that it is not sufficient to make the preparation of a mitigation strategy a condition of an approved planning permission. Until a mitigation strategy has been prepared and assessed, it is not possible to determine whether the impact of a development upon a protected species can be satisfactorily mitigated.

5. Drinkstone Parish Council objects to this application on the grounds of loss of amenity which would result from the felling of a group of mature trees

There are a large number of mature and semi mature trees on the site. These are a key landscape feature in the village, providing a visible backdrop from many viewpoints in Drinkstone Green. They have high amenity value for the group of 3 listed buildings that abut the property, the other residents of Chapel Lane and its surrounds, as well as the wider public who use the Village Hall which shares a boundary with the site.

Whereas some separation exists between the dwellings and the trees to be retained under this application, the dwellings are in close proximity to the trees, and the gardens indicated on the plans are shown as being more than 50% occupied by the existing trees. Close proximity of the dwellings to the trees is likely to result in inconvenience to future occupiers, and there would be no way to resist future proposals for work to reduce the trees, or indeed for their removal, which would have the potential to threaten the value and the future of the trees in the long term and thus result in significant harm to the surrounding locality.

Although the trees individually have not been deemed worthy of a TPO, the PC maintains that the loss of this established group of trees will have a detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the area in contravention of Policy H16 of the Mid Suffolk Local Plan. If MSDC is minded to approve this application we would ask that MSDC imposes conditions regarding the need for the long term retention of the trees and protection during the development phase to prevent damage and/or removal. The Council believes that these remaining trees meet the necessary criteria for protection in that they are of high public amenity value and they are under threat.

6. Drinkstone PC objects to this application on the grounds of the detrimental effect on the setting of a group of three listed buildings, and on the scale and form of other existing buildings

The development site is bounded by three listed buildings which share a boundary with the site on three of its sides. The English Heritage listing of one building states that one of the four reasons given for its historical and architectural interest was its “considerable group value” with the nearby listed buildings. A development of 5 two story dwellings placed at the centre of this group would have a detrimental effect on their linked landscape setting and the cohesive value of the group.

It is felt that the design and layout of the development also does not respect the scale of other surrounding properties, and is therefore contrary to Policy GP1 of the Mid Suffolk Local Plan, and would be detrimental to the character of the existing street scene.

7. Drinkstone PC objects to this application on the grounds of highway safety (Policy T10)

Chapel Lane is a narrow, unadopted road. It is a single track lane, used by vehicles and pedestrians. It has no passing places, no pavement and no street lighting, with only narrow grass verges where pedestrians can step aside to avoid vehicles.

The proposed development includes parking for 10 cars. An additional 10 vehicles using Chapel Lane represents an increase of at least 40% in regular vehicle movement in the lane. This does not take into account an increase in delivery vehicles using the lane as a result of an additional 5 dwellings. It also increases the number of vehicles entering and leaving the lane at the junction with the highway, where there is restricted visibility in both directions.

The applicants propose to widen the lane by 5m along the frontage of the site. This does nothing to address the bottleneck that would then occur along the remainder of the lane to the junction with the highway.

Any attempt to widen the lane would inevitably require the removal of hedges and trees. This would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the lane. In addition, as an unadopted road established under the enclosures act of 1854, the ownership of the lane is problematical. Although we appreciate that this is not a material planning consideration, seeking permission to widen the lane would thus present considerable legal issues.

8. Drinkstone PC objects to this application on the grounds of the increased risk of surface water flooding.

The applicants propose to lay a pipe along what they describe as a ditch which runs along the frontage of the site. This is in fact a stream feeding into the River Blackbourne. This stream floods regularly after spells of heavy rain. The neighbouring properties of Bellrod and Brookside have both experienced flooding incidents after heavy rain, both in summer and winter, which has been reflected in their increased insurance premiums and higher excess for flood related damage. The flood waters are often contaminated with raw sewage as Anglian Water has acknowledged that the main drain serving Chapel Lane is inadequate for the number of dwellings currently connected to it.

The applicants propose to lay a 225 pipe to take the flow of the stream. This is patently inadequate to accommodate the flow of this stream, and will lead to more frequent and more severe flooding of neighbouring properties, as will the increased surface water running off the site if it is developed, due to less absorption of water as a result of the proposed hard landscaping.

Drinkstone Parish Council has concerns that the residents of Bellrod and Brookside will have their residential amenity value affected by overlooking and loss of privacy, especially at Brookside. There is also concern that the residential amenity for any prospective resident of the proposed new dwellings would be compromised by proximity to the very well used Village Hall and its car park.

Daphne Youngs, Chair Drinkstone PC

Photos:

Photo 1



Aerial photograph showing part of the development site under cultivation as a residential garden

Photo 2



The junction of Chapel Lane and Gedding Road, looking right

Photo 3



The junction of Chapel Lane and Gedding Road looking left

Photo 4



The approach to Chapel Lane

Entrance

Photo 5



Chapel Lane from the highway

Photo 6



Village Hall with the
backdrop of trees on the
proposed development site

Photo 7



The stream along the north side of
Chapel Lane after rain