**MINUTES
of the**

**ELMSWELL ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

**held at The Blackbourne on the
14th May 2014**

**Present** 62 members of the public
 Gillian Benjamin of Community Action Suffolk
 John Jowitt of Messrs PJ Planning
 MSDC Ward Member Cllr Sarah Mansel
 Cllr David Barker, Chairman, Elmswell Parish Council
 Peter Dow, Parish Clerk

1 Cllr David Barker welcomed all present and outlined the structure of the evening.

2 John Jowitt summarised, as follows, the outcome of the MSDC Planning Committee meeting
 held on 07.05.14 at which the Planning application for development on the redundant Bacon
 Factory site had been determined:
 2.1 The application is acceptable to MSDC with certain outstanding issues to be delegated
 to officers;
 2.2 The outstanding issues relate to Highways and Network Rail issues;
 2.3 The application is not determined pending resolution of those issues;
 2.4 Ward members and others raised the issue of the employment which the site once
 offered and which should be reflected in any development by way of the provision of
 employment opportunities;
 2.5 £1.3m is offered towards the construction of a footbridge to address safety concerns
 regarding the ungated rail level crossing adjacent to the site which is an ancient
 Public Right of way and forms part of the village’s footpath network.

3 John Jowitt confirmed that he had very recently had sight of the draft revision to the
 professional civil engineers’ estimates for the proposed relief road triggered by the Bacon
 Factory development and that this remained well within the original £3 - £4m costing,
 substantially below figures of £10 - £20m bandied about, including by SCC Highways officers
 who have not surveyed the site. He suggested that a way forward might be to have the £1.3m
 offer diverted from the footbridge scheme, substituting a footpath diversion in its stead, as a
 substantial contribution to the relief road cost.

4 Questions were invited regarding John Jowitt’s presentation and the following ensued:
 4.1 Surely the £1.3m is an opening offer and subject to negotiation?
 *Yes, and other elements can be brought in towards contributing to a road if that is what
 the community wants.*
 4.2 To take the relief road only as far as School Road is simply moving a traffic jam from
 the crossing gates to the new School Road junction. The road should be built all the

 way to the A14 roundabout.
 *Again, a community decision. The costings, as per the original scheme, are in 3
 sections and could easily be phased.* 4.3 Does the engineers’ estimated costing include the railway bridge?
 *Yes. A total of £3-£4m, depending on the final specification, covers the construction of
 the bridge.* 4.4 The cost of a footbridge at £1.3m seems disproportionate compared to a road scheme
 which includes a road bridge at under £4m.
 *The civil engineers’ report will soon be available and will clarify detailed build costs.*

4.5 Does the £3 -£4m build cost include land acquisition?
 *No. The land is delivered by virtue of the scheme as a whole.*

4.6 When the road is provided, Station Road should be closed off at the crossing and a
 footbridge or underpass provided for pedestrians. This would only inconvenience a

 few households.

 4.7 Moreton Hall has secured a relief road in advance of the houses being built, why not
 Elmswell?
 *Elmswell is a brownfield site. Consequently there is far less ‘leverage’ in negotiating
 with the developer. Further, the Bury project is for at least 900 houses, so the road
 contribution is a much smaller proportion of the project cost. Any other land adjacent
 to the Bacon Factory site and which is needed to be brought into the scheme in order
 for the road to be provided would not be brownfield and would, therefore, yield a higher
 proportionate infrastructure contribution. The Developer is suggesting that the scheme*

 *can go ahead without a relief road. We would be wise to suggest ‘swapping’ the*

 *employment contribution for road building contribution.*

 4.8 Until this has gone beyond the Planning approval stage, all the talk of a relief road is

 pie in the sky. Only Suffolk County Council can make a Planning application for roads

 and, therefore, their estimate of £10m - £20m must maintain.

 *The relief road must be incorporated by Mid Suffolk as policy. The Planning*

 *application can come from any quarter.*

4.9 The HGV traffic on Ashfield Road is already intolerable. Taking it through the new
 development would make for an unappealing prospect and lead to complaints from the
 incomers. A far better option is to build a road from Grove Lane across the fields
 behind the village, over the old A45 to join A14 at a new junction.
 *The new residents will have bought into the scheme as it exists, having taken the road
 into account.*

4.10 If 190 houses yield £1.3m, how many more houses would be needed to fund a £4m
 road?
 *The contribution from the proposal site, a brownfield site, is far lower than would be the
 case with the other, greenfield sites. The relief road would open up other sites for*

 *development and they would have to contribute to its provision to a far greater extent
 per dwelling than is the case with the Bacon Factory development.*

4.11 Under new legislation, development on brownfield sites can be stopped.
 *On the contrary, NPPF core principles include the encouragement of, ‘the effective use
 of land by reusing land that has previously been developed, ie brownfield land,
 providing that it is not of high environmental value.’ The only argument against this in
 the case of the Bacon Factory site would be that it has been an employment site and should remain so, but this would fall against the test of its being a, ‘long standing
 vacant site’. Elmswell Parish Council originally argued the ‘employment site’ case but Mid Suffolk have done the exercise and it cannot be made to work.*

 4.12 190 houses need a service road, not a relief road.
 *The original proposal was for a road running through the development but MSDC have
 persuaded the new developer otherwise. The road structure as proposed is adequate
 and acceptable.*

 4.13 There is a danger that Mid Suffolk will look favourably upon development of brownfield land adjacent to the current proposal site but outside of the development envelope.

 *The development boundary remains intact unless Mid Suffolk policies change, which is not going to happen without community input. This community must use the leverage afforded by the constraints of the existing boundary to seek infrastructure gains, such as the relief road.*

4.14 The ‘by-pass’ is not a by-pass at all, it is a road through a housing estate and HGV’s won’t use it. HC Wilson should re-locate to A14.
 *The relief road skirts the estate rather than going through it. It addresses the inevitable growth in both road and rail traffic.*

 4.15 Heavy traffic will still have to use Ashfield Road.
 *We can only attempt the achievable. We can discourage through traffic in the heart of the village.*

At this point, Cllr Barker sought the feeling of the Meeting, towards informing the Parish Council’s thinking on the matter of the relief road, by way of a series of straw polls.

QUESTION: Should the village strive for a relief road to remove through traffic from over the
 crossing?
 5 HANDS AGAINST

 4.16 A straw poll is not representative of the village. I do not want to read in The Newsletter that this vote represents ‘the feeling of the meeting’.
 *That is exactly what a straw poll does.* 4.17 People want a relief road, but they want it to go all the way down to the roundabout.
 *Let us test that.*

QUESTIONS: Is a relief road a good idea in principle?
 1 HAND AGAINST
 It would be better for any relief road to go all the way to the A14 roundabout.

 0 HANDS AGAINST
 If the relief road can’t, in the first instance, go all the way to the roundabout, we

 go ahead anyway?
 7 HANDS AGAINST

 4.18 The current traffic problems are, at times, chaos. Sad to think that this road might never happen.

5 There being no further business relating specifically to the bacon Factory Planning
 application, Gillian Benjamin gave a brief run-down of the progress made by the Neighbourhood Plan Strategy Group. In her experience of such groups she considered Elmswell to be lucky in having identified an excellent body of people with a wide range of skills and experiences who have already made far more progress than she could ever have expected from just 2 meetings.

 The public were shown 3 areas on which comment was invited, these repeated around the
 room in displays with the opportunity for written feedback, being:

* The Project Plan – a timetable of the process just begun extending to September 2015;
* A Stakeholder Analysis – identifying groups and organisations to be consulted and placing them in a hierarchy of those least/most affected by the outcomes of the Plan and those having the least/greatest influence on the Plan;
* The Key issues that the Plan should address.

There was a 30 minute interval when all present were encouraged to address and respond to the issues displayed and to discuss them, or any other relevant topic, with Group members who were identified by badges. There were boxes available to accept written comment

6 The meeting re-convened and questions were invited on the Neighbourhood Plan with
 Cllr Sarah Mansel, the Chair of the Strategy Group, in the chair:
 6.1 The questionnaires should include a contact number in case of queries and
 they should be collected door-to-door.
 *This is exactly the format which the Group anticipates.* 6.2 The number and siting of street lights should be the subject of a question in the
 questionnaire.
 *Agreed and noted.*

7 Cllr David Barker assumed the chair to invite questions or comments on any matter at
 all relevant to the village:
 7.1 We have a wonderful newsletter but it would be better if it carried
 correspondence from readers.
 *This matter is frequently raised and regularly discussed by the Trustees of the
 Elmswell Amenities Association, the publishers. The comment will be*

 *forwarded to them.* 7.2 The issue of noise from the concrete section of A14 is to be raised again
 through the MP and a piece is to go in the Newsletter inviting comment towards
 strengthening the case. All present were invited to contribute if they have a
 view.

8 There being no further business, Cllr Barker thanked all concerned and the meeting
 closed at 9.00pm.

Peter Dow

23.05.14