

**NOTES FROM BROOKE VILLAGE MEETING AT FRAMINGHAM EARL HIGH SCHOOL
THURSDAY 21 JUNE 2018 AT 7.30PM**

Present: Edward Jinks (EJ) – Chairman of Brooke Parish Council
Martin Tobin – Brooke Parish Councillor
John Fuller (JF) – South Norfolk Councillor
Helen Mellors (HM)– South Norfolk Council Planning Department
Barry Stone (BS) – Norfolk County Councillor
Julian Wells (JW) – FW Properties
Nick Durrant (ND) – representing Frank Spurgeon
Anthony Spurgeon
Bex Cole - Brooke School Governor
Lynn Chapman – Vicar

and approximately 300 members of the public present. 287 handouts were taken.

EJ welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked people to read the handout (copy attached) regarding the running of the meeting. He then handed over to Martin Tobin, the newest member of the Parish Council, to talk about his experience of life in the village and his role on the Parish Council

EJ presented his opening remarks for the meeting (copy attached) then introduced a succession of four speakers, starting with John Fuller, who has been our SNCouncillor since 2003.

JF expressed his disappointment at recent comments on social media and felt that "lines have been crossed" with lies and misrepresentations. He stated that there has been no planning application made yet for either of the proposals being discussed tonight. He went through the planning process and explained that most applications are dealt with by paid planning officers who have strict criteria to apply both locally and nationally, set out by law. He explained about the current development land supply and that the local development plan is about to be reviewed; landowners have put forward land to be allocated for for new housing development in the new Local Plan; however SNC have received offers of plots of land 20 times what would be required to meet the need for new housing up to 2036, so most of the sites put forward will be rejected in the Local Plan review. He explained that Brooke is not being singled out for more building than any other community at this stage, nor is the total of houses required being divided by the number of villages in order to allocate new housing land allocations. He did not want to talk about the school as this will be covered by the County Council. He explained about the 5-year land supply and how, historically in South Norfolk, we have not built enough houses as Parish Councils such as ours have held the line and kept all developments quite small. People are getting older and we need to provide homes for younger people. Lots of people want the village to stay the same but he is not sure how realistic this is. He also talked about the types of houses which may be built, how many smaller homes, how many shared equity, how many "affordable" etc. South Norfolk's record on enforcing social housing on developers is one to be proud of, building more than 650 "social housing" homes in South Norfolk last year. He went on to say that he had been accused on social media of "taking a bung" from one of the developers and that he was guilty of criminal action. He is very angry and he said the campaign on social media must stop and the anonymous trolls on social media must take a long, hard look at themselves and stop. He explained that issues are not clear-cut but

he will represent views from both sides on planning grounds only, and not by social media campaigns, petitions or anonymous contributions. He loves the village and fears that we will tear ourselves apart if the anonymous comments continue.

Nick Durrant spoke next on behalf of Frank Spurgeon's proposal. He spoke of the 5-year land supply and the local development plan to 2036. It is not the landowner's intention to push through this proposal on the back of the lack of a 5-year land supply. He suggested that approximately 100 houses would need to be built in the next 10 years or so and their proposal is only for 55 houses on 2 sites. He said the current chair of governors of Brooke School has described the school as "not fit for purpose". He briefly touched on the failure of the County Council in obtaining the land for a new school and that the money which was in the budget is now not there. He said a limited development could help boost the falling rolls in the school. The Wood Farm development would provide the land to build a large enough school to house 140 pupils with only 35 houses, with another 20 houses on land further along High Green, providing 55 new houses in total. He was asked why there are 2 sites; he explained that this allows a certain amount of flexibility in development and that they could both be developed quite differently with differing architectural styles. He also knows SNC wants to encourage smaller builders rather than huge developments. Both developments are being followed through the Local Development Plan review process, which may allay fears of building outside the development line in the current Local Plan. This development also includes a footpath along parts of High Green to link various parts of the village. He said that the land provided for a new school could be used to play on if a new school was not built. He also stated that the landowner would provide finance to support the existing school instead of land for a new school if that was the preferred option.

Julian Wells from FW properties spoke next. He wanted to dispel some of the rumours which are circulating on social media. The land is owned by his wife's cousins who live in Oxfordshire and he said his company does not get any financial gain from the sale of the land but will earn money as the developer. He also wanted to clear the record about the purchase of the land for a new school on Norwich Road. During 2014, NPS (Norfolk Property Services) was looking for sites for a new school. At the end of 2014, it was confirmed that the Norwich Road site had been shortlisted and meetings took place with NPS, who suggested that the CC (County Council) would offer agricultural prices for the land; Mr Wells said the family who own the land would probably not sell at that level. No price was ever offered by NPS, who informed him that the CC had changed their favoured site to land adjoining Burgess Way but they were not able to make a deal with the land owner there. Therefore, it was not FW Properties which scuppered the deal for the land for a new school.

He explained that they would provide fully serviced land for a new school and following the very useful public exhibition, they have reduced the proposed number of houses to 148. This would be a gradual process of building over say 7 years. 70% of the houses will be 2 or 3 bedroomed houses for young buyers. Also bungalows and places for older people to downsize to, should they wish to do so. This is also following the consultation in the village hall and responding to comments from the public. They have also planned a footway from the village hall to the proposed new school site and a zebra crossing across Norwich Road and there would also be a roundabout which would be built early on in the scheme. Drainage issues will also be addressed with the drainage authority, but JW said that the flow levels of water will be no greater than those at the moment.

Barry Stone spoke next. He has been our County Councillor since 2015 and ever since

then, he has been aware of the desire for a new school. He confirmed that the Burgess Road site had become the favoured site for a new school. It was not possible to purchase this land for the money the CC was prepared to pay. The money could still be made available at some date in the future but no assurances could be made tonight that, even with the provision of land at no cost, the County Council would make the recommendation to build a new school. It is not possible for a developer to actually build the school. The CC is building up a new business plan for Brooke School; space is limited; there are flooding issues; there are portacabins and the fabric of the school is said to be "past its sell by date". At the moment, there is no identified need for more primary school places but this may change, particularly with the building in Poringland. Mr Stone's opinion is that we need to provide some sort of residential development in the village, services, roads, draining etc before the CC would find the business case for a new school. This is his personal opinion and it may not happen for the next 2 – 3 years. There are no commitments and no promises but this is the case as he sees it at the moment. He says there needs to be new input to keep going our shops, pubs, garage etc but this will only happen with new housing development. He stressed that new infrastructure is generated by new housing. He does, however, support the provision of a new primary school for Brooke.

Q & A Session

Drainage was raised by someone from the audience, who said that draining from solid roads and paths is very different from that draining off agricultural land. JW said that drainage requires approval from the flood control agency. The water is held back and then released by flow control (tenuation in the form of tenuation ponds) and if agreement is not forthcoming from the flood control agency then planning permission would not be granted. He agreed that they could have done better with the management of drainage with the new houses on Norwich Road.

Mr Hillier asked about compulsory purchase of land for the school. Any compulsory purchase has to be done at current market value – Helen Mellors explained that it is a lengthy process which is rarely undertaken. The total price for a new school is now approximately £5m which has increased in the last 3 years from 3.5m.

Mrs MacGregor said we are being asked to accept an increase in the size of the village by 60% and should not expect to fill our school with 4 year olds from Poringland, and shouldn't Poringland build its own school if it does not have capacity for children living in Poringland.

Hannah Skeppelhorn (aged 15) said Poringland, Woodton and BerghApton schools are now full to capacity. She said it is only 5 minutes by car to and from Poringland and parents will probably be quite happy to travel to a good school.

EJ asked why we are talking about a school for 210 pupils, and not the 140 capacity that we have now. BS explained that a school for 210 pupils is what is thought to be a viable size for the business plan.

Ms Marshall, new resident, said she moved here from Stoke Holy Cross and has personally seen the damage which has happened with a large development which happened in Stoke. There is a problem with not having enough provision of doctors, dentists already. BS said that all infrastructure has to follow building and development and not necessarily be provided for prior to building.

JF said that it is up to NHS England to provide doctors' surgeries and there is a new surgery at Loddon, Mill Surgery and the existing Heathgate Surgery in Poringland. The government will no longer allow one doctor surgeries which used to be in Brooke. This is following cases of abuse like the Harold Shipman case. Some of the surgeries are indeed full but this is the responsibility of NHS England.

Mr Bryan from Brooke wanted to ask BS about the provision of a larger school than is currently there. He said the larger number of pupils means there is clearly a plan to allow much more building in Brooke. BS explained that the cost of land, building and everything else has gone up and to support a viable business plan, the school would be larger than that which is currently provided. He said that the surrounding schools which are currently full would be looking to Brooke to provide places. Currently, some parents are sending their children out of the village to these surrounding schools and we have children from out of the area coming to Brooke School. Mr Bryan was not happy with the first answer and asked BS to explain the policy change and why the CC is "twisting the arms" of the District Council. BS said there had not been a policy change.

Mike Liggins offered his personal opinion. He feels the matter of the school is a massive red herring. He said it is a well-known fact that the CC has no funding so the chance of having a new school is pie in the sky. He feels that Brooke school is a brilliant school and has been so for some time. He said we need to cut to the chase and decide how many houses we would be willing to accept and how low we can get that number.

A mother of a 4 year old in Brooke with two more children born in Brooke had looked at houses and schools in the area. They have chosen to send their children to Brooke school. No-one has asked them where they are sending their children to either pre-school or primary school and yet people are saying that Brooke parents want this and that.

Mrs Hannah Spinks said that some people choose to send their children to Brooke from out of the village as it is considered such a good school.

Mike Liggins asked JW "what is the bottom line for the number of houses to be built in Brooke"; JW explained how the cost is analysed and calculated. 148 is the figure.

JF said that there is an aim of 33% of all developments being affordable housing of all sorts but the reality of 29% is where we are currently. These would be controlled rent, shared purchase but not open to all. 33% would produce about 48 affordable homes in a site of 148 so only 100 would be the ones in the private sector and this would make it financially less viable.

BS explained about priorities for capital projects and how money from building developments helps with making a business case for capital projects.

JW explained the finances behind building fewer houses.

Mrs Bryan said that there is still no guarantee that funding for a school will happen and children will still keep going elsewhere.

Jonny Spinks has 2 sons who go to Brooke School and his wife works there, the staff work very hard and the school just needs lots of maintenance. He took JW to task for saying on

the information day that he could categorically guarantee that a school would be built. Jonny had spoken to Isabel Horner at the CC this week who said that there is no money in the budget at the moment for a new school, without the building of new houses.

JF explained that there are no circumstances where anyone would even consider allowing building outside the current building lines, without the provision of a new school. He also said that the lack of a 5 year land supply does not give a developer a “golden ticket” to build wherever they like but it is, however, a very real issue and councils are being pressed to permit new development where there is no 5 year land supply. He was heckled about why other villages are not being pressed to build schools and that Poringland developers have been forced to double the size of Poringland School. He was heckled so much he was unable to continue speaking.

A lady asked about what is happening about a new school in Poringland, which she has heard is not now going to be built. BS said he was unable to answer this question but would find the answer.

Mr Skeppelhorn said both his children have been through Brooke School, he said the important thing is that we keep a school in Brooke, whether it is a new one or the current one, properly maintained. If we do not get a new school or update the current one, it is entirely down to the CC.

Barbara Fox said we should consider the possibility of both housing developments going through and, if we do have houses outside the development plan will we still have to take more houses from the new LGDP when it is legitimised. John Fuller said this is difficult to answer as we do not know what the number is yet. His gut feeling is that South Norfolk may have to take about 2000 new houses which would be divided amongst all the service villages; for Brooke it could be 50 – 100 houses.

“Katherine” said that she was brought up in Brooke but can’t now afford to live there and now lives in Poringland. How would the new houses be priced? JF stated that this is the reason why new affordable 1-2 bedroom houses need to be built.

A lady asked where all the children will go to High School when they move on to secondary school but, as there is currently no provision of secondary education in Brooke, this was not appropriate to discuss.

A man (Stuart) commented that several smaller developments of say 12 properties here and there in several places would be far better, not the monstrosity that happened in Costessey and seems to be being encouraged now. JF said that encouragement for a larger building development could not be further from the truth. He also said it is much harder to insist on the right percentage of “affordable housing” on sites of 12 houses or fewer.

A man asked why JF encouraged FW to put forward their housing application in January/February 2018. JF said he was just responding to the discourse which had been brought up by Isabel Horner at the Parish Council meeting when she said the money was no longer in the capital budget. At least if there was a planning application we could look at it as such.

Helen Mellors (South Norfolk Council) reiterated there is no planning application at the moment. The developers have only been in touch with Highways to decide that, should a

school and development happen, then a roundabout would be needed. Consultation is all on the website and is completely transparent. Benefits are weighed up against any harm which may be caused.

A lady asked how the roads could cope and why not go further towards Suffolk rather than increasing traffic towards Norwich. HM said a full transport assessment would be taken into account as well as public transport. At the end of the day, it is a balance between the benefits and the harm which may be done.

Mrs Bryan asked if a planning "NO" could be overturned by a Committee. HM stated that this could happen but they have to give reasons why they may go against their own officers and then give reasons why they wish to make that decision.

Mr Robb asked about the two sites proposed by Mr Spurgeon. Would this mean a substantial improvement to High Green and would this mean a roundabout at the Post Office junction. HM said that there is also no actual planning application from this developer either. The same criteria would be applied to both. Mr Robb said why not get in Nick Knowles and the Big Build Team in to build the school.

ND answered the point about the Spurgeon site providing either a new school or maintaining the old school. This had not been considered previously but would now be considered. The original plan just provided the site for a new school with 55 houses. If it was preferable to have fewer houses, they would consider providing funds to update and maintain the current school.

Mrs Sue Holl commented that we just need to think about the building and not consider the provision of a new school. Do we want any houses or not?

A lady asked about affordable homes – not for youngsters but for people like her who wish to downsize from larger family homes. They would not be appropriate for affordable homes where people have to fit the criteria for help with housing.

EJ reminded everyone that members of the public will be able to make their own comments on the SNC website on any planning applications that are submitted, and asked that copies of such comments are copied to the Parish Clerk (contact details in the Parish Magazine). This will assist the Parish Council in making its comments on any planning applications made

EJ thanked everyone for coming but advised that the meeting must close as the hall should have been vacated at 10.00pm. Meeting closed at 10.10pm

Brooke village meeting, Thursday 21 June 2018

Introduction by Edward Jinks, Chairman

Good evening. My name is Edward Jinks. I am chairman of Brooke Parish Council and I would like to welcome you all to tonight's meeting.

I am sure there are better ways to celebrate the first day of summer, so thank you for taking the time to be here tonight.

You should all have received a piece of paper on your way in. On one side is background information and the agenda for tonight's meeting. On the other side are some notes about recording of this meeting, including guidelines for people who wish to make video recordings.

Please can you read these notes. I know of one person who wishes to video the meeting and he has agreed to comply with the guidelines set out in the note.

Before I go any further I want to hand over briefly to Martin Tobin, the newest member of the Parish Council, who'd like to say a few words.

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Thank you, Martin.

Let me start by thanking you for making the effort to get to the meeting here at Fram. You will know that we had planned to hold this meeting in Brooke, but the attendance at FW Properties exhibition a couple of weeks ago made us think again about the number of people likely to attend tonight.

We didn't want to be in a venue where people would have to be turned away due to lack of space, or have to stand outside, so we made a late decision to meet here. It is less convenient than Brooke Village Hall but can hold far more people, so on balance we thought moving the meeting was the right thing to do.

Thank you also for your patience in waiting for this meeting to take place. It is happening later than some people would have liked, and it's unfortunate that the last few weeks have allowed time for rumours to develop. In particular there seems to be a view that the Parish Council is in cahoots with one or more developers and is pushing for a major new development in the village.

That is simply not the case.

Since we learned about the two development proposals we have been actively engaged in setting up this meeting. We want as many people as possible to hear about what is being proposed for our village and be able to ask questions of the developers, the Parish Council, County Council and South Norfolk about all aspects of the developments, including the issue of the school.

This will help people to submit their own comments on any planning applications that are made in due course, and to guide the Parish Council in how it responds on behalf of the village.

To be clear – the Parish Council does not decide planning applications, that is the role of South Norfolk – either by the planning officers or by the planning committee. The Parish Council is consulted and is entitled to make a recommendation on whether to approve or refuse, but the decision is with South Norfolk.

Both these development proposals are on land which is outside the village development boundary, so the Parish Council's default position would be to recommend refusal.

Over the last few decades the Parish Council has consistently recommended refusal for any development proposals outside the village development boundary.

We have also consistently sought to minimise the expansion of the village whenever the Local Plan has been reviewed - the current Local Plan for the period to 2026 provides for 20 new houses.

The other big issue at the moment is funding for a new school – or rather, the lack of funding for a new school.

For many years the Parish Council has been pressing the County Council to provide a new school in Brooke, as the physical state of the existing school has been falling increasingly below current required standards.

This pressure eventually paid off - in 2014 the County Council allocated funding, with the expectation that a new school would be built within the ensuing 3-4 years.

Since 2014 we have continued to press for the school to be built, but we have received very limited feedback, and progress has been frustratingly slow.

Finally, in late 2017, we were advised that funding for Brooke school was no longer "ring-fenced" and had been allocated to other projects. We finally received an explanation in January this year, when Isabel Horner from the County Council attended the

Parish Council meeting and explained why Brooke is no longer a high priority for a new school:

- the unavailability of suitable land on acceptable terms
- falling pupil numbers and
- no likelihood of significant new housing to boost potential pupil numbers

For these reasons we were told that the prospects for re-instating the funding for a new school in Brooke are very low.

We were very upset by this news, particularly as we had not been engaged in the decision-making process, or been able to make representations. It was the first time we had heard that pupil numbers were an issue for the funding of a new school.

Apart from the new school, we don't know what the future holds for the existing school. Over the years that I have lived in the village the school has been successful and very popular, but if pupil numbers continue to fall we are concerned that the physical constraints of the building will make it increasingly unviable.

Following our January meeting we were approached by a developer proposing to put forward land for inclusion within a new strategic plan for the village encompassing the development of a new primary school and housing. We rejected the suggestion of a meeting.

In March we received an approach from another party, also talking about a development which would include land for a school.

It was when we received the second approach that we thought it would be useful to explore what was being offered from both parties, and how this might help the prospects for a new school.

Meetings were held in late March on a confidential basis so that we could hear about any proposals before they were made public, and enable the Parish Council to consider how it would develop its response. We made it clear to both parties that the meetings were for us to gather information and that we would not be commenting on their proposals or encouraging any particular course of action. At the meetings we learned that Mr Spurgeon was proposing 55 houses off High Green and FW Properties were proposing 200 houses behind the village hall - both included the promise of free serviced land for a new school.

Since those meetings we have been working to bring both proposals before the village for a proper debate.

Although the Parish Council's established policy would be to recommend refusal, the situation surrounding the new school has caused us to stand back and think whether its traditional approach is appropriate.

Decisions on any planning applications will be made by South Norfolk - depending on what they decide on these proposals, there could be a significant impact on the village.

Approving a large new development would have a huge impact on the character and scale of the village, but may improve the prospects for a new school by providing land at no cost to the County Council, and by creating new housing which could boost pupil numbers.

But the risks are high. We cannot assume that we would get a new school unless we get an unconditional guarantee from the County Council and Diocese that they would build and run a new school. We thought we had this before, but then it disappeared.

Conversely, refusing a large new development may result in no new school.

We really need to have answers to some key questions:

- without a new school what are the prospects for the existing school surviving over the next 10/15/20 years
- how can County Council funding for a new school be reinstated without paying the price of a large new housing development in the village
- if new development is accepted, how enforceable is an agreement to provide a school

There are two other factors that are relevant to the current situation – both relate to the Local Development Plan.

- The current Local Plan
 - there seems to be a view that the current village development boundaries in rural south Norfolk (including Brooke) are vulnerable because of issues with the five-year land supply
 - I will leave John Fuller to explain this, but my understanding is that there is a risk that South Norfolk may find it difficult to refuse new planning applications outside the existing village development boundaries
- The Local Plan is about to be reviewed by South Norfolk for the period up to 2036

- there is a requirement for up to 7,200 new houses in the combined areas of South Norfolk, Norwich and Broadland, so there will be pressure on villages like Brooke to accommodate more new housing
- as with the last review, landowners have put forward sites far in excess of 7,200 houses, including a number in Brooke
- as before, the vast majority of these will be rejected
- South Norfolk will hold a public consultation exercise later this year on all of the sites put forward

If a large new development in Brooke is not favoured, we will need to think about what we can do to ensure the continued presence of a school in Brooke, either by improving the viability of the existing school, or by strengthening the case for a new school.

The County Council talks about a new school for 210 pupils, but this is far larger than the existing school - we may wish to campaign for a new school of the same size as the existing school, which would inevitably cost less.

After tonight's meeting you will be able to make representations to South Norfolk - both on planning applications that may be submitted for specific development proposals, and also on the sites put forward under the Local Plan review.

Details of where to submit comments are included on the paper distributed at the start of the meeting. This includes the Parish Council website with details of the Clerk's email address - we would like to be copied in on all representations so that we can reflect those views in our comments.

You may also wish to make representations to the County Council on the funding for a new school - I will leave Barry Stone to let us know how this can be done.

I am sure there will be plenty of people wishing to speak tonight, so I would ask that all requests come through me by raising your arm. I will try to ensure that everyone who wants to speak is able to do so.

It is a large hall, so there are microphones for us to use - please wait for a microphone to arrive then state your name before making your comments.

In the interests of time I may need to ask people to wind up their comments if they are taking too long.

You have a copy of the agenda - there is one change - we had hoped to have a County Council Education officer here tonight, but that has not been possible. Barry will be dealing with any questions you may have on County Council matters.

Introduction by Martin Tobin

Hello everybody.

A lot has been said about Brooke Parish Council over recent months.

I ask for 30 seconds of your time to explain where I am coming from and a couple of minutes to talk about Brooke Parish Council and the role that it undertakes.

My name is Martin. I am 37 years old. I speak from the heart as I have lived in Brooke for my entire life.

I went to Brooke School. My children have had the benefit of Brooke School. I got married at Brooke Church and we have had a business based in Brooke for the last 13 years.

My family and I have had the benefit of just about every amenity that Brooke has to offer.

I care passionately about Brooke.

18 months ago I joined Brooke Parish Council.

Brooke Parish Council is a body of 9 volunteers that give up some free time to try and benefit the Parish.

Most of the work that the PC does is mundane in its nature, but important in contributing to the pleasant environment that Brooke has to offer.

We are talking Dog Bins, Grass Cutting and the like.

Brooke PC, as a representation of all residents and in a democratic fashion, is also invited to comment on, recommend approval of or refusal of ALL planning applications in the Parish, regardless of scale.

When the PC recommends approval, that does not mean it will be approved.

Likewise, in recommending refusal, it does not mean that the application will be refused.

Decisions on whether to grant or refuse a Planning Application are made by South Norfolk Council – either by the Planning Officers or by the Planning Committee.

The PC's input is a very small part of the Planning process.

In my time at the PC, I can wholeheartedly say that the current committee are honest, hardworking and committed – Without exception.

The idea that the PC has or would withhold information is quite frankly ridiculous and could not be further from the truth.

The PC is well organised, well led and lives within its means.

The PC is not anonymous.

All of Brooke's current Parish Councillors have one thing in common – They all care passionately about Brooke.

Brooke PC, as with all other parish councils, has no authority whatsoever to prevent anybody submitting a Planning Application for anything.

The absolute best way forward from tonight is to garner the information that is being offered, make your informed opinion and as and when a Planning Application is received, convey your thoughts – whatever they may be – to the South Norfolk Planners.

Thank you.