

Notes from the joint meeting of local Parish Councils held at Holbrook Village Hall on Tuesday 28th November 2023

Present: John Ambrose (JA - Chairman Holbrook PC), Alison Looser (AL - Chairman Harkstead PC), Mike Crouch (MC - Councillor and Acting Clerk Harkstead PC), Jo Hazlewood (JH - Clerk Holbrook & Freston PCs), Henry Stogdon (HS - Chairman Freston PC), Rosie Kirkup (RK - Chairman Chelmondiston PC), Simon Pearce (SP - Chairman Woolverstone PC), Mal Bridgeman (MB - Chairman Brantham PC), Sarah Keys (SK - Clerk Brantham and Tattingstone), John Richardson (JR - Councillor Shotley PC), Richard Wrinch (RW - Chairman Shotley PC), Chris Leach (CL - Councillor Stutton PC), Darren Cooper (DC - Chairman Stutton PC)

1. John Ambrose welcomed everyone to the meeting, gave a brief outline of the purpose of the joint meeting and invited the attendees to introduce themselves.
2. **Housing issues:** RK asked if councils with Neighbourhood Plans had specified sites: JA said Holbrook did a call for sites which were independently assessed and rejected. DC said Stutton also called for sites but had met their housing needs with existing increase in housing stock. RK was concerned that the JLP might impose sites if they hadn't been identified. JR mentioned that Housing associations have begun to buy ready built estates. It was generally agreed that there is a shortage of affordable houses on the peninsula. An application for the 285 houses currently agreed at Ganges had been lodged to increase to 303 houses with no affordable housing. RK reiterated that houses are not affordable in Chelmo & Pin Mill and it is therefore very difficult to meet the need for affordable housing. RW reported that 11 possible sites were identified in Shotley, which were reduced to 5 or 6, but in the end none of the landowners offered the land.
JA said there were a small number of housing association/affordable houses in Holbrook in the Berners Field and Admirals Quarter developments.
3. **Traffic:** it was agreed that the new developments, particularly with regard to the development at Ganges resulted in an increase in traffic through the villages, on the A137, Freston Crossroads, The Strand and Wherstead Road. School traffic was also increasing, with buses and cars transporting pupils to the RHS and Ipswich High School, as well as an increase in children attending peninsula schools from out of catchment. MB reported that a recent survey in Brantham suggested that all the junctions were already at capacity, which has been ignored. One vehicle was identified driving at 81 mph through Brantham. SP said that Wherstead are very badly affected – the last traffic survey was carried out when Ipswich High School at Woolverstone was closed. He added that the volume of traffic would be easier to manage if the traffic travelled considerably slower.
4. **Planning:** The meeting considered whether there was a way Councils can jointly call planners to account and work together on planning applications and how this could be achieved, bearing in mind that applications have to be discussed in an open forum. It was agreed that it would be helpful to have an overall picture of what is happening on the peninsula and beyond. MC used to work in planning including working for some time with Babergh and emphasised that acting together as a group is likely to have a much greater impact. Babergh have only just started work on Part 2 of the Joint Local Plan and MC suggested that it would be an ideal opportunity to meet with the Chief Exec and the leader of the Council as an Alliance.

It was understood that until part 2 of the JLP is in place, Councils could be open to inappropriate applications. It was acknowledged that Freston & Harkstead had more of a challenge to discuss planning applications, due to less frequent meetings. There was some discussion about whether the group could respond to certain key planning applications, perhaps using non councillor representatives, which would need further thought.

5. **Infrastructure:** Concern was expressed about the increased strain on the infrastructure, other than roads, as a result of the increase in housing: schools, doctors' surgeries, utilities, etc. SP said there are section 106 funds to address Freston Crossroads and traffic on the roads and RK said it was v. difficult to get information about the section 106 funds for road safety measures. Councils want to have an input into measures proposed. SP reported that SCC are supposed to have a consultation re this.

6. **Future role of the group/alliance:** There could be a joint development response from the peninsula alliance to Babergh. Such an alliance could respond to wider issues, i.e. infrastructure, loss of green verges and local amenities, etc. SK suggested that it might be possible to jointly respond to some of the consultations which Councils are asked to participate in – i.e. the future of Suffolk Libraries. The next steps would be to agree a title (if possible a catchy title), draw up and circulate a Memorandum of Understanding and Terms of Reference (JA and JH to provide). SP suggested that Babergh Alliance of Parish and Town Councils may have a suitable blue print.
The next meeting was proposed for early February and Tuesdays seemed to be a convenient night (with the exception of the first Tuesday in each month when Chelmondiston Parish Council meet).
Holbrook Village Hall is usually available on Tuesdays, but it was agreed that rotating the meeting between Councils would also be a good idea.

JH