

## **Hedley Parish – Notes of the village meeting held on 12 July 2021**

### *Background*

A village meeting was called to give the Hedley Parish Council the opportunity to seek input from villagers in Hedley on the planning application for an agricultural access road to Hedley East Farm (21/02408/FUL). The village meeting was followed by a parish council meeting whereby the applicant and their land agent were present to provide clarity on the proposed access road in addition to what is covered in the planning application.

### *Concerns raised by the community*

Comments raised during the village meeting are collated, summarised, and paraphrased below, and not attributed to individuals at the meeting.

- Concerns were raised over the purpose of the agricultural access road to Hedley East Farm, particularly given the farm has already been given code Q planning permission to convert the farm buildings to residential housing.
- Further concerns were raised about the lack of transparency in the application, giving rise to speculation as to the plans to further develop the land for residential use.
- The application states that the agricultural access road is to support modern farming. Given the access roads that already exist (across the village green, along the track to the new farm buildings to the South East of Hedley East Farm, and across pasture land), it is unclear why an additional road is required to support agricultural activity.
- Concerns were raised over the width of the road. With a stated width of 8 metres, this would exceed the width of the main road through the village at 5.5 metres.
- The proposed road would be very prominent on the landscape given the elevation of the field behind existing houses. The suggestion was raised that a more discrete positioning of the road would be possible. Where this would cut across pastureland, it was suggested that cattle grids could be used to support grazing by life stock.
- Linked to the point raised above, the application mentioned that the positioning of the proposed access road was chosen to minimise visibility of the road. This was contested at the meeting.
- Concerns were raised over the impact of privacy for the houses backing on to the access road. In particular given the elevated position of the proposed road.
- Concerns were raised over the ongoing maintenance of the buffer zone between existing residential properties and the proposed road.
- A lack of clear communication was identified. Planning permission has been granted in the past, which hitherto, has not resulted in any development of the land. The uncertainty around the planned development has led to anxiety amongst some of the villagers.
- It was felt that the proposed access road is not in keeping with the Green Belt status.

In addition to the concerns directly related to the planning application the following concerns were also raised:

- The current farm access across the village green, that also serves surrounding houses has eroded over time, which makes it unsuitable at the moment for most personal vehicles to use.
- Concerns were raised about the drainage capacity on and around the current track across the village green, resulting in effluent running down the road.
- Concerns were raised about the speed of cars near the east end of the village, in particular traffic coming up the North Hill, turning left, being presented with the 60mph speed limit sign at the end of the village, and speeding up whilst still in the build-up area, exceeding the 30mph speed limit.

*Further information provided by Colin Horncastle (Northumberland County Councillor)*

County Councillor Colin Horncastle joined the village meeting, and provided some additional information on the planning process. In particular:

- The majority of planning applications are processed by a planning officer. They will judge each application at face value, and not concern themselves with potential future development that is not covered under the application.
- If the planning application is to be discussed by the planning committee, there is an opportunity for the parish council, or villagers to speak at the meeting for 5 minutes. This time is shared amongst all speakers, so any contribution needs to be carefully coordinated, concise and to the point.
- Only material planning concerns will be taken into account when planning decisions are taken. These include (but are not limited to): right to light, right to privacy, ecology, Green Belt. Other concerns such as loss of view or loss of property value are not material planning concerns, and will not be taken into account.

*Questions to be put to the owners of Hedley East Farm and their land agent.*

Following the village meeting, the parish council identified the following questions to be put to the applicant and their land agent during the parish council meeting:

- How does this application relate to the existing code Q planning permission already granted to convert the farm to residential use?
- Why are the existing access roads to the farm not sufficient?
- Why is an 8 metre-wide road required for agricultural use?
- Who would be responsible for the maintenance of the road and buffer zone?

## **Hedley Parish – Notes on item 5 (Planning) of the Parish Council meeting on 12 July 2021**

### *Background*

The planning application for an agricultural access road to Hedley East Farm (21/02408/FUL) was discussed at the Hedley Parish Council meeting on 12 July 2021. The applicants and their land agent were in attendance to answer any questions related to the application.

The Parish Council sought to provide clarification on the question raised during the Hedley Parish Village meeting on 12 July 2021 (see separate notes), in particular:

- How does this application related to the existing code Q planning permission already granted to convert the farm to residential use?
- Why are the existing access roads to the farm not sufficient?
- Why is an 8 metre-wide road required for agricultural use?
- Who would be responsible for the maintenance of the road and buffer zone?

The resulting discussion has been summarised below. These notes reflect the understanding of the Parish Council following the meeting based on responses from the applicant and their land agent.

### *Notes from the meeting*

Code Q planning permission has previously been granted for the conversion of existing farm buildings and access to residential use. Existing access across the village green is deemed sufficient for this proposed development. Any further development (in addition, or instead of the approved conversion) would be subject to full planning permission, including the review of any access road against modern standards. Based on a traffic survey, and consultation with highway specialists, the applicant has concluded such access cannot be provided across the village green. Instead, the current planning application for an agriculture access road can be seen as a first step in a process towards further development of the Hedley East Farm site.

The applicant has indicated that they have no intention of building the access road for agricultural purposes only. If permitted, the access road, before being built, would be included as a residential access road in a further planning application to develop the site. Any concerns related to residential access across the proposed access road to the site would need to be considered as part of this later application. If the application for further residential development would be denied, the access road will most likely not be built.

The proposed width of 8 metres of road, is to provide enough space if future planning conditions require a road wide enough for two-way traffic, and pavements on both side of the road. Conditions for the access road would be set by the County Council, if a residential development is approved in future (and may well result in less stringent requirements, and therefore a smaller road).

Although any future residential access road would be built to a standard that would make it suitable for adoption by the highway agency, the road would likely remain private property. The property would be in shared ownership by any owners of residential property in a future development. These owners together would be responsible for maintenance of the road, possibly through a management company.

The buffer zone would likely remain property of the current landowner. Therefore, the landowner would be responsible for ongoing maintenance of the trees, shrubs or other vegetation on the buffer zone. The County Council might set conditions for the maintenance and upkeep of the buffer zone as part of the planning process.