

## **Woolverstone Parish Council's response to the Statement from Shotley Parish Council dated 7 March 2016**

Woolverstone has always supported redevelopment of the Ganges site but only on an appropriate scale. We believe 285 new houses, a hotel, care home and business units in addition to the Marina development of 150 houses will overwhelm the B1456 - the only route in and out of the peninsula - causing unacceptable environmental damage to an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and our designated conservation village. The planning process has been protracted because of the determination of the developer to build so many homes at a location classified as "non-sustainable", on the tip of a peninsula at the end of a 8.5 mile narrow, twisting road passing through four communities. The original plan to build 500 houses was reduced to 325 but we fought and won a Public Inquiry in 2006 when the Secretary of State rejected the scheme pointing out:

*" the inaccessible, unsustainable nature of the proposal site and the harm to the environment arising from the increase in traffic that would be generated.....the site is not within an urban area, nor is it an urban extension nor is it located around any node in a good public corridor. "*

The current plans do not address the criteria for sustainability nor take into account how they will affect neighbouring villages. We welcome Shotley Parish Council's willingness to work with us to mitigate the impacts of the increase in traffic but do not believe any meaningful mitigation is possible. The provision of "sensitively designed white gates" at either end of the village is derisory. No clear figures of the total traffic generation have been shared with us although it is described as "substantial" and "significant." We understand from the developer's figures the increase will be up to 38% - a huge number of additional vehicles on the road making over 3000 extra trips a day. Such an impact is comparable to that of the scheme rejected in 2006 and remains unacceptable.

The Government is keen to see houses being built; it is also keen to ensure they are built in sustainable locations. The homes provided by the Ganges development are not even needed for Babergh to meet its housing targets. We agree with Shotley Parish Council that an acceptable and sustainable solution should be found for the site and have consistently said so at many consultations but such a massive scheme is neither.

Nor does Woolverstone PC believe the current proposal is the "best" that could be achieved for the site or the communities along the B1456. We fundamentally disagree with the view expressed in Shotley's statement regarding the Section 106 monies. The guaranteed sum is £1,079,480 phased over the period of construction, nearly half of this destined for education. Any further monies to be obtained, potentially up to £5.984 million, depend on the viability and profitability (20%) of the project. There are to be three valuation points to assess these. Only if the valuations show viability and a profit over 20% will additional monies become available. There is no certainty that the project will be sufficiently profitable to trigger any extra payments. Furthermore, it is really hard to see the "rewards" of such a development to the villages along the B1456 and the wider community.

Shotley Gate is at the end of a long winding road passing through four communities - Wherstead, Freston, Woolverstone and Chelmondiston. It is surrounded on all sides by an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Its classification as a "non-sustainable location" has not stopped it becoming a vibrant community and to be congratulated on becoming "Suffolk Village of the Year 2015". But that village status could soon end. By adding 1,500 to the population, the Ganges and Marina developments would transform Shotley from what is officially a "hinterland settlement" into one of the largest communities in the Babergh District.

All the villages along the B1456, including Shotley until the eleventh hour, objected to the current proposals. Woolverstone, supported by Freston, is now prepared to challenge Babergh's decision at Judicial Review. Previously the Peninsula Parishes Alliance, including Shotley, worked together to protect our unique and beautiful peninsula. We have fought and won before and hope to once again. That said, we embarked on Judicial Review proceedings with a heavy heart. It was not a decision taken lightly but we believe Babergh made an error in law and that the scale of the development is simply too large and damaging to go unchallenged. A High Court judge has now decided that we do have an arguable case.

We agree with Shotley Parish council that change is inevitable. But we believe that what we are facing would degrade and destroy our environment irrevocably for all time, for our children and grandchildren. There is nothing "sympathetic" about the increased volume of traffic, danger, noise, vibration, emissions and community severance.

The Shotley Peninsula is a very special place with tranquil countryside running gently down to the banks of two glorious rivers. There are moves afoot for the interior of the peninsula to be added to the AONB so protecting it from the ravages of future development. Our hope is that all the communities of the Peninsula will once again work together to protect its rare beauty and character for posterity.