

Annual Parish Report 2018

Chairman

Good evening and welcome.

It is with great pleasure that I am able to present the Annual Parish Report for 2017 -2018.

It has been another busy year, most of which seems to revolve around the planning process in some way or another.

The Ganges development is slowly getting underway which is slightly at odds with the urgency which was expressed at the Judicial Review - now over two years ago. Work has started on clearing and preparing the site. We are told that construction of the new junction/ roundabout at the western end of the site will soon start. This will make an entrance to the spine road which will run across the site and connect with Shotley Marina. I have asked our District Councillor, Derek Davis, for information about the construction plan i.e. the number and travelling times of HGVs etc. to share with parishioners, but this is not yet available.

As you know, the Parish Council decided that we had gone as far as we could “reasonably and legally go” in our effort to protect our village from the blight of a massive increase in traffic and loss of amenity this development will bring. We set out five points which we are determined to adhere to. We have yet to be consulted on the traffic calming measures. We need to try to protect our infrastructure, like the low brick walls of estate cottage that are being worn away. Houses have been built at Holbrook – Admirals Quarter - which received permission amongst other things because the Freston Crossroads were to be improved, yet this still has to be agreed. As seems too often to be the case, the necessary infrastructure changes seem to lag behind the developments.

We recognise that we had just the one chance to prevent a development of this size and that has now gone. So, we have to move on. BUT, Haylink have already asked for a change in the planning permission given and have asked for permission to demolish Anson building – a building with conservation status. We have objected because the whole Ganges argument, in the end, was balanced on preserving conservation assets. It is beyond irony that Haylink now wish to demolish one of the heritage assets.

In June last year the Parish Council agreed a loan from Berners Hall Management Committee of £28,000 to be repaid by July 31 2024. This was to cover our legal expenses in challenging the decision by BDC to give planning permission for 285 houses on former HMS Ganges site, Shotley Gate. As a small village we do not have access to the sort of funds villages such as East Bergholt do to challenge planning decisions. We raised over £10,000 in donations. It will be repaid through fundraising events over the coming 6 years. We have already made a start through Friends of Woolverstone with the Woolverstone Open Gardens and Opera concert last year. By doing this we also aim to raise the profile of and give greater support to Berners Hall as well as provide more community events for the village.

Much time and effort was taken up in the autumn responding to the New Joint Local Plan. Babergh have calculated that they do not have a five-year housing supply. The NJLP was undertaken to identify sites and priorities. Our response ran to many pages and involved many hours work. The result can be found on our website. Most important to us is the preservation of our historic estate

landscape and estate buildings. We have 18 listed structures in Woolverstone. We have asked BDC to reassess our status as a “hinterland” village. We also expressed views about including Grade 2 listed green field sites as locations for housing development in the context of our estate “model” village. When the Nursery Lane development is built out that will give an additional 13 houses to the village plus up to a further 7 in redundant farm buildings at Whitehouse Farm and 4 in similar buildings at Home Farm. This will increase the size village by nearly 25%. I think we have done our bit.

Boundary changes

We have responded twice to the Boundary Commission which is trying to reduce the number of councillors in Babergh and redraw the ward boundaries. The first consultation produced wards that did not reflect the geography, history or communities of the Shotley peninsula. The second consultation proposals were an improvement but produced a three councillor ward. We have responded to try and reduce that to two councillor ward and retain the name of Berners.

AONB

We responded to the AONB extension consultation accepting their proposals which among other things will bring additional protection for the ancient woodlands of Freston running down to the River Orwell.

GDPR

In response to the new data protection legislation, I have contacted everyone on the original village info mailing list. As from today, 78 people agreed to continue to receive Woolverstone News and village updates. 7 are “lost”. Only one person opted out. Our next task is to catch up with this with email addresses that are not currently part of the list and get paper copies of newsletters to those who do not have access to computers.

Woolverstone: Notes and Queries

The history of our village is important. To state the obvious, it is why it is the way it is. To try to collect memories, photographs, history of houses, families, organisations we have started a Facebook page called “Woolverstone: Notes and Queries”. Thank you to Lorraine Wildbore for the impetus. At the moment it is a closed group that one has to opt into. It would be good to see more people reading the snippets of history so far provided and even adding some of their own. I will be adding an account of life at London Nautical School (1947-1952) in the next few days which has some great photos and interesting memories. The “colours” from the school used to hang in St Michael’s church but are currently being assessed at St Edmundsbury diocese.

Elsewhere in the Parish

Ipswich High School for Girls

Thank you to Ipswich High School for Girls for continuing to allow us the privilege of the use of their grounds. It is very much appreciated. We’d like to thank Ipswich high School for giving us one day a year at the Hayward Theatre for fund raising with Friends of Woolverstone. It has been good to see students involved in the Spring Clean. We are looking forward to the “Battle’s Over” tribute, in November 2018, on the terraces leading to the banks of the Orwell.

Friends of Woolverstone

“Friends of Woolverstone” is a new group in the village dedicated to bringing events and activities to the community. There is a report from their first year later this evening

Community Speedwatch

Speeding continues to be a real problem through the village. The Police have shown terrific support in attempting to calm traffic. Our Community Speedwatch efforts are still stuttering. It is very difficult to organise groups together for the surveys and we are also losing team members when they move out of the village. We really need a Speedwatch co-ordinator to bring individuals together in a regular way and more volunteers who have the time to give a few hours a month.

With regard to speeding, we must keep pressing to have the whole of our village within a 30 mph limit. I have received several emails reporting the excessive speed of traffic and concerns with the expected increase in traffic from the Ganges and Marina developments, plus further developments along the B1456 and at Shotley. In addition there is the added traffic generated by BDC’s drive for tourism on the Peninsula. As repeated many times, there is no footpath access to houses in a national speed limit zone. With a series of bends that make sight lines difficult this stretch of Woolverstone is an accident waiting to happen. It is hazardous to pull out onto the road and even to stop, wait and pull in. We have sought support from our County Councillor, David Wood, but this has not been successful thus far. This year we will try to work directly with Suffolk Highways.

Horse Pond Green

Work continues on Horsepond’s Green. This is a plot of land bequeathed to the village as a place of “peace and relaxation”. It is a wildlife haven with a wide selection of trees and some new fruiting trees to give it blossom for bees and fruits for birds.

Planning

New Joint Local Plan consultation took combined hours of work but day to day planning issues were again active this year. We live in a Conservation Area which brings particular responsibilities. I would recommend the Babergh webpage: “Living in a Conservation Area” for advice about buildings and trees.

For example, in Conservation Areas, notice is required for works to trees that have a trunk diameter of more than 75mm when measured at 1.5m from ground level (or more than 100mm if reducing the number of trees to benefit the growth of other trees).

You have to give your local planning authority six weeks’ notice before carrying out work on trees which are located in a conservation area but are not yet the subject of a tree preservation order. This gives the authority an opportunity to consider whether an order should be made to protect the trees. Please look at the Babergh Interactive map to see the area of Woolverstone where every tree is covered by a TPO!!

The Double’s Nursery development continues to draw our attention. Three of the four houses given permission four years ago are nearly completed. There has been a recent planning decision to grant permission to build the fourth house within the Walled Garden itself, but this is subject to strict conditions. The Parish Council sought to protect the integrity of the Walled Garden. With these

conditions it maybe that despite a relatively small dwelling being built in the garden the remainder is preserved.

Villages and village life is under threat. It will be a continuing responsibility for the Parish Council to ensure any development is consistent with principles that ensure the character of our village is “preserved and enhanced”. This does not mean that there will be no development in the village, but that what there is must be of consistency and quality. The approach we adopt tries to ensure fairness and transparency in all cases. However, it must also be remembered that we operate in an advisory capacity only and do not make the decisions and cannot appeal. It is Babergh Planning Committee that makes the decision or Officers under delegated powers.

Neighbourhood Plan

Sometimes it is best not to be in the vanguard of things! The concept of local neighbourhood plans is changing. It will be interesting to see how the consultation on a renewed NPPF affects them. We have not been able to move this forward as yet but it remains our intention. In fact, the whole concept of Local Plans now seems to be under threat by changes to the NPPF. The revised NPPF could allow local authorities to overrule neighbourhood plans, either when local plans are reviewed (every five years) or if not enough homes are delivered elsewhere. In my view, people need to be at the heart of planning policy not developers.

The following applications have been granted:

White House Farm	Conversion of barns to form 4 dwellings
Home Farm	Change of Use of existing farm buildings
Dairy House	tree works - following storm damage to Plane
Cherry Tree Cottage	tree works – fell birch, laburnum and holly
Deer Park Lodge	tree works – prune Ancient oak and fell 6 sycamores
Cat House	tree works – fell 3 trees Acer and prunus
Walled garden Plot 11	Revised alignment of access drive and turning area
Walled garden - Gardener’s cottage	Single storey link extension between dwelling and garage plus part conversion of garage
RHYC	Tree work – removal of 4 Scot’s pines
IHS	Erection of 2 wooden outbuildings
Walled Garden	Alterations and extensions to form single storey building, with conditions and new section 106
Walled Garden	Erection of double garage
30 Main Road	Tree works - Fell willow

“Thank you’s”

I would like to thank all the members of the Parish Council for the work and time that they have given in numerous ways. Thank you to people in the village who have helped in many different ways to move forward with different projects.

Simon Pearce, Chairman Woolverstone Parish Council