Acton Parish Council's response to outline planning application DC/17/02751

Proposal for residential development (up to 100 dwellings), including access, play space, scout hut, canoe storage and community orchard, with all other matters reserved

Land South East of Barrow Hill, Acton CO10 0AS

This application was considered by the Parish Council at a full meeting of the Council on Monday 17 July 2017.
The meeting attracted 56 local residents. The developer’s representatives were also in attendance.

The recommendation of the Parish Council is that the application be REFUSED.

In making this recommendation, the Parish Council ask the Planning Authority to consider the following points:

1. This site was put forward to Babergh and dismissed in their SHLAA because it was poorly related to the rest of the village. The applicants are contriving an access by purchasing and demolishing an existing mature house, appropriate in its setting, and replacing it with a road. The road will have an adverse impact on the appearance and amenity value of the village centre generally and the quality of life of those living in the immediate vicinity of this junction specifically.

2. The Parish Council is dismayed by the developer’s perception of community need. The current proposals are not based on any prior consultation with the Parish Council and, so far as we can ascertain, any community group other than the local scouts, whose current base lies outside the parish. Councillors, together with local residents attending the meeting, were very largely dismissive of proposals for a scout hut, canoe storage and community orchard. It is strongly recommended that the developer be required to engage with the Parish Council on this matter prior to any future re-application.

3. The Parish Council feels that another such residential development, at or near the heart of the village centre threatens to undermine its sense of community and place.
Acton is defined by the Planning Authority as a Hinterland Village and, in accordance with policy CS2, expects to accommodate some development to meet the needs within it.
However, the limited response to the housing survey undertaken by the developer has resulted in conclusions and outline proposals that do not correspond to its needs.
As indicated in para 4, the needs addressed by this development have been anticipated elsewhere.
4. The Parish Council is aware that land adjacent to Tamage Road, Acton has been identified by Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Council as a potential site for up to 90 dwellings. Furthermore, the following potential housing developments are also likely within 2km of Acton High Street:

- **B/16/00777** - Erection of 71 residential dwellings (including market and affordable homes), garages, parking, vehicular access (with Bull Lane), estate roads, public open space, play areas, landscaping, drainage and other infrastructure works. | Land on The South Side Of Bull Lane Long Melford

- **B/15/01718** - Up to 1,150 dwellings (Use Class C3); 15ha of employment development (to include B1, B2 and B8 uses, a hotel (C1), a household waste recycling centre (sui generis) and a district heating network); village centre comprising up to 1,000m2 Gross Floor Area (GFA) of retail floor space (A1, A2, A3, A4 and A5), village hall (D2), workspace (B1a), residential dwellings (C3), primary school (D1), pre-school (D1) and car parking; new points of vehicular access and associated works; sustainable transport links; community woodland; open space (including children’s play areas); sustainable drainage (SuDS); sports pavilion (D2) and playing fields; allotments; and associated ancillary works.

There is also rumoured to be a proposal for 130 homes near St Mary’s, Chilton.

The Parish Council is already concerned about the volume of traffic passing through the village and urges the Planning Authority to consider the traffic flow impact of this development alongside that of other applications for residential development already known to be in the pipeline. The Parish Council draws attention to policy CS11 which states that the cumulative impact of development both within the Hinterland Village in which the development is proposed and within the functional cluster of villages in which it is located will be a material consideration when assessing such proposals.

5. The Parish Council feels that the proposed development fails the crucial tests set out in policy CS11 in that it:

   i) pays insufficient regard to the impact of the junction and traffic on the character of the High Street which is the historic centre of the village featuring many mature and attractive properties;

   ii) fails to demonstrate a proven local need for the housing proposed;

   iii) fails to demonstrate the creation of enduring employment opportunities.

6. The Parish Council refers the Planning Authority to Suffolk County Council Highways response to application B/16/00603 which, when referring to traffic accidents around the junction of the A134 Long Melford bypass and Bull Lane, comments as follows:

   o This is a junction which has a history of accidents despite several attempts to improve the situation. In the past 5 years where data is published, 2010 to 2014, there have been 5 slight accidents at this junction.

   o In addition to accidents at the A134 junction there have also been 3 accidents on the stretch of Bull Lane/Melford Road between the A134 and Bull Lane Industrial Estate.

Only recently (July 2017), a 4-car collision occurred at the Bull Lane junction across the by-pass to which at least one fire engine was called.

7. The junction of the proposed new access road with Acton High Street is directly opposite *Maigold*, a small Victorian cottage. This property lies a matter of feet
from the High Street as there is only a very small front garden and no footpath between the cottage and the High Street. The noise from vehicles using this junction will therefore be highly intrusive. In addition, vehicles using the junction opposite will be highly visible and, at night, their lights will illuminate the entire living area. The Parish Council believes that the impact on this property is unacceptable.

Furthermore, the lack of footpath prompts the Parish Council to ask whether it is safe or appropriate to site this junction with so little safe passage for pedestrians? Residents at the meeting commented that the existing footpath is not wide enough for two people to walk side by side or even for a double pushchair!

8. The proposed junction is also situated opposite Spring Cottage, a grade II listed C18th-C19th timber-framed and plastered cottage (listing NGR: TL8964344776) and Spe Dives, a grade II listed C17th timber-framed and plastered house with a cross wing at the east end. (listing NGR: TL8961344759.)

The Parish Council is concerned that the construction, and subsequent increased traffic, at this proposed junction will be detrimental to these properties.

In the unfortunate event that the application is granted the Parish Council makes the following observations:

a. There is concern that the current sewerage capacity within the village is inadequate to cope with the additional load generated by a development of up to 100 dwellings. Because of the local topography, water will flow out of the proposed development towards the High Street.

b. It is believed that the water table north of the High Street is very high, in places a mere 18 inches below the surface. This is evidenced by the presence of a number of ponds in the vicinity. The Council is concerned that the run-off from the proposed development will raise the water table further generating problems on lower lying land in and around the High Street.

c. There is concern about the capacity of the local electricity supply. The Planning Authority is asked to ensure this is adequate for the needs of local residential and industrial estates’ requirements.

d. The Council is advised that the local internet network has capacity for a further 4 homes only. If this development proceeds we are advised that the entire local internet facility will need to be upgraded.

e. The developer seems unclear as to which boundary hedges and ditches fall within the red line. The Planning Authority is asked to ensure absolute clarity regarding future maintenance of boundary hedges and ditches.

f. The developer is incorrect in indicating that there is a post office in Acton. There is not.

Paul MacLachlan
Clerk
Acton Parish Council