



## **Addendum to Agenda Items** **Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2010**

### **Items for Determination**

#### **Item 10 A**

**N/2010/0375 – Change of use of post office (Class A1) to educational, cultural and community centre (Class D1) at 26 – 28 Newnham Road.**

#### **Consultation response from Police Crime Prevention Design Adviser -**

Northamptonshire Police has no formal objection to the application in its present form, but suggests improvements to security including upgrading of doors and glazing and installation of an alarm system, which if implemented, will reduce the likelihood of crime, anti social behaviour and disorder occurring. These suggestions have been forwarded to the Council's estates department, as landlord, who indicate they are likely to require this work to be carried out, and that the building will be subject to a rent free period, which will offset the cost of such works to the applicant.

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### **Enforcement Matters**

#### **Item 11 A**

**E/2010/207 – Breach of Planning Control at Groove Night Club 8 - 10 Gold Street.**

## **Applications for Consultation**

### **Item 12 A**

**N/2010/0301 – 80 residential units with associated garages, roads and sewers at Land off South Meadow Road.**

**Objection received from Councillor Paul Varnserry, which he has requested be circulated in full to the Committee: -**

Dear Andrew,

I write in my capacity as a Ward Councillor for West Hunsbury to object to this application on the grounds that it is contrary to planning policy and will furthermore generate a serious adverse cumulative impact on the amenity of the existing St. Crispin community. I also object to the proposed loss of public open space. I am also supporting the objections submitted to WNDC by Upton Parish Council and last, but by no means least, the opposition voiced by local residents.

#### **Overview**

The St. Crispin's development has been beset with the detrimental effects of inadequate provision of infrastructure, underlining concerns recently expressed 'cross-party' as part of challenges to figures for the future growth of Northampton. St. Crispin's development is a case study in how promised infrastructure provision can fail to materialise in a sufficient or timely manner and how pledges to preserve and protect key natural and historic features can be and are reneged upon by developers.

#### **Cumulative effect**

If the development proposed in N2010/0310 goes ahead, the cumulative effect in terms of its impact on the St. Crispin's development will be immense. The current infrastructure deficit is creating horrendous traffic difficulties. Decisions taken in isolation, in respect of past planning approvals, have created a cumulative negative effect significantly in excess of their individual contributions to problems in the area.

I was a member of the NBC planning committee when the Upton Lodge/Norwood Farm application was originally heard, and I recall the serious concerns raised by members of the committee at that time. I have subsequently cautioned against that application's deficiencies at WNDC planning committee. Members of the planning committee may find that the brief comments contained in clauses 2.1, 2.2 and 4.1 of the committee report do not express the magnitude of the issues in sufficient detail.

It would be understandable to form the view that N2010/0310 is simply a cynical attempt to bypass those concerns – which centred on inadequate infrastructure provision for such a large development – by surreptitiously submitting a smaller application (possibly the first of what could be a series of applications, each representing one 'phase' of the earlier



S/2006/1654/W application); where the ultimate scale of required infrastructure for the entire spread of the development can be concealed and ignored within each successive tranche. This approach of 'piggy-backing' on pushed-to-capacity infrastructure on adjoining development simply cannot be supported.

### **Loss of public open space**

The loss of public open space is wholly unacceptable under this application and would not prove necessary were the application to form part of the larger scale Upton Lodge/Norwood Farm proposals, with its own infrastructure and access arrangements. Furthermore, the first and second bullet points in clause 1.1 of the committee report do not constitute any form of compensatory measure for the proposed loss of green space. No new green space is liberated to replace that which would be lost under the proposed development; merely the suggestion that mitigation might be possible with regard to hedgerows bordering the bridleway referred to in the third bullet point. This is an existing right of way!

### **Highways infrastructure**

Clause 7.24 of the committee report barely scratches the surface of highways issues afflicting the St. Crispin's development.

The width and layout of the main estate road was specified to provide inherent traffic calming. It achieves this rather too well and certainly beyond the scale of whatever might reasonably have been envisaged by the original planners; creating as it does vast traffic hold-ups at either end of the school day in the vicinity of St. Luke's School. This is because the County Council's subsequent planning approval for the construction of St Luke's school, without drop-off and pick-up facilities in place, gridlocks St. Crispin Drive with parked vehicles.

NCC has attempted to assist with a solution to these problems by introducing parking restrictions, marked by yellow lines, in the vicinity of the school, but these have to date had limited effect in the absence of the enforcement which was also meant to take place.

Traffic issues locally are expected to escalate further when the new district retail centre is completed on Kent Road. This development was approved by WNDC's planning committee despite their planning officers' apparent total lack of knowledge of the area meaning they failed to recognise that residential properties existed directly opposite the site, so did not consult the residents. At the WNDC planning committee where the matter was determined, this serious error was dismissed and approval granted.

A third highway access into the development was due to be provided by the time 300 homes were constructed, but this is still not in place despite some 1000 homes now being occupied. A suitable route, using the original Kent Road access – which would also assist in addressing issues of anti social behaviour and vandalism in the vicinity of the former St. Crispin Chapel – has been proposed by my co-Ward councillor and I, but progress has been held up by a lack of movement on the part of the County Council.

Given the background, in terms of deficient highways planning, I have little confidence that the expectation expressed in the committee report that *"WNDC should therefore be satisfied, in consultation with the Highway Authority, that the road network of the existing*

*estate is sufficient to cope with the increased demand arising from the proposed development*” will in fact deliver an acceptable and sustainable outcome. My concern is that the line of least resistance will be followed and the existing highways rubber-stamped as capable of handling the additional traffic. This simply would not match up to reality.

### **Safety issues and the future of the listed Victorian hospital**

Additionally, there are serious health and safety issues at the former Victorian asylum – a listed building – where the developers have vacated the site, leaving the building and site insecure, the building open to the ravages of the elements and deep excavations for an underground car park filled with water. This has regularly been brought to the attention of the developer by local residents and Upton Parish Council, but the developer continues to fail to maintain a security presence on site. They have simply abandoned the site – and any moral or legal obligations they might have – without ensuring proper arrangements for the appropriate level of safety and security.

The future of the listed building and the landmark clock tower are now in serious jeopardy and, anecdotally, a representative of the developer has allegedly stated to a resident that it would be their preference for the building to fall down!

This is a key landmark building, both within the St. Crispin's development and further afield on the western approach to Northampton, where the clock tower has been an imposing structure for over a century.

The developer for the former Victorian asylum and the applicant are, I believe, one and the same!

Other 'industrial' buildings of lesser status, both in Northampton and elsewhere, have been successfully developed into residential accommodation and have ensured the survival of those buildings and their contribution to the heritage of the town. It would therefore be indefensible for the developer to be granted permission to develop a new Greenfield site, just a short distance away, when they have yet to fulfil their moral, if not legal obligation to preserve and restore the listed Victorian hospital. Is this to be yet another part of Northampton's historic architectural heritage that is to be sacrificed (like the Emporium Arcade and Notre Dame school, for example).

This may not be a material consideration under planning law, as the development of the hospital site is not part of the application under consideration, but I contend it is a serious moral and civic consideration.

### **Summary**

To summarise; the recommendations from the author of the report, listing concerns which the NBC planning committee might wish to submit to WNDC, do not in my view go far enough when a greater understanding of the consequences of the present infrastructure deficit is reached. With this understanding, the only credible decision which the committee can reach is to object strongly to the development.

## Conclusions

- The proposed development, by reason of its location and lack of provision of supporting infrastructure, would have an unacceptably adverse impact on the amenities of residents in the properties immediately adjacent to the site and the surrounding area.
- The site access proposals are not in accordance with acceptable standards and would lead to potential safety hazards.
- The proposal is contrary to planning policy in that it causes the loss of protected green space.
- The development subject of the application previously formed part of a larger scheme to which the planning committee has objected. Considered in isolation, the proposed development makes for a still less attractive proposition due to the cumulative effects of lack of corresponding new infrastructure to support increased traffic flows in the surrounding area.

I urge the planning committee to register its strongest objections to the application with WNDC.

I will be grateful if you can ensure the members of the planning committee receive a copy of this submission in full.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Paul Varnsvery  
West Hunsbury Ward  
Northampton Borough Council

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Amendment to recommendation, Para 1.1 and first bullet point –

That the Council submits a holding objection to WNDC pending resolution of the following issues –

- The access to the site is proposed across an area of public open space to be transferred to this Council under the terms of the Section 106 Agreement for the greater St Crispin development dated 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2002 as varied by Deed dated 7<sup>th</sup> October 2005. Suitable compensatory arrangements should be agreed prior to consent being granted in the event that the following concerns have been satisfied.







