

**Minutes of Public Meeting held by Withersfield Parish Council on Monday,
11 December 2017 at 7.00 pm at St Mary's Church, Withersfield**

Present: Cllrs Terry Rich (Chairman), Frank Eve, Ian Kinloch; Hilary Thomas, Russell Wallington; Borough Cllr Jane Midwood; 25-30 Residents from The Arboretum, Barsey Close and Hanchett End; Paul Sutton, agent for planning applicant, Strutt and Parker

1 Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Geoff Hayward and Rosie Wenham.

2 Welcome and introductions

The Chair introduced those in attendance and explained that Paul Sutton would outline what was being proposed and the reasons, and everyone would have the opportunity to ask questions and give their views. At the end of the meeting the Parish Council would meet to decide whether and what representations should be made to the Borough Council regarding the application.

3 Basis of the proposed change of use

Paul Sutton outline the application which would remove a restriction on use class B1c which was currently ancillary to B1a and b (office and research use). This would be consistent with the land use designation with the Local Plan. The owners had not managed to sustain interest in research/office uses and it was believed that removing the restriction would make it more likely that there would be interest from companies. He said that B1c was compatible with a residential development.

Cllr Kinloch reviewed the history of the development and questioned why the original plans had not been followed through and why the promised research park had not been delivered. Paul Sutton made the case that significant efforts had been made but that market conditions had not been favourable with more attractive options for research companies closer to Cambridge. He said that one company, which manufactured stage equipment, had pulled out because they were concerned about the B1c restriction.

4 Public forum

Residents raised a number of concerns including:

- They had invested in their homes on the premise that they were erected on part of a research park, not an industrial area;
- The change would have a detrimental effect on the value of their homes and on the environment;
- Light industry was not suitable as the access road to the development site was the estate road between homes, the nursery, and the recreation area/wildlife pond;
- There were currently plenty of vacant light industrial units available in Haverhill and no evidence that there would be a demand here;
- A change away from the concept of a high quality research park as the gateway to Haverhill would have a detrimental impact on the town and the area.

5 Resumé of discussions

There was a strong consensus that despite the case being put forward by Paul Sutton on behalf of the land owner, this proposal should not be supported.

6 Closing remarks and thanks

The Chair thanked everyone for their attendance and said that the Parish Council would now consider their position and let people know via the Arboretum Facebook page or by email if they had left their contact details.

Cllr Thomas advised residents that they could also see all comments on the St Edmundsbury Borough Council planning site. The Chair reminded residents that they could also make their own objections.

The meeting closed at 7.55 pm.