

SELLING PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 3 April 2024 at 19:00 hours at Selling Village Hall

Present: Cllr Kevin Hobson (Chairman), Cllr Andy Day, Cllr Sue Henderson, Cllr Anthony Kitchen, Cllr Andrew Bowles, Cllr Sally King, and Cllr Garry Evans.
There were 22 members of the public.

04.24.E1 Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chairman welcomed everyone. Apologies were received from Cllr Lehmann (Swale BC and KCC) and Cllr. Gould (Swale BC) due to their attendance at the Full Swale BC Meeting.

04.24.E2 Declarations of interests and dispensations

Councillors had no interests to declare.

04.24.E3 The Duchy of Cornwall Development: planning ref. 23/505533/EIHYB

i) Learning residents' opinion - To hear the views of residents about this proposal in open forum

The Chairman introduced the open forum by explaining the handout produced to help residents respond to the Duchy's planning application (Ref.23/505533/EIHYB). The handout is available online at sellingparishcouncil.gov.uk/News_26452.aspx

All residents felt the planning application was speculative, harmful to the future of the whole area and neither grounded in any existing development plan nor the true facts and conditions of everyday life around Faversham and surrounding rural villages. It was noted that no consultation has been offered by the Duchy to meet with Selling Parish Council, or any other local parish councils, until a very belated invitation in the past two weeks. Residents made the following comments pertinent to material considerations:

Traffic generation – There is insufficient evidence of understanding trip distribution (number of trip origins and destinations) and lack of detail or substantive planning consideration of the impact of the proposed development on current traffic conditions, especially the A2 - based on an outdated traffic modelling exercise carried out in 2021. It is impossible to avoid the A2 Canterbury Road for any vehicles intending to access and exit Faversham.

The A2 j/w Love Lane is a known traffic hot spot exponentially affecting journey times at any time, including peak hours. The increase of vehicles from the planned Duchy development adjacent to this junction (with its re-routed traffic from Selling Road, also a well-known 'rat-run' in times of strategic road network difficulties involving the A252, A251, M2 and A229) can only make any solution more complex and the application singularly fails to account for this or offer any details of tangible, sustainable improvements.

This planned development, alongside recent and new housing developments in the Faversham area (currently about 1,600 new houses across four new developments

in the past three years) will have even more significant implications for the A2, the M2 J6 and J7 (Brenley Corner) and surrounding strategic road network. Residents are concerned that the re-routing of Selling Road would mean increased and more difficult journey times for blue light emergency services called to Selling.

While there is ongoing high level discussion between national bodies on the future of the A2 and Brenley Corner, any solution is not funded until 2030. There must be clearer and more substantial plans for managing traffic generation on an already dangerously overloaded road network included in the application. The Duchy's own peak flow measure highlight the intense pressures on key roads around Faversham.

The Duchy suggests the new population will have the opportunity to walk to Faversham town centre and the station. From the farthest reaches of the housing development to the station will entail a 1.8 mile walk and to the town centre nearly two miles. From the proposed housing near to Macknade the walk is nearly a mile to the station. There are very few options to reduce this distance by clever use of new footpaths / footways and the marginal gains are insignificant. Commuters will typically use their vehicles for a walk to the station beyond c. 20 mins as transportation forecasting models have demonstrated ad nauseum. The volume of vehicles used to commute in inclement weather doubles.

Highway safety - The re-routing of Selling Road, an important connection heavily used by residents of Selling to access Faversham and its station, health centres, shops and leisure facilities, is given short mention and no impact assessment of the consequences of diverting traffic through what is intended as a mainly housing Phase 2 of the development in 2027. This road is currently a lifeline for Selling and its widespread hamlets, used not only by vehicles but by horse riders (there are large stables close by, further east along Selling Road), cyclists, walkers and runners.

We note the Duchy's peak flow measurements assigned to Selling Road adjacent to the planned development at 200 vehicles per hour. The use of Selling Road by LGVs accessing the A2, A229, M2 and other parts of the strategic road network (many of which are articulated vehicles transporting full size containers) and local farm vehicles and often large machinery has clearly not been considered.

By the existing design, all this additional rat run traffic, including LGVs and agricultural vehicles, may be generated in the very centre of the Phase 2 development. Traffic will necessarily flow into and out of the residential area, alongside the intended large primary school and through a 'community hub' onto and off the A2. This re-routing represents an inherent and heightened safety risk to all road users and we call for a condition of the application to include re-consideration of the planned removal of vehicle access to Selling Road.

Adequacy of parking – The Duchy's off-road parking proposals are unrealistic and at odds with the recommended Police and national crime prevention models for designing out crime. The structure for parking planned requires CCTV as well as safety and intrusive crime prevention lighting, which is not in the application. This will be contrary to the style, and broad architecture of the development. There is no detail on how parking space will match the needs of housing set against typical vehicle ownership in England of two per household.

Faversham Station currently has just two consistently full car parks as of now. The other nearest station at Selling has no official car park and no more than 15-20 vehicles can use the congested narrow Station Approach and very small open space next to the station. The Duchy proposal makes no mention of course of any additional parking since it relies on a walk & cycle policy. There is no cycle storage facility at Selling train station.

Intrusion into the open countryside – The Duchy readily admits in its Master Plan and Vision that building on prime agricultural land goes against its preferred approaches to sustainable development. It specifically references Swale Borough Council as the body responsible for identifying this very large area of Best and Most Versatile (BMV) land for development – high quality land invaluable for scarce food production against the context of increasing international food imports and recognised by even the Security Service as one of the greatest national security threats to the UK. This does not justify the Duchy’s decision to go ahead on the basis that it is not responsible for intruding into open countryside and subverting the integrity of government policy. There is a choice.

This BMV land is all in open countryside representing a staggering 70% of the proposed development. Although not directly within the North Kent National Landscape literally the other side of the M2, there is no difference in the nature and appearance of this open countryside. Notwithstanding the ambitious 20% biodiversity gains for the development claimed, there appears no reasonable rationale for destroying the peace and environment of the open countryside and then attempting to ‘make good’ the impact of such a large development of housing, new roads, commercial premises and space and additional population.

Nature conservation - It goes without saying that the large areas of open countryside and prime agricultural land earmarked for development (70% BMV land) have abundant, diverse ecosystems of flora and fauna. This wildlife and associated habitats rich in biodiversity face destruction. There is little detail in the application that offers reassurance of conserving existing nature and biodiversity plans are not complete. At this moment, it is not unreasonable to conclude that construction will unavoidably remove or at best drastically alter the natural landscape and endanger a number of protected species despite best intentions.

Risk of flooding – The Duchy states: “Surface water will be directed to sustainable drainage systems (SuDs), and an onsite Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW) will process all waste water and sewerage from homes and businesses...this system will require approval from the Environment Agency”. Phase 1 of the development (2027) includes the water recycling centre

Southern Water refers to the impact of additional foul sewerage flows from the proposed development on the existing public sewer network. Their initial study indicates that these additional flows may lead to an increased risk of foul flooding from the sewer, although their job is to mitigate that.

Southern Water also stipulate that where a SuDS scheme is to be implemented, the drainage details submitted to the Local Planning Authority should:

- Specify the responsibilities of each party for the implementation of the SuDS scheme.

- Specify a timetable for implementation.
- Provide a management and maintenance plan for the lifetime of the development

These details do not appear to be in the application.

Much essential information on the risk of flooding, SuDs and government approval is yet to be offered in the application. As Phase 1 also includes the water recycling centre, planning permission would seem premature. While the Duchy focuses on the ambitious plans for a SuDs and WWTW, it neither refers to existing flooding issues in Selling Road and the A2 nor any plans to mitigate against the risk of the development exacerbating flooding.

Density of build and scale – The vastness of the development site, replacing hundreds of hectares of open countryside and best most versatile land, is hard to fathom. There is no doubt that, coupled with the recent and ongoing housing developments along the A2, Love Lane and Graveney Road, the charm and allure of Faversham is ruined forever. The trade-off between housing density based on green credentials and consequent increased scale causes much unease for the future of this area of Faversham, Swale and East Kent. The role of commercial premises is not properly explained, and prima facie seems an odd fit within this enormous development. There is irony that the intended sustainability sought by the Duchy, and required by the National Planning Policy Framework, is undermined by the sheer unnecessary scale of the project.

ii) To resolve a response to the proposal - How to respond to the consultation letter and next steps

Councillor Hobson proposed that a draft response be prepared following the next ordinary council meeting on 18 April, which is to combine the views of residents and councillors. Seconded by Cllr Evans. A vote took place, and it was agreed by all.

04.24.E4 The date of the next Ordinary Parish Council meeting will be Thursday, 18 April 2024

The meeting was closed at 8.25 pm

Signed.....

Date