



# COGGESHALL PARISH COUNCIL

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## **COGGESHALL PARISH COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO THE DUTCH NURSERY APPLICATION 17/00359/OUT**

The proposals that have been submitted for outline planning permission for development at the Dutch Nursery site on West Street have been modified since they were first presented to the public in September 2016. The plans have taken into account comments made by the public, Parish Council and, in particular, the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, where the Parish Council understands that a number of points have been incorporated and subsequent positive changes have been made to the original plans. These include keeping the housing mainly on the brownfield part of the site; allocating public open space by the river, with "green" access from West Street; building housing around cul-de-sacs; off-street parking for residents and visitors; central access down to the river; variation in housing size between neighbouring properties; and natural landscaping.

However, there are still aspects of the plans that we would like to see modified and areas where more detail is required. The following sections outline areas that the Council finds acceptable and notes areas of concern that the Council would like the developers, as well as Braintree District Council, to take into consideration and address.

- The use of open spaces in the plans is encouraging, but there is a request that there should be a footpath link to the north west corner of the site, to create a direct footpath connection with the public footpath opposite.
- The Draft Local Plan from Braintree does list the Dutch Nursery site in its allocated site list, and this was supported by Coggeshall Parish Council and many residents of Coggeshall. However, the allocation is for around 30 properties and these proposed plans are for a significant increase on this figure. We understand that the figure of 30 was proposed due to the fact that certain businesses at the site would continue to operate, and this is now not the case. However, the increase in units is disproportionately large and while Coggeshall Parish Council supports development in principle, it is on the basis of there being lower density housing. The proposed plans cannot be considered low density and therefore changes are required to meet this criterion.
- There is already a long-standing issue with parking in Coggeshall and the Parish Council wants to ensure that any future developments do not add to this. While several of the properties do seem to have sufficient allotted parking spaces, many do not, which may lead to bottlenecks on West Street. With houses planned to be built along the street next to existing properties, there is a concern that those houses will use the street for their parking. As the plans also include a proposal to create a footpath along this section of West Street, this may narrow the street considerably, causing safety issues for cars travelling up and down the road. There is a suggestion in the proposal that the houses developed along West Street would be of value from a heritage perspective. Coggeshall Parish Council disagrees with this, and would suggest that it would be more sympathetic to the heritage of the road to not build new houses adjacent to the existing listed properties. Furthermore, the frontage of the development should be discreet, with a low visual impact. This should be taken into consideration with the commercial units, which should be designed to be in keeping with the Isinglass properties.

- The Parish Council understands that the Essex County Council standard is to allow each property parking spaces for two cars, however for the larger houses of four bedrooms more spaces may be required. In light of the issues experienced in the village, the Parish Council requests an exception to be made to the current standards, and for the developers to consider houses with more than three bedrooms to have at least three car parking spaces. Coggeshall has a much higher level of car ownership per household than the rest of England (15 cars per 10 households compared to 12 for England and Wales) and whilst the application may satisfy the planning policy, an allowance should be made for this additional level of car ownership in an increased provision of parking spaces.
- The transport assessment that has been submitted as part of the proposals includes guidance from The Institution of Highways and Transportation about journeys on foot and accessibility. The guidelines suggest that there should be a maximum of 800m between a development and a town centre and that it has been calculated that it is possible to walk 840 metres in 10 minutes. The application states that it is possible to “walk to all the local amenities” in Coggeshall in seven minutes. What do the developers consider the village centre and local amenities to be? A table only puts two of the defined amenities as being under 800m - the Vineyard and White Hart. Both of these are restaurants and can't be considered as essential amenities. Furthermore, the White Hart is, according to the table, actually 750m away and nine minutes walking distance, so it cannot be considered accessible within the seven minutes previously stated. When looking at the amenities that are more likely to be used on a regular basis, such as McColls (Post Office) and The Co-op, both are put at being 1km away and 12 minutes' walk. The Co-op is further than McColls, so this is a miscalculation, and the distance to both may mean that people do not walk, but drive. As noted, there is a lack of parking in Coggeshall, so this may cause further traffic and congestion on the roads if they are unable to find spaces in the car park.
- The transport assessment also says there is good sustainable access for walking, but at several points on West Street the pavement is incredibly narrow and has an uneven surface. There is a concern that accessibility might be an issue for people with prams or those in wheelchairs. This may further deter people from walking. Widening of the pavement has been mentioned, but the Parish Council would like more detail on these plans, as to where exactly it will be widened, to what measurements and what the resulting measurements of the road would be.
- The Parish Council understands that the plans have been submitted for outline planning permission and there is no requirement to present any designs for the properties at this point, but it feels that it is difficult to approve of the plans without seeing any draft designs or design statement. Given that much of Coggeshall fits into a conservation area and design is clearly a prominent feature of the village, with a number of listed buildings, the Parish Council requests that it is provided with information on the designs and how they will be sympathetic to Coggeshall. It is suggested that these reflect the heritage nature of Coggeshall, and that a uniform approach in the design is not taken.
- In the proposal there is a welcome reference to the consideration of self-build plots, but no detail is given on where these would be located on the site, what size they would be or precisely how many will be allocated. The Parish Council understands that this may depend on the affordable housing provision, but in the number of

scenarios presented on affordable housing given the uncertainties around the Section 106 agreement, there was no mention of self-build and how this might be impacted. Furthermore, the inclusion of self-build plots had been specifically requested by the Neighbourhood Plan group, on the basis that it has the potential to encourage diversity and character in new developments and can add to the unique character of the village. As Braintree District Council has an obligation to find plots within three years for people who have registered an interest with them in self build before 31 October 2016, the developers should work closely with Braintree to ensure that a specified allocation is made before proceeding to detailed planning permission. This would meet the request of the Neighbourhood Plan group and would also help Braintree to fulfil its quota for the people on its self- build interest register.

- The proposals include a mixed use development and one suggestion for the commercial units is that they include food outlets. The Parish Council would recommend that this use is removed from the plans, as it may take business away from the village centre and create a community within the development that is separate to the rest of Coggeshall. Furthermore, the nature of food outlets may encourage further problems with people parking on the road for food collection and with operating hours being unwelcome to existing residents in neighbouring properties. The commercial site should be developed for businesses that will benefit the community, provide non-food retail services, or designed with consideration of people who are self-employed, creating a 'hub' that may allow them to grow their businesses.
- With regards to the affordable housing provision, it is difficult to be able to respond to this given the number of potential scenarios that have been outlined, depending on the Section 106 requirements. In light of this, the Parish Council wishes to state what it would like to see for this provision and to have this taken into account by Braintree District Council and the developers. The features that it would like to see incorporated into the affordable housing are as follows:
  - Starter homes, which have covenants to ensure that they remain classed as such in the event of any future sales;
  - Properties that have covenants stating they cannot be extended to increase the volume or footprint of the building;
  - Shared ownership;
  - Properties sold at a discounted rate to have a sale price that is below 80% of the market price, with properties of more than three bedrooms to be at most 70% of market price.

The Parish Council understands that Braintree District Council has the power to approve of these suggestions, but that approval may need to be applied for from Essex County Council. Where such approval is needed, the Parish Council asks that it be sought.

In conclusion, the Parish Council support the application in principle but would like to see further modifications before planning permission is granted.

12<sup>th</sup> April 2017