

Dear Mr Isbell,

I've delayed sending this until today because I'd hoped to have received a reply to the concerns expressed in my email dated 6th November. Unfortunately I've yet to receive even an acknowledgement of its receipt.

As you are aware, I've attempted to engage with the Heritage Team to discuss my concerns for the safety of my Property in respect of the planning application referenced above and to seek their support to address those concerns. The reply received on Tuesday 5th November left me somewhat bemused. The officer believes that we have a difference of opinion regarding the significance of the issues I've raised. With due respect to your officer, there should not be a difference of opinion when dealing with measurable criteria – it's either right or it's wrong.

1. The narrowing of the road to 3.5m will bring wide high sided vehicles into contact with my Property.
2. Placing a physical barrier into the road to prevent such contact will narrow the road further. Meaning wide Agricultural Vehicles (nominally 3.5m wide) will be prevented from passing through Main Road.

As Somersham is surrounded by arable farmland and Main Road is an essential route for such vehicles, placing a physical barrier in the roadway is nonsense and means that the Listed Asset cannot be protected.

3. Maintaining my property requires me to place equipment and protective barriers into the road. In 2017 Suffolk Highways initially refused to allow me to carry out this work because they said the road width was not wide enough. It took me 3 months of negotiation and compromise to reach an agreement that allowed the work to commence. We used traffic lights to control the flow of traffic and had just enough road width to accommodate the traffic that passed through while keeping the equipment and the decorator safe. The placement of the proposed path into Main Road and thus reducing the road width to 3.5m prevents this from ever being allowed again!

These are not opinions, they are facts.

I'm not some random resident who's unwilling to accept change. I'm the owner of a Grade 2 Listed Property that will be put in jeopardy by this unwise proposal to narrow Main Road. Please understand that I do not for one moment believe that the Heritage Team is incompetent or neglectful it's duties, so there must be another reason why there's such a reluctance to engage on these real and significant issues. When alerted by me to the setting issue created by the first draft of

the developer's site plan, the Officer dealt with this effectively and caused the site plan to be amended. So why is there now this reluctance to step in when the physical wellbeing of the property is being put at risk?

Could there be a conflict of interest at play?

Planning and Heritage fall within the same MSDC Directorate. The objective of the Planning Team (ref documents submitted to the Development Control Committee) is for the application to be approved. They state that the outcome (of a less than thorough assessment by Suffolk Highways) warrants approval of the application. This objective is paramount, otherwise why are they reluctant to challenge the application and instead hide behind the 'expertise' of the LLHA even though the LLHA assessment has been shown to be flawed .

Now this is where the cynic in me steps in.

In reality, everyone knows that the proposal to change the layout of the Mill Lane to Stocks Hill section of Main Road is a bad idea. However, if the development is approved, work on the roadway alterations will not take place until after the housing estate is complete. Why? Because large construction vehicles, i.e. earth movers, aggregate HGVs, etc will not be able to pass through the section if it is narrowed and bollards (to protect my property) are in place. Once the development is concluded, work can then start on Main Road. The Highways Engineers will review the plans, a Road Safety Audit will be undertaken and the conclusion will be that the changes are not acceptable. As such, the road will be left unchanged and the housing development becomes a fait accompli, with the need for sustainable, inclusive, safe pedestrian access to the village for the new residents, conveniently lost.

In this scenario, Heritage knows that the issues raised will not materialise so there is no need to engage and open this can of worms to greater scrutiny. The Development Control Committee and now the Referrals Committee will continue to be presented with a sanitised assessment of risk, with the expectation being that no one will contest the 'Expert' opinions and as such the desired outcome will be achieved.

I hope that I'm wrong and that all parties will acknowledge the risks in a fair and rational manner but based on my current experience, I'm not sure that will happen .

I look forward to receiving your reply to the concerns I've raised.

Kind regards

Andy Laughlin

Kings Cottage

Main Road

Somersham