

Following the Committee Meeting on Weds 8th November to discuss our stables application & the subsequent planning consultee response, Mike Moss & myself have been in contact with our planning consultant Ben Elvin, we have watched the recording of the meeting & we have listened to & read everything that all the various parties had to say.

We wish to register our disappointment that the feedback from Heritage came so late in the day & that it wasn't made available to Ben to digest before the meeting commenced. As we understand it, the consultation period ended months ago and it seems completely unacceptable that feedback like this can be sought so late in the day and that members could even think about voting when neither Ben, Mike or myself had been made aware of Heritage's comments.

The comments made within their feedback about repositioning the stable block don't make any sense at all. We also noted concerns raised by the members at the meeting about a number of issues including the size of the stables, what the benefit would be to the village if permission was granted and most important of all appeared to be the issue of preserving the view of the green space - both across the meadow from the bottom near the corner and also from the top of the meadow from the footpath – as part of the agreed village plan.

Please can you ensure that the following information is made available to all members and anyone else associated with making the decision on our application as a matter of urgency as it is only fair that we are able to provide information in advance of the decision being made where people may well not be aware of the facts - particularly as Heritage have been allowed to comment so recently and so late on in the proceedings.

Preserving the View

We would like to tackle the issue of the preservation of the view first as there is an absolutely vital point being missed here that nobody anywhere has given any level of relevance to at all.

When we purchased the meadow it had not been maintained for decades and whilst it was described as a meadow it actually resembled a piece of waste land. There was around half an acre of blackthorn situated along the top of the meadow where the footpath is and down the side of the meadow along the opposite side to the church. See attached photographs prior to the land being purchased and during & after the blackthorn removal.

The meadow was covered in stinging nettles, thistles, weeds & rabbit burrows.

Whilst it may indeed have been classed as open space, it was hardly an attractive vista and the rate at which the blackthorn was growing into the meadow it would not have been long before there was barely any green space to be seen at all.

Due to the thickness of the blackthorn - see photographs attached, there was absolutely no view of anything from anywhere along the footpath. As Alex Scott rightly pointed out, there was no point in taking photographs from the footpath when he visited the site as nothing but undergrowth was visible.

As the Parish Council knows, we have removed the blackthorn and in doing so have uncovered a number of elm trees and have given other trees along the edge of the meadow room to flourish. **In doing this work we have now created a view which wasn't there previously.** See photograph of post blackthorn removal which shows the side of the meadow. At the top of the picture is the start of the footpath which is diagonally opposite the gate at the corner of Brockford Road/Church Road. This particular vista was referred to by Councillor Stringer.

In addition to clearing the blackthorn, we have completely removed all the weeds and topsoil, we have re-laid the soil & have had it seeded ready to grow grass in the Spring. We have also had the meadow perimeter fenced. This has been done at considerable cost & effort on the part of professional groundsmen we employed who have done an excellent job.

Whilst this will enable us to provide good grazing **it also comes as a bonus to the village as the view has considerably enhanced what anyone was able to see before.**

In addition to what we have done so far, we want to plant more trees and we intend to line each of the flanks of the meadow with wildflowers which will attract insects and will look absolutely beautiful in the years ahead each Spring & Summer. **This too will be a benefit to the village.**

One final point - we are regularly maintaining the footpath at the top of our land and will continue to do so in the future along with maintenance of the rest of our land. **This too is an advantage to the village as had it remained as it was before nobody would have had any incentive to maintain or improve the area.**

Who wouldn't prefer to have the view of what we are creating compared to blackthorn, stinging nettles and thistles?

Repositioning of the Stables

We have taken photographs from the corner of Brockford Road & Church Road where the large arrow was referred to on the map the members were looking at during the meeting. We do not understand why this particular "view" is deemed so important? As is suggested, the corner is somewhat dangerous to pedestrians and if the hedge around the current unused access does close up over time, surely the "view" from this place, if there is one will reduce?

As you can see & the members will be able to see when they visit the area, the area where we currently propose the stables to be sited cannot be seen. There isn't actually much of a view across the meadow as the most obvious view is of the yew trees lining the churchyard. However, what can be seen now - even before the sown grass has grown - is immensely more attractive than the rough meadow and blackthorn which was previously visible.

There is still barely any view from the footpath over the meadow as the undergrowth remains fairly dense. There is certainly no view of where we want to site the stables as again, the churchyard yew trees screen it.

We cannot see the point of repositioning the stables as if anything, they would be more visible if they were rotated and sited up the side of our house.

Size of the Stables

Some members admitted that they know nothing about horses so perhaps the following information might help them.....

The amount of meadow space is sufficient to graze 2 - 3 horses - allowing for resting paddocks. Currently I have 2 horses but I may have 3 to mitigate for the fact that my 2 are old and one or both will eventually die. Horses need hay & feed & hay in particular cannot be stored outside as it would spoil in the wet & cold. We therefore need storage - hence the additional areas we have designed to the stables in the block. Hay has to be purchased in bulk - one cannot simply buy a few bales at a time. The horses need bedding for the short periods of time they will be stabled for & this too has to be bought in bulk. We also need space to hang horse rugs etc. These are the reasons why we are requesting the size of stable block we are.

As you are aware, we do have the option of having temporary buildings instead of permanent ones but we would rather have permanent ones for the following reasons :-

1. We want to have solar panels fitted on the roof which will produce electricity for our house we are currently building to live in. We notice the members expressed concerns about the possibility of someone other than the owners of the house using the stables & land and as we want to have solar panels fitted, this will always link the stables and land to our property.

2. We believe that purpose built stables will appear much more attractive than the various temporary structures we would be forced to use if we do not obtain permission. If the members are so concerned with the appearance of the structure we build, surely they would be more concerned about the use of temporary structures we could erect that they would have absolutely no control over?

Car Parking

Heritage has referred to 'car parking' and this has also been raised in previous meetings & correspondence so we feel this point needs clarification.

We do not need car 'parking' as such as any visiting cars will be 'parked' for a minimal amount of time. Visiting vehicles might for example be the farrier, the vet & a friend's vehicle when they come to help. We will need to have feed, bedding & hay delivered and vans will need space to turn around in so they are not backing out onto the road. In addition, we intend to have the horse manure collected on a regular basis so there needs to be space for a small tractor & trailer to manoeuvre. Maybe it would be easier to describe the space as 'vehicle turning' rather than parking.

In addition to the above there were numerous other points raised which we could easily have explained and commented on. However, as only a 3 minute window of opportunity is allowed to counter debate the issues that were raised, it seems only fair that we can present our viewpoint by way of this email so that members are aware of facts which haven't previously been presented.

Latest Mendlesham Parish Council Response

With regard to the latest planning consultee response, it is completely futile for Mendlesham Parish Council to continue to complain that the site should not have been developed. The original planning was nothing to do with us. It was agreed by Mid Suffolk District Council that 2 X properties could be built and again agreed by them that they could be amended to what we are building now. It is pointless to continue to make reference to this.

With regard to the flooding issue, it is just not accurate to assume that if we build a stable block it will add to flooding problems. We have confirmed before that we intend to do work to improve the situation on the corner of Brockford Road/Church Road but clearly, nobody believes us! This will be for our benefit and for the benefit of the village too. We intend to store all rainwater from the stable roof for use so it will not add to the problem.

The recent deluge of rain caused by Storm Babet was very unusual and unprecedented. In the unlikely event that it should occur again the road flooded so badly due to the ditches and streams being unable to take the water away quickly enough. In the event of such rainfall occurring again, our stable block would hardly worsen the situation.

We should also re-state that the area where the stables would be sited did not flood.

With reference to the essential points made at the end of the response :

- a) It makes no difference if the existing corner entrance is closed or not. The entrance has existed for decades & does not pose a risk for anyone other than ourselves should we want to walk in and out of it.
- b) It is not acceptable to limit the number of horses we choose to have.
- c) Lighting would only be in the stables/storage rooms & under the covered walkway which would have absolutely no impact on the church which is nowhere near the stables.
- d) We utterly fail to understand how having horses grazing on an attractive meadow would in any way offend any mourners tending to the graves of their loved ones. The meadow has a history of horses grazing on it and I understand from a number of locals that one horse in particular was much loved and regularly looked upon by villagers.
- e) As stated before, we intend to plant more trees to greatly enhance the meadow further. It is not acceptable to impose conditions with regard to this.
- f) We have already covered the issue of the footpath in our comments above.

Summary

We simply do not understand why the Parish Council continue to try and block everything we do with the meadow. As Ben Elvin pointed out, we were not responsible for any of the history of the planning applications on the site yet we have been treated as if we are riding rough shod across all rules and regulations which is simply not the case. We have sought advice at all stages, we have made amendments wherever requested and all works to the houses and the meadow have been carried out in a professional way.

As stated before, we simply wish to finish building our house, live in it and keep our horses in the field behind with a stable for them to live in when required.

Our application for the stables was originally submitted in January 2023 and it was validated in April. We understand that ordinarily there is an 8 week period after validation when responses are sought from consultees and then a decision is made.

We understand that if there is reason why a decision can't be made after 8 weeks then it can be delayed with our written agreement. This was not sought, **some 8 months have now passed** and all that has happened is Mendlesham Parish Council continues to raise the same points over and over again. It is absolutely unacceptable that we are being victimised this way. Our application appears to have become political through absolutely no fault of our own.

Can you kindly acknowledge receipt of this email and confirm that it will be distributed to the members as requested.