

SAFE (Supporters Against Fressingfield Expansion) comments on Appeal (APP/W3520/W/19/3227159) on the unanimous rejection by Mid Suffolk District Council of building at Post Mill, Fressingfield (1648/17)

More detailed analysis of the comments on this paper can be found on the SAFE website fressingfieldhousing.org

- Fressingfield is a small, agricultural village on the Suffolk/Norfolk border with about 350 houses in the core the village and a total population of just over 1000 in the Parish
- This appeal relates to the extension of an existing housing estate of 25 houses, making a total of 49.
- Two hybrid Applications (3872/16 and 4410/16) including 46 houses and two large community facilities were approved in 2017 but have not yet been built, (plus 5 windfall houses). These will generate about 100 additional cars and 120 residents. The full cumulative impact with these is unknown, but an Environmental Information Regulations application to Suffolk County Council (SCC) disclosed an email to MSDC dated 16th April 2018 from the lead flood authority has already highlighted a significant risk to worsening the existing flood risk in Fressingfield" in connection with Application 3872/16 (a stone's throw from the Appeal site).
- In a scientifically sound petition, visiting every house in the central village, 94% of villagers were against major development (such as Post Mill) and in favour of no more than 5 homes per annum.
- As a Primary Village, provisionally a Hinterland village together with the proposals in "The Right Homes in the Right Places" we would be expected to build no more than 5 homes per year. This is supported by the Parish Council and the Pre-Submission Consultation Version of the Fressingfield NDP. With the approved and projected windfall houses we have met our housing targets for the next 20 years.
- At the November 2018 Planning hearing one councillor strongly urged that developments for Fressingfield should not be considered until the 2 approved sites had been developed.
- 93 villagers submitted objections to the Post Mill scheme in their own words and of their own volition.
- Traffic and road safety are of great concern. The Post Mill site exits onto the main street (New Street) where the shop, medical centre, scout hut and Methodist Chapel are situated. It is a very narrow road, is frequently congested and has no pavement for much of the road.
- New Street culminates in a complex 5 way junction. (Jubilee Corner)
- A recent traffic monitoring survey situated in the midpoint of New Street, presumably commissioned by the developer, would have underestimated the traffic volume as no account would be made for traffic coming from Jubilee Corner visiting the shop and turning immediately or traffic visiting the surgery from the west of the village. The survey was undertaken in February 2019 – one of the quietest times of the year for an agricultural village.
- The proposed footpath from Post Mill to New Street opens onto a blind corner in New Street.
- 24 dwellings in Post Mill would be expected to generate 48 vehicles and 55 extra residents all accessing the school, shop, surgery,, places of worship and the two pubs, via New Street.
- In the Post Mill Application, 8 of the homes have been designated as "Affordable". Within the two major developments already approved, there are 18 "Affordable" homes. Currently there are 8 families with local connections on the waiting list for affordable housing. The two already approved developments will exceed local need.
- There are no cycle routes in Fressingfield. Cycling is not a realistic sustainable transport option.
- Fressingfield is 4.5 miles from an A road and 5 miles from the nearest small town. It is 12.4 miles to Diss railway Station and 62.9 miles to the nearest motorway. The nearest District Hospital is either Norwich or Ipswich each approximately 28 miles away.
- The needs of disabled residents and those with impaired mobility are not considered in the application i.e. are no facilities for disabled people in the village.

- We have a primary school (nearing capacity), but no senior school, so older children exit the village for secondary education.
- The medical centre is adjacent to Post Mill. The surgery car park is frequently full and this leads to on street parking in New Street adjacent to the Post Mill entrance.
- We have only one bus A WEEK.
- There are only 64 Whole Time Equivalent jobs in the village, so most adult workers will have to journey out of the village by car to work.
- Lack of local facilities and dependence on motor vehicles, combined with no mains gas means that our Green Credentials are poor.
- Low Road is at the bottom of four steep slopes and is the route of the Beck and of the village's sewer. Recurrent significant surface water flooding has been recorded and photographed since the 60s. The surface water drainage strategy at Post Mill takes no account of off- site flooding.
- Flooding already occurs at the lower end of New Street.
- There is a serious problem with sewerage. At times of heavy rainfall manhole covers lift causing raw sewage to enter the roadway and residents' gardens. This occurred four times in 2018 and a clean-up team was needed on one occasion because of the level of contamination. Anglian Water has investigated the problem and conclude this is due to historic surface water connections to the foul sewer. ANY further building will exacerbate the problem as more houses will result in more sewage and less capacity in the sewer at times of heavy rainfall. Recent attempts to modify the pumping station have failed to solve the problem.
- The problems of flooding and sewage egress are long standing, but becoming more frequent. It was documented in correspondence in 1988 between our then MP, Michael Lord, and Anglian Water's CEO.
- Anglian Water have confirmed to us and the LPA that the situation cannot be rectified. To increase the size of the sewer will reduce the flow rate during normal periods and will result in blockages and smells.
- The Suffolk Director of Public Health formally reported this as a health hazard.
- The proposed development lies outside the settlement boundary in Fressingfield.
- The proposed development at Post Mill is on the brow of a Hill and will impact visually on the rural aspect when viewed from the Harleston Hill, especially when the deciduous foliage screen is bare.
- Fressingfield is important in having a significant Conservation area, 58 designated heritage buildings two of which adjoin the appeal site, and other important non-designated heritage assets.

TEN KEY POINTS

In summary the proposed development is NOT sustainable because it would:

- 1. fail to take account of the cumulative impact of 46 houses agreed but not yet built**
- 2. bring more houses to the village than policy has allocated**
- 3. bring new residents to the village with no collocated employment opportunities**
- 4. fail to adapt to climate change by increasing car travel to/from facilities the village does not have**
- 5. fail to prioritise pedestrians by radically increasing traffic along the core pedestrian route**
- 6. fail to minimise pollution by introducing yet more sewage to a defective system**
- 7. further exacerbate flood risks that cannot be mitigated**
- 8. compromise the heritage of the conservation area and the two listed buildings adjacent to the site**
- 9. compromise the landscape setting of the village, identified as unusual for Suffolk**
- 10. introduce a housing estate of almost 50 houses, entirely out of character for a rural settlement.**

Dr. J. Castro, Chairman of SAFE

on behalf of SAFE members, P. Castro, D. Cavilla, J. Kelsall, E. Manero, A. Maydon, M. Miles and T. Orchard.

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