

Wreningham Parish Council

Public Meeting - "The Farthings", 27th June 2023

Attendees:

Parish Council: Michael Hill, Hughie Graves, Keith Morris, Jean Lambert, Andrea Tancred and Tina Higlett, Parish Clerk.

Wreningham Heritage: David Kirk.

F W Properties Ltd: Julian Wells and Donovan Brock.

Norfolk Wildlife Trust: Gemma Walker.

South Norfolk & Broadland Council: Helen Sibley.

Members of the Public: in excess of 70.

**Michael Hill** opened the meeting. There are three objectives for this meeting:

1. to announce the FW Properties proposal for the site by Hethel Road i.e. three self-build plots with transfer of the remaining land to community ownership;
2. to engage those present in discussion about what the proposal may mean for the community and for the site itself;
3. To gauge whether those present would support the proposal in principle. Otherwise the proposal would fall at this meeting.

He pointed out that the community land is for the benefit of Wreningham residents. It will not be developed by the Parish Council other than as a green / environmental asset. If the proposal is acceptable, then it is to be acknowledged that this is a long term project of 10 to 15 years which will require the active engagement of Wreningham residents to resource the project, design the site, and to manage and maintain it. Hence, MH wishes to establish a Parish Council project team comprising villagers to lead in developing the land as a community asset.

He introduced the five speakers who will each provide their input on the implications and opportunities presented by this proposal for community land and three self-build plots.

**David Kirk** – Heritage group, gave a presentation on the historical element of the land and how the development has become known as The Farthings. Historically it was two fields which were divided by a ditch. The ditch can still be seen today and is quite deep. Up until 1985, the land was owned by Elm Tree Farm and was used for cattle fodder. Records show that in 1838 the fields were divided and were known as Ash Yard and Blacksmiths Field. In 1600's, there are the same field patterns, with Farthing Lane running alongside.

**Julian Wells, FW Properties Ltd.** - Various developments in South Norfolk including Woodton and Brook. Currently working on a development of 60 houses in Loddon, However, the Local Plan has no additional housing allocation for Wreningham. So, FW Properties wish to remove this land from their portfolio. The site is well connected to both path and roadways. Two options for the site:

1. Auction the land to the highest bidder (could be anybody), or
2. the preferred option, to sell part of the land with planning application for three two-storey, self-build properties and the remaining four acres transferred to the Parish Council as community land.

Should the community land option be acceptable then the community will decide what is to be done with the area. FW Properties would facilitate the transfer and cover costs over a

period of time. Outline consent for the self-build plots will be obtained through a planning application to South Norfolk Council.

FW Properties would address the site and boundary drainage and utilities/services will be laid to the self-build plots. FW Properties can assist with the self builds if requested to do so. A Design Statement for each plot will be developed by FW Properties. The build of properties will not commence until community land initial tree/bush planting has been completed and ownership formally handed over to the Parish Council. An Ecology site inspection will be undertaken.

JW advised that the feedback from this meeting will influence the planning application, including their design of community land (spaces i.e. pre-handover planting – trees & bushes/shrubs), footpaths, bridges, benches, access – gates & footpath, etc.).

**Donovan Brock, FW Properties Ltd.** – Gave an overview of the developer's interpretation of what the site could look like in particular the community land design.

**Gemma Walker, Norfolk Wildlife Trust.** Stoke Holy Cross was given a plot of land by a developer two years ago and this has been a great asset to the community. When given land, the parish must consider ongoing management, including:

- People. Watch where people walk the area to establish footpaths should be sited.
- Plant life. It is worth waiting to observe and record what grows on the site.
- Wildlife. Similarly, observe visiting wildlife, such as barn owls, and consider how to encourage more
- Hedging. Good for butterflies and small mammals
- Species of trees. Suitable for the site and years to come
- Community orchards. A Popular option
- Pond, all ponds are mapped (possible ghost pond). Larger pond to combat flooding
- Wet meadow area, perhaps instead of a pond, or, to complement a pond
- Meadow but this can be a lot of work. Example nearby at Long's Farm
- Grant funding
- How you want to manage the land – local resources (people, equipment)
- Allotments
- Scope and scale of the project
- Sustainability. A plan to afford to manage the site and its contents
- Don't over complicate keep it simple.

**Helen Sibley, Green Infrastructure Officer, South Norfolk and Broadland Council** - Her role sits outside of the Planning department. She gives advice to planning applicants on green infrastructure and spaces, and also advice for communities. More recently Rothbury Park, Wymondham, which is an urban area being developed by the local community. The design proposal for the area includes a designated footpath, area for football, and both an orchard and wildlife area.

Funding for development can be sourced from:

- Norfolk County Council Members Grant
- South Norfolk Council Pride in Place Community Grant
- National Lottery Awards
- The Geoffrey Watling Charity

## Questions & comments – a summary

The formal input completed, Michael Hill opened the meeting to questions from the floor.

1. *Concerns around privacy, oversight and the hedge around Yew Tree Cottage*

The design and placing of the self-build plots will include an assessment of privacy for neighbouring houses.

That hedge is within the ownership of FW Properties and a separate discussion will be held with the neighbour to ensure that appropriate measures are taken to maintain the hedge and retain privacy.

2. *Other hedges – on the site boundary and within the site.*

JW will enhance the hedges around the boundary of the whole site. Hedges will be established around the self-build plots. Similarly, hedges are to be planted along the back of the houses on Church Road

Hedges will be a mix of species and interspersed with trees.

Actual hedge / boundary design will be part of the discussion with the community.

3. *Future of the unsold lots for sale to Church Road residents*

JW said these will remain in ownership of JW Properties until, in time, they are sold to the residents. He did not expect to sell them to any other group.

4. *Flooding along Hethel Road.* This is a perennial problem on the road. The (pond) water overflows into gardens to the East of the site.

JW advised this will be addressed. Ditches will be cleared out and engineers will look to improve the flow along the ditches to mitigate flooding. FW Property will have to liaise with NCC on this matter anyway.

MH has contacted NCC Highways with a view to walking the route of the drains to discuss the problems with drainage/flooding.

The existence of a pond and nearby ditches offers the opportunity to consider creating a wetland space which may also act as a sink for flood water.

5. *Proposed siting of properties. Is this the best location for houses?*

a. *With regards to highway and visibility.* This is not where you would expect to cut into the land. The preferred site access is suggested to be existing entry opposite Pear Tree Farm.

JW advised he will revisit the plan with regards to where the self-build plots may be sited so as not to affect those living in close proximity.

Noted that this is a narrow lane and ensuring access is remote from the corners

b. *Parking on roads.*

NCC Highways consider the impact of extra vehicles as part of the planning application process

c. *Construction traffic – local roads very narrow.*

NCC Highways and Planning Officers will consider the impact of construction vehicles as part of the planning process. An access route to and from the site will be determined and required.

6. *Affordable housing – the stated size of the plots and the houses to be built means they will be expensive.*

JW advised the calculations for including affordable properties are a problem and not profitable.

7. *Could the Parish Council buy the land at the auction?*

MH advised council could not even afford to buy one of the plots offered to Church Road houses as garden amenity space.

[MH had noted in his opening remarks that the playing field had been acquired through public subscription, but thought this might not be repeated for The Farthings]

8. *Proposal was "A gift to the community for the benefit of all"* – this is not the case  
MH accepted that in any development involving new houses there are going to be some who perceive or experience disbenefits. However, the majority around the site will experience benefits through having access to community land. It is hoped that the majority of villagers will see the potential benefits for them and their families.

9. *New Biodiversity legislation* – planned for later in the year. Would this land be affected by this legislation?

JW as yet has no idea what this legislation is about and any potential impact on this proposal.

JW would also investigate what a suggested 30-year lease covenant / legal agreement might mean to this site.

10. *Access* – disabled and other access.

There will be two main access points with a potential for a third. The current vehicular access will be retained with the addition of a large gate with a side gate for pedestrian and disabled access

The footpath from Church Road will remain, be hardened for wet weather access, and provide open access into The Farthings.

A further gate may be installed along Hethel Road into the site.

Vehicle Parking (for those with mobility issues) - this will be part of the design and if necessary, the planning application

### **Conclusion**

MH reminded the meeting that the details of site design and later use were not the issue here. Such things would be addressed in the build up to a planning application. This meeting was intended to provide the villagers with information about the proposal, and to gauge the degree of support for the proposal.

MH asked for a show of hands in support of this proposal – **majority [of 2/3]** of those present were **in favour** of the community land proposal.

MH asked for a show of hands to indicate a willingness to become actively involved in this community project – **a majority did so**.

MH said that the information provided by the speakers will be available on the village website with a summary of this discussion session. The next step is to form a project group from residents to develop an outline design, devise parameters for the site and assist in creating the planning application.

Notes by WPC Clerk  
27 June 2023