



# MELTON PARISH COUNCIL

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**PLA(21)125**

## **MELTON HILL REDEVELOPMENT – ENGAGEMENT WITH LOCAL COUNCILS**

In October 2021 both Woodbridge Town Council (WTC) and Melton PC wrote to the Head of Planning and Coastal Management at East Suffolk Council in the following terms:

### **Re: Melton Hill Development**

It is understood that the closing date for bids for the purchase of the above site was on 15 September and your council is in the process of considering the bids received. The Melton Hill site is partly located within the parish of Melton and its development is of important significance to the residents of Melton, just as it is to the community of Woodbridge. Melton Councillors have therefore expressed a strong wish to work together with both the District Council and the Woodbridge Council and community to produce the best possible result in terms of how the development will both reflect the iconic nature of the site and integrate well into the existing fabric of the town.

I understand that Woodbridge Town Council has been in touch with you seeking a meeting to discuss how best this outcome can be achieved, and Melton Councillors would wish to be a party to any such discussions.

A reply to both Councils was received on 25 October. It read:

I have received letters from your respective councils seeking to have a meeting with myself and planning colleagues in respect of the future development of Melton Hill.

The council, as landowner, is currently considering the offers it has received with its appointed advisors. I am not involved in that offers consideration process as it is imperative, as always, to separate the council's landowner considerations with that of the council being the local planning authority. Once an offer is accepted no doubt the successful bidder will want to engage with the planning team to share their emerging proposals for the site. It will be at this time, when the preferred bidder is identified, that community dialogue considerations will be able to be undertaken with your respective councils and the developer. I have no indication, at this time of any timescales for the next stages but as soon as I am able I will be in contact again to pick this matter up.

WTC followed this up on 27 October, emphasising that the request was simply one to discuss “the mechanics of exactly how any future developers...will engage with the Town Council and the community” and reiterating the request for a meeting.

Having failed to secure the desired meeting, WTC then issued a statement, which included saying that:

Both requests for East Suffolk to meet with the Town Council have been refused. In its replies, East Suffolk has watered down its previous publicly stated position for developers to “forge a close working relationship” to “a strong recommendation that developers have pre-application discussions with the local community”.

Woodbridge residents and the Town Council are keen to work in partnership with any new developer to maximise the potential opportunity that the Melton Hill site offers and are disappointed that ESC is reluctant to meet to discuss how this can be achieved.

However it is arguable that a request for a meeting should be better directed to the decision-makers in the bidding process rather than to the planners who will be engaged at a later stage. The original statement that “developers will forge a close working relationship with the local community and Woodbridge Town Council” is attributable to Cllr Craig Rivett, Deputy Leader of the Council. The question might well have been put to him on how he thinks that the developer will do this as there may be something in the brief that would be issued to bidders dealing with the point.

Accordingly I drafted the letter below to be sent to Cllr Craig Rivett, and contacted WTC to find out whether some sort of joint communication might be sent to him. However I was informed that the Statement referred to above was to be issued and WTC did not want to join with Melton in sending a letter to Cllr Rivett at this time.

#### **DRAFT**

#### **Re: Melton Hill Development**

It is understood that the closing date for bids for the purchase of the above site was 15 September and your council is in the process of considering the bids received. The Melton Hill site is partly located within the parish of Melton and Melton Parish Council is therefore very concerned about its future development which will equally affect residents of both Melton and Woodbridge.

In your statement which accompanied the remarketing of the site in July 2021, you said:

“...East Suffolk Council is now ready to remarket the site with a fresh perspective and with certain expectations from the purchaser”. The statement added that the Council would like to see any potential developer coming forward forging a close working relationship with the local community and Woodbridge Town Council, ensuring that local people’s views are being heard and taken into consideration.

Given that the site is partly within Melton it is hoped that any such close working relationship will extend to Melton Council and community as well, and Melton Councillors have already expressed a strong wish to work together with both the District Council and the Woodbridge Council and community to produce the best possible result for this significant site to ensure its development integrates well into the existing fabric of both Woodbridge and Melton.

How do you envisage that your commitment to community consultation is going to be put into practice, and do you have any anticipated timescales within which this will happen?

**Recommendation**

Councillors are requested to decide whether they wish to send the above draft letter to Cllr Rivett, or to do nothing and await further developments.

William Grosvenor

Clerk and Executive Officer to the Council

25 November 2021