**Grundisburgh & Culpho Parish Council**

Mr. Peter Knights,

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To:

Mr Stephen Baker, Chief Executive, East Suffolk Council

Mr Steve Gallant, Leader of East Suffolk Council

Mr Philip Ridley, Head of Planning and Coastal Management, East Suffolk Council

Dear Sirs,

**Official Letter of Complaint**

My Councillors have requested me to forward the following official complaint on their behalf regarding 3 planning decisions made by Suffolk Coastal planning department in respect of applications submitted within the Parish of Grundisburgh and Culpho.

“Grundisburgh & Culpho Parish Council (GPC) wish to make an official complaint to East Suffolk District Council about 3 decisions made by the Planning department in 2018.

The planning policies contained within the current Local Plan, used by the District Council to determine planning applications across the district, are subject to interpretation .

The interpretation of the policies used to approve the three applications listed below, totally lacked common sense and the normal use of the English language.

1) DC/17/5459/FUL Land adj 5 Post Mill Crescent. Proposed bungalow with garaging. Approved at officer level 6th March 2018

2) DC/18/1636/FUL Land south of 24 Pound Cottages, Pound Corner, Ipswich Road / Park Road. Proposal: Erection of a detached dwelling and double carport.

Approved 23rd July 2018

3) DC/18/2286/FUL Builders Yard, Charles Avenue, Proposal: Erection of 4 dwellings.

Approved 27th September 2018

Three very different applications, but all had one thing in common: SCDC officers had the policies which should have been used to refuse the applications. The impact these decisions have had and will have on various residents of the village is quite unnecessary and the biggest problem of all is that the people have no appeal system. If developers and landowners, making the financial gain from these applications, had been refused permission they could have gone to the government inspectorate to appeal that decision so policies would have been tested. The man in the street and parish councils have no such opportunity to test the way policies are used and decisions made.

The Post Mill Crescent (PMC) application is the only one that has been started, but what a huge amount of unnecessary distress and disruption it has caused and is causing, particularly to the owners of 3 & 7 PMC.

The long-term owner of 5PMC died; the property was eventually sold to a developer who divided the large corner plot and obtained permission to build another detached bungalow in the garden. The PC and neighbours objected on the grounds of Policy DM7 infilling and back land development which states: ‘Proposals for the sub-division of plots to provide additional dwellings will be permitted provided that: (b) it would not result either in tandem or similar unsatisfactory types of back land development that would significantly reduce residential amenity, mainly as a result of increased noise and loss of privacy, or result in the erosion of the particular character of the surroundings’.

GPC objected as it was considered that the drive was too narrow to accommodate 2 properties. This has since been proved to be true in that a skip delivered to the site whilst the owner of 3 PMC was away could not be recovered without the cooperation of both the residents of 3 and 7 PMC. The site was then sold on at auction. The new owners have had to arrange with the landowner of Chapel Field to gain access via the rear of the site going over a Public Right of way. Two garages were demolished, part of the planning consent, and the contents left on site. The PC understands there is now a boundary dispute with the residents of 9 Red Barn Piece, the property to the east of the site. SCDC should have listened to GPC and suggested a large extension to no 5 as has happened in other parts of PMG instead of allowing the plot to be divided causing so much distress and ill will.

In the case of DC/18/1636/FUL Land south of 24 Pound Cottages, Pound Corner, Ipswich Road / Park Road. Proposal: Erection of a detached dwelling and double carport.

This site is outside, but adjacent to, the Physical Limits Boundary (PLB) of Grundisburgh, therefore policy DM4, Housing in Clusters in the Countryside, applies. DM4 defines a cluster in the countryside as containing 5 or more dwellings located no more than 150m from the edge of an existing settlement. There are only 3 dwellings within this distance, outside the physical limits boundary, i.e. Pound House, South View and Park View. Dwellings further along Park Road are outside the 150m limit (no footway). Houses the other side of the proposed site, along Ipswich Road, lie within the village boundary, and therefore cannot be counted as part of a cluster in the countryside as different policies apply. Hence there is no countryside cluster to which the site relates.

The officers report argued differently and did not follow common sense in that a policy called Housing in Clusters in the Countryside should mean just that.

Grundisburgh is a Key Service Centre and the site is within 150 metres of the settlement. There is a continuous line of dwellings adjacent Ipswich Road and Park Road, one which the site would fall within whereby it would constitute infilling. Objections from local residents and the Parish Council suggest the site does not fall within a cluster because - for it to be so - the 'cluster' would have to include dwellings already within the physical limits’ boundary. However, the policy does not preclude dwellings located within the settlement boundary contributing to make up a cluster. On this basis the dwellings at: Fair View; Fairlands; 24 and 25 Pound Cottages (all within the settlement boundary) are in a row adjacent and the application site forms an infill plot between these properties and the property to the south at Pound House (which is outside the settlement boundary). This is considered to make up a cluster in the context of policy DM4. Furthermore, when looking at what the policy is aiming to achieve, it is clear that the objective is to permit new housing within a small group of existing properties whereby it would relate well to a sustainable settlement. In this regard, the proposal accords with the objectives of policy DM4 and the principle of development is therefore acceptable.

The Parish Council would suggest that the officer is wrong in that by interpreting the aim of the policy to permit new housing within a small group of existing properties whereby it would relate well to a sustainable settlement, all that would happen is PLB would have no strength and creeping ribbon development according to the whim of landowners would take the place of planned development. This site is now for sale.

DC/18/2286/FUL Builders Yard, Charles Avenue, Proposal: Erection of 4 dwellings.

GPC and several parishioners objected to this resubmission of a previously refused application DC/17/1583/FUL. In the officers’ report to that initial application the following comments were made, which still apply to the 2018 application.

Although occupying a corner location and noting that Alice Driver Way does contain two storey dwellings, the form and scale of the development of the site should take its steer from Charles Avenue as that's where the site's main frontage lays. Charles Avenue contains single storey not two storey dwellings.

Whilst government guidance talks of the need to secure efficient use of land, this should not be at the expense of poor design and poor relationship to the character of the area. The proposed plot sizes differ; considerably to those in the vicinity and this results in a poor layout out of character with the area. Paragraph 64 of the NPPF deals with this matter as does Policy DM21 of the Local Plan (Core Strategy and Development Management Policies) DPD

County Highways recommended to refuse the application due to inadequate parking stating

CONSULTATION RETURN DC/18/2286/FUL PROPOSAL: Erection of 4 dwellings

LOCATION: Builders Yard, Charles Avenue, Grundisburgh, IP13 6TH

Grundisburgh is classed as a sustainable location, so all dwellings should provide parking as recommended in Suffolk Guidance for Parking (2015) Please regard this as a holding recommendation for refusal until the issues below have been rectified:

1. It appears that the frontage parking areas are around 4.5 metres in length, which cannot accommodate many modern vehicles. Garages should be set back at least 6 metres from the footway or parking spaces should be at least 4.8 metres in length in frontages, as recommended in Suffolk Guidance for Parking (2015). Where these areas are below the required dimensions, the plots will not have adequate parking provision. Please amend the frontage parking areas to ensure that dwellings have adequate parking provision.

2. The proposed parking arrangement for Plot 1 is not suitable. The Northern spaces requires a difficult manoeuvre into and out of the spaces, it is also within close proximity to the junction with Charles Avenue. The second access is proposed directly on the junction of Alice Driver Road and Charles Avenue. This does not comply with the guidance set out within the Drop Kerb Application and is also directly onto of a tactile pedestrian crossing point.

It is hoped that with minor amendments to the proposal, the Highway Authority can recommend the necessary highway related planning conditions.

Mr Harry Grace Development Management Technician

The parking problems have not been addressed. Charles Avenue is the access to the Grundisburgh Doctors surgery; there is a lot of on street parking at surgery times. Alice Driver Road is the access to Grundisburgh Primary School. The catchment area includes Clopton so a bus attends the school twice a day as well as parents’ cars.

All of the above decisions have caused residents and the Parish council of Grundisburgh to lose any faith they may have had in the ability of SCDC planning department to defend their village against unsuitable development. There is growing concern that the officers dealing with these decisions are not applying the impartiality their positions demand. The Local Plan must be interpreted using common sense and the English language not manipulated to satisfy developers and landowners out to make money at the expense of the environment and residents.”

This complaint has been fully considered by our planning subcommittee and was discussed in detail at our recent annual meeting.

On behalf of the Councillors, I look forward to receiving your response in due course.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Knights

Clerk to Grundisburgh and Culpho Parish Council