

HOUGHTON AND WYTON PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the **Extraordinary Parish Council Meeting** held on Tuesday 21 December, 9:00am.

Present: Cllr C Spearing (Chair)
Cllr B Gilmour

Cllr P Boothman
Cllr R Guinea

Staff present: Lois Dale.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllrs Baxendale, Bonny, Elborn, Keane and Skinner.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Change of use to allow for a mixed use as private residence (Class C3a), a wedding and corporate events venue (sui generis use) with ancillary guest accommodation and parking. Hemingford Park Common Lane Hemingford Abbots Ref. No: 21/01768/FUL

RESOLVED: Houghton & Wyton Parish Council recommend that this application be **REFUSED** for the following reasons:

1. Noise and Neighbouring Residents Amenity

Experience to date make us very concerned about the level of noise we may experience here in Houghton & Wyton.

Sound does not always travel in ways that are immediately obvious. Residents (e.g. those along Thicket Road and south of Huntingdon Road) and visitors (e.g. those using the camping and caravan park by the river, or living in the house boats along the river) often complained about the noise from the old A14. Anecdotal evidence from some of these residents suggests that at times, particularly at night along with the prevailing wind brings the sound wave from the old A14 down onto the south side of the village where it hits the back of the houses and appears to make it louder than in Hemingford Abbots itself. One resident reported that before the new A14 was built, they were unable to sleep with the windows open.

Likewise, private parties taking place in gardens in Hemingford Abbots, and even the Hemingford regatta further afield, when playing music are heard in waves of rising and falling sound – again especially at night when bird, traffic and other manmade sounds subside.

The fact that sound can travel such long distances and even leapfrog areas nearby but return to ground further afield, means that the definition of neighbours must be looked at in its wider context. We already know that Houghton & Wyton village is affected from noise from Hemingford Abbots, and *vice versa* due to prevailing wind and topography, therefore we believe policy LP14 section C applies and that the predicted timing, duration and character of noise impacts (waves repeatedly coming closer and then seemingly disappearing) would be unacceptable. Living on a boat, in a caravan or under canvas would be even more intolerable.

LP14 Amenity requires that amenity is maintained for occupiers of neighbouring land and buildings.

It states that a proposal will be required to ensure:

C. The predicted noise impacts, including internal and external levels, timing, duration and character, will be acceptable.

If we add to this the:

- possibility of fireworks which are often used to celebrate such events,

- difficulty in controlling a large number of visitors, keeping them inside with doors and windows closed, especially in hot weather,
- the potential to exceed the forecasted number of events (unless limited)

then this proposal would make the impact worse for all our residents.

2. Quiet Tourism/Conservation area

Houghton & Wyton, in particular, relies heavily on quiet tourism to sustain the local economy. The Great Ouse River and valley provide healthy sanctuary for visitors and residents alike.

Hemingford Abbots and Houghton are gateways to the Great Ouse Valley and wider conservation area. We welcome the boaters, campers, caravaners, fishermen, paddle boarders, walkers, bird watchers, horse riders and cyclists that flock here in their thousands.

The National Trust at Houghton Mill record over 100,000 visitors to their land and property each year, but we know from the cars parked throughout the village, walkers, cyclists, boat and bus users that this number is a gross underestimate. It is one of the reasons Houghton Mill is listed as the number 1 visitor attraction in Huntingdonshire.

Hemingford Park lies directly opposite Houghton and very close to the access point crossing the river, linking the two villages and the meadows. Noise as well as increased traffic may have a direct impact on this area and on the enjoyment of the very people who we rely on.

3. Viability

Whilst we respect the fact that it is important that a grade II* building is capable of being maintained, we question the logic that the original plan of running “Europe’s biggest private subterranean spa complex” is suddenly no longer viable post Covid, and that all other options are essentially ruled out by the current owners.

We therefore feel these are NOT material considerations to the planning application which through a change of use we believe would have a negative material impact on the quality of life for a great many more people.

4. Summary

In conclusion our residents choose to live here in order to enjoy the tranquillity of the village and the peace of the Ouse Valley. Our many visitors, that help support the local economy, come here for the same reasons.

This proposal will only have negative impacts on residents or visitors to the area through noise nuisance and loss of amenity. This in turn could negatively impact on the quiet tourism that this area relies on for its economy, the Conservation Areas and the wildlife and environment that attracts many visitors.

The Listed status of the building should be confirmed and maintained.

Proposed: Cllr Spearing, Seconded: Cllr Guinea. All in favour.

Signed:..... Date: