

# Cratfield Parish Council

## PARISH COUNCIL PLANNING MEETING

*Cratfield Village Hall*

**Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2025 at 7.30 pm**

**Councillors Present:** Lotty Barbour (Chair), Richard Chivers (Vice Chair), Tim Ackerley, Dan Elford, Adrian McDonald, Chris Mobbs and Helen Torrance

**Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer (RFO):** Sally Chapman

**Also Present:** District Councillor Julia Ewart and 29 Members of the Public

### A. Public Forum – For Members of the Public

Parishioners spoke at length regarding their concerns and discrepancies in the proposed business plan for application DC/24/3806/FUL, Holly Tree Farmhouse, Bell Green, Cratfield, and asked questions. Councillors and District Councillor Julia Ewart provided advice, and the Chair informed those present that parishioners could submit their views and comments directly to the Planning Inspectorate via the Appeals website, quoting reference 3366924. Comments must be submitted by 28 July 2025. The Clerk handed out an instruction sheet with guidance on how to submit comments on this planning application.

## MINUTES

### 1. To Approve Apologies for Absence

None

### 2. To Record Declarations of Interests and to Consider Requests for Dispensation

None

### 3. Planning Applications and Decisions

*To review the listed Planning Applications and any additional Applications received after the Agenda is published.*

#### To Comment on the following Application

##### a) DC/24/3806/FUL

##### **Holly Tree Farmhouse, Bell Green, Cratfield, Halesworth, Suffolk IP19 0DN**

An appeal has been made to the Secretary of State against the decision of East Suffolk Council to refuse planning permission for Construction of Agricultural Storage Building and all associated works. Status: Appeal

[Councillors Resolved to OBJECT to this planning application and made the following comments:](#)

Cratfield Parish Council held a planning meeting on Wednesday 23 July 2025 at 7:30pm. The meeting was attended by all Councillors, District Councillor Julia Ewart and 29 parishioners, many of whom expressed concern regarding the current planning application and the associated business plan of Holly Tree Harvests.

It was noted the same application DC/23/1662/AGO, submitted on April 24, 2023, was a prior notification request for the construction of an agricultural storage building. This application was initially refused by East Suffolk Council. Following this, an appeal was filed under Appeal Reference APP/X3540/W/23/3323933, but the appeal was ultimately dismissed.

#### **History of the site:**

Councillors and parishioners stated they have known this land for over 65 years. The site is around 10 acres in size (including buildings) and has never been used as a working farm during that time.

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The meadows are cut once or twice a year by contractors, and the bales are removed. Nothing is stored on the land. According to Companies House, the owner is listed as an accountant, not a farmer and has lived abroad for around 20 years.

## **Change from original planning application:**

The original planning applications were for an agricultural barn. This has now changed. The new business plan is for a 10-acre fruit and vegetable farm. It also includes selling local produce, gourmet food items and cheese making, supporting local farmers and producers. The planning application has changed from the original purpose. The business plan talks about special themed market days and attractions to bring in large crowds. Councillors and parishioners raised concerns that this would have a big impact on Cratfield, which is a small, quiet and vulnerable rural village. Surely, this new type of business should need a completely new planning application?

The size of the proposed building and agricultural store is very large. It would be 6.8 metres high, 30 metres long and 15 metres wide. It would look too big for the landscape, be easy to see from the road and would stand out on the skyline. There were also concerns that it would affect the area's dark skies.

## **Concerns about local infrastructure:**

There are concerns about the local infrastructure. Cratfield is surrounded by single-track roads. There are worries about how much extra traffic this new business would bring and how it would affect the roads. There is also concern about the size of the vehicles.

The entrance to the site is on a 60mph road. The turning is narrow, and the road is single track and it floods at the bottom of the hill, near the entrance. Currently vehicles have to pull over to let each other pass and the area is surrounded by farmland using farm machinery.

Suffolk County Council Highways made a comment on 19 November 2024, saying:

'Notice is hereby given that the County Council as Highways Authority does not wish to restrict the grant of permission due to the application not having a detrimental effect upon the adopted highway'.

However, that comment was based on the original agricultural barn application. With the new business plan now being presented, the practicalities of the highway issues are not represented for the department to comment on. This new proposal could have a much bigger impact, and the Highways Authority should revalue what effect this business would have on the village of Cratfield and its minor roads.

## **Concerns about the proposed business and missing details:**

Questions about business credibility:

The business plan says on the first page that Holly Tree Harvest is already successful and this is because of some key factors.

However, there is no evidence to show this previous success.

- Where is proof that Holly Tree Harvest has been successful before?
- Is the business registered at Companies House?
- Where can this information be checked or reviewed?

Councillors and parishioners would like clear evidence to support these claims.

There are serious concerns about the business plan. Running a working fruit and vegetable farm, along with cheese production, would need much more than just one agricultural building.

- Polytunnels or greenhouses would be needed for crop growing, but none are shown in the plan.
- The site is north facing, which makes it harder for crops to ripen properly.

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- Access to the site is poor, especially across the meadows. No roadway is shown.
- There is no power supply listed for the building.
- There is a lot of important information missing from both the planning application and the business plan.

## **Concerns about water supply:**

The business plan and planning application do not clearly say where the water for the farm will come from.

- High-quality fruit and vegetable crops need regular watering (irrigation).
- The proposal does not explain how this will be done.
- If the plan is to use mains water, what pressure will this put on the local supply?
- If the plan is to use groundwater, has the applicant applied to the Environment Agency for permission to extract water?

Local groundwater levels are already under pressure. Some older wells and boreholes in the area are now running dry. Any extra demand could affect nearby homes and properties that rely on these natural water sources.

## **Further concerns include:**

- Noise for nearby neighbours from production activities.
- Cheese making needs water and milk, but these are not mentioned in detail.
- Wastewater and waste disposal are not covered.
- Refrigeration will be needed, but there is no information about this.
- Milk deliveries and lorry traffic will increase, but no transport plan is included.
- There is no mention of car parking for visitors, staff or deliveries.
- No toilet facilities, shop layout, or rubbish disposal plans are included.
- There is no mention of any new hard roadways on the farm, lorry turning space, disabled access, or employment details.

## **Environmental concerns:**

- No wildlife survey has been provided. There may be owls, bats or newts on site. The farm opposite is in a conservation area.
- No detail is given about how dark skies will be protected. Will high and constant use deliver light pollution?
- There is no environmental impact report.
- Access in winter is likely to be difficult due to the driveway and field conditions.

These gaps show that the business plan and planning application are incomplete and unclear. This raises serious concerns about the true scale and suitability of the development for a small, quiet village like Cratfield.

## **Concerns about the future use of the building:**

Councillors and parishioners raised worries about what will happen if the building is constructed but the fruit farm business does not go ahead.

- Could the owner later apply to change the building to a residential use?
- What will happen to the building if the business fails or stops running?
- The building can be seen from nearby listed buildings, which adds to the concern.

It was suggested that a planning condition could include a clause stating that if the business is not operating or closes within 10 years, the building must be removed.

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## **Decisions**

None

## **4. Items for the Next Agenda**

None

## **5. To Confirm the Meeting Dates**

- Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2025 at 7.30 pm
- Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2025 at 7.30 pm

*The meeting ended at 8:58 pm*

Signed:

Date: