

News and information from Jane Gould, Babergh District Councillor.

To the residents in Orwell Ward

August 2020

I am pleased to be able to report that Chelmondiston have been awarded the first District Councillors locality grant for work on repairing the village car park.

At last month's full council meeting a motion received from Green Party Councillor, Leigh Jamieson was passed; the motion was to consider a cycling strategy to ensure there is a permanent shift in the numbers of people choosing to cycle and walk and was seconded by one of our peninsula councillors, Councillor Derek Davis from Shotley. At the same meeting the CIFCO Business Trading and Performance report for 2019/2020 was received.

Councillors praise staff at Full Councils

In Full Council meetings last month, councillors praised officers for their outstanding work in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Chair of Babergh District Council, Cllr Kathryn Grandon thanked officers on behalf of the council and recognised the tireless work that had taken place to keep the district running while many were dealing with their own challenges. ***"Our officers have continued to support residents, council tenants, communities and businesses when they needed us most,"*** she said.

Leader Cllr John Ward described the response by officers in helping residents, communities and businesses cope with lockdown as 'exemplary'. ***"Everyone involved deserves all of our thanks and gratitude,"*** he added.

Last week Babergh District Council approved plans for new commercial units in Wherstead generating investment and 300 jobs in the area, in addition to paving the way for much-needed highways improvements.

Applicant Pigeon (Wherstead) Limited sought outline planning permission for the development of land, totalling almost 20 acres, to the north and east of Bobbits Lane in October 2019, with plans coming before the planning committee meeting last week which was held virtually to ensure public safety during the current coronavirus outbreak.

Following input from planning officers, the applicant, objectors and supporters and subsequent debate, the committee voted by seven to one in favour of approving the recommendation that outline planning permission be granted, subject to conditions.

The site, owned and due to be developed by Suffolk based property company Pigeon (Wherstead) Limited, is ideally located for the five new commercial units proposed with direct access to the A14, one of the region's most important trunk roads, reducing the need for HGV vehicles serving the industrial and logistic units to travel through surrounding villages and towns unnecessarily.

In order to mitigate any additional traffic resulting from proposals, and plans for a drive-thru restaurant and service station in the vicinity also approved at the same meeting, the developer has committed to providing funding of £6 million, for much-needed highways improvements which will be completed prior to site occupation. These have been identified following discussions with the relevant highways authorities and include a redesign of both nearby roundabouts with seeing visibility increased tenfold and the creation of a new lane on the A137 for traffic wishing to turn on to the A14, addressing congestion issues currently faced. In addition to reducing traffic delays, road

users will also benefit from increased safety as a result of the proposed reduction in speed limit.

These highways improvements also extend to Public Rights of Way, cycle ways, bus stops and a toucan crossing, as well as delivering footpath connectivity between Bobbits Lane and Bourne Lane encouraging healthy lifestyles for the community and meeting the council's ambition for greener travel options, set out in its recently approved blueprint for climate change.

Babergh District Council's Economic Development team confirmed that the requirement for commercial development in the district remains constant with the demand for business use properties proving to be unaffected by COVID-19. This development will also meet need arising from the changing post pandemic landscape, as businesses begin to look away from urban areas and favour well connected rural locations.

The proposals have already attracted commercial interest, demonstrated by discussions currently underway between the developer and two businesses who wish to occupy the site. If successful, these businesses will bring inward investment to Babergh and contribute to the estimated creation of 300 full time jobs from the industrial and logistics park, at a time when opportunities for employment are needed more than ever. Once completed the commercial park is set to generate business rate income in excess of £500,000 per year, providing revenue for the council to fund vital services. In addition to this welcome economic boost for the district, it is anticipated that the development will see an estimated spend of £20million in the construction sector, as well as providing temporary construction jobs in the local area.

Following approval of outline planning permission, reserved matters, setting out final details of the scheme, are scheduled to be considered by committee in Autumn this year. If approved, this will enable construction to begin in 2021,

with the developer aiming for completion and occupation of the units by early 2022.

Cllr Peter Beer, Chairman of Babergh District Council's Planning Committee, said:

"After much deliberation, the committee agreed that this application supports Babergh District Council's commitment to ensuring bright and healthy futures for its communities, with the benefits of proposals far outweighing any potential harm. "This industrial and logistics park will create 300 full time jobs in our district at a time when employment opportunities are needed more than ever, as the economy begins to try and recover from COVID-19.

"It will also fund significant highways improvements that will make a real difference to one of our county's busiest roads – reducing congestion in an area with known traffic issues and improving safety for all road users. This is in addition to welcome funding for more sustainable travel options, meeting our council and county wide ambition for a greener, healthier Suffolk.

"I would like to thank my fellow committee members and officers for attending today's planning meeting, spanning almost seven hours and demonstrating the immense time and careful consideration that goes into large applications such as these."

Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any issues that you think I can help with and all the very best to you all.

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