

Minutes of a Meeting of Staploe Parish Council Held at 7.45pm on Tuesday 8th April 2025 in the Meeting Room at Wyboston Village Hall

Present: Cllr. J. Thomson, Cllr. G. Meola, Cllr. E. Meola, L. Crwaford (Parish Clerk) and 5 members of the public.

Apologies for absence: Cllr. J. Ibbett, Cllr. P. Yockney

2025/032. Declarations of Interest

None

2025/033. Public Open Forum

A resident of Staploe submitted their objection to the Parish Council:

"I wish to OBJECT to the following Planning Application: 25/00525/PIP Duloe Village, Beds, PE19 5HP, for the following reasons:

- 1. The proposed development area is not clear in the application documents:
 - a. V01, drawing, shows a large blue area and a smaller red area beside the road.*
 - b. V02 Planning Statement, shows the same drawing but here the blue and red areas are combined into one red outlined area.*
 - c. I assume that the proposed development is on the small red area shown on V01.**
- 2. The parish of Staploe is entirely rural. It has 3 small hamlets (Staploe, Duloe and Honeydon), small groups of a few houses at Begwary and Bushmead and isolated farmhouses. Duloe has 20 -25 properties, so an additional 5 properties as proposed in this PIP application would add 20-25% to the size of the hamlet. This is an excessive expansion that is inappropriate in scale and would be out of keeping with the rest of the hamlet.*
- 3. Bedford Borough Council do not class the parish as a key service centre, or a rural service centre or a small settlement. It is classed as Open Countryside for planning purposes and Bedford Borough Council have allocated zero homes for development in the parish. This application is on a green field and is therefore totally inconsistent with the Council's designation. It would create a harmful intrusion into the open countryside and not safeguard the intrinsic character of the countryside, environment and biodiversity.*
- 4. The proposed development is to be located in the gap between Duloe and the A1, which forms the boundary to Eaton Socon in Cambridgeshire. This development would therefore lead to coalescence with Eaton Socon.*
- 5. The proposed location of the development is not sustainable. There are no facilities within the hamlet of Duloe (no GP surgery, no church, no shops, no schools, no post office, no village hall, no public transport, no pub).*
- 6. The proposed development is on a narrow, unlit, badly maintained, rural, 1.5-car-width road which is unsuitable for the HGV traffic that will be needed for this development.*

There is no footpath or suitable verge for walking on, so it is very dangerous for pedestrians who try to walk in the road.

7. *There is no community need for this proposed development.*
8. *There is no community support for this proposed development – in fact quite the opposite – there is strong opposition.*
9. *There is no Parish Council support for this proposed development.*
10. *There are no design details for the proposed houses, but the small red area (on V01) looks small for 5 houses – noting that plenty of car parking would have to be include within the site boundary as there is no space to park/obstruct the narrow rural road.*
11. *This proposed development is for 5 self-build houses which will deny the Parish Council of CIL income.*
12. *Surface water runoff provision in this area is insufficient (ditches often flooded) and will not be able to cope with additional houses.*
13. *The proposed development would be close to the A1, thus subjecting the properties to both noise disturbance and poor air quality.”*

A resident of Duloe sent the following representation to the Parish Council:

“LPA Ref. 25/00525/PIP

***Permission in Principle for the erection of up to 5 self build dwellings
Land Adjacent To 1 Duloe Lane, Duloe, St Neots, PE19 5HP***

It is noted that this is an application for Permission in Principle (PiP). PiP is an alternative planning consent route for housing-led development, separating the principle of development from technical details into two stages:

- 1) a PiP stage to establish site suitability ‘in principle’. The scope of the PiP is limited to location, land use and amount of development.*
- 2) a technical details consent (TDC) stage for detailed proposals. This stage is similar to a full planning application or a Reserved Matters application, and it is at this stage that matters such as design, ecology, drainage, access etc are considered.*

It is also relevant to point out that the accompanying Planning Statement contains a number of inaccuracies, such as:

- The address is Duloe Lane, not Duloe Road.*
- No. 1 Duloe Lane is a detached bungalow and not a row of cottages.*
- Para 2.1: The red line of the location plan does not match the red line shown on the submitted drawing (drawing no. 25 009 1000 Rev B).*
- Para 2.3: The land to the east (LPA no. 8835) has been promoted through the latest Call for Sites consultation, however, it has not been allocated in the Local Plan*

2040: Plan for Submission. The site was clearly rejected by the Council, concluding that “the site has been excluded from further assessment at Stage 1 because its location is not in accordance with the development strategy”.

- *Para 2.6: Whilst the statement claims that “it is agreed with the Council...”, it is not clear where the applicant’s evidence is to substantiate this point as no Statement of Common Ground has been submitted with the application.*
- *Para 3.4: It does not explain what the development plan comprises of – there is clearly information missing.*
- *Para 3.33: It should state that the “development hereby proposed...” and not “permitted”.*
- *Paras 3.36 and 3.39 make assumptions on character, design and scale despite such details not having been submitted with the application. These are technical matters for PiP stage 2 if stage 1 would be approved. Therefore, Policies 28s, 29 and 30 of the Bedford Local Plan 2030 are not relevant to this proposal (these are incorrectly referenced in para 3.40).*

The hamlet of Duloe comprises around 30 properties and lies to the west of St Neots and does not have a settlement policy area under the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 and Policies Map and the site is therefore defined in planning policy terms as lying within the open countryside. The surrounding area is rural in character with agricultural fields to the north and directly to the east of the site.

The application site is remote from day-to-day facilities and is intrinsically rural. There is no public transport serving Duloe and nearest bus stop is 15-minute walk away. The nearest facilities and shop in St Neots are at least 2km away, with Duloe Lane having no footway or street lighting to encourage walking or cycling. Therefore, the site is unsustainable, and the proposed development would be reliant upon the private car, would not allow occupants to make a meaningful contribution to supporting the vitality and viability of the very limited services and facilities in nearby settlements and would not contribute to the creation of a safe, accessible and healthy community. As a result, the location of the application site for residential development conflicts with Policies 2S (Healthy Communities) and 3S (Spatial Strategy) of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 and Paragraphs 83, 96, 109 and 110 of the NPPF (2024), which aim to promote safe, accessible and healthy communities.

The application site is located in the open countryside and fails to meet the criterion listed at Local Plan Policy 7S (Development in the Countryside) for development permitted within this location and is therefore not a sustainable form of development within this location. Furthermore, any development of the application site would reduce the extent of the gap between the western boundary of St Neots and the group of houses to the west of the application site, resulting in coalescence and loss of the rural setting and character of the locality.

With regards to criteria vi. and vii. of Policy 7S, there appears to be no identified community or identifiable community support for self-build properties in the Parish and as such, the proposal fails to meet this part of Policy 7S and the objective of Policy 59S. The Housing Needs Assessment (April 2024) carried out for the Staploe Neighbourhood Area, which includes the hamlet of Duloe, identified the following need:

Table 6-4: HLIN estimate of specialist housing for older people need in Staploe by the end of the Plan period¹⁴

Type	Affordable	Market	Total
Housing with care	0.52	0.67	1
Adaptations, sheltered, or retirement living	1	2	3
Total	2	3	4

Source: Housing LIN, AECOM calculations

The proposed development is therefore contrary to Policies 3S, 7S and 59S of the Bedford Local Plan 2030 and is unacceptable as a matter of principle. “

All 5 members of the public objected to the application for reasons listed in the response below (Agenda item 2025/035.)

2025/034. Approve Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 20th March 2025

These had not been published before the meeting and will be approved at the next meeting.

2025/035. Consider how to respond to the following planning application in Duloe

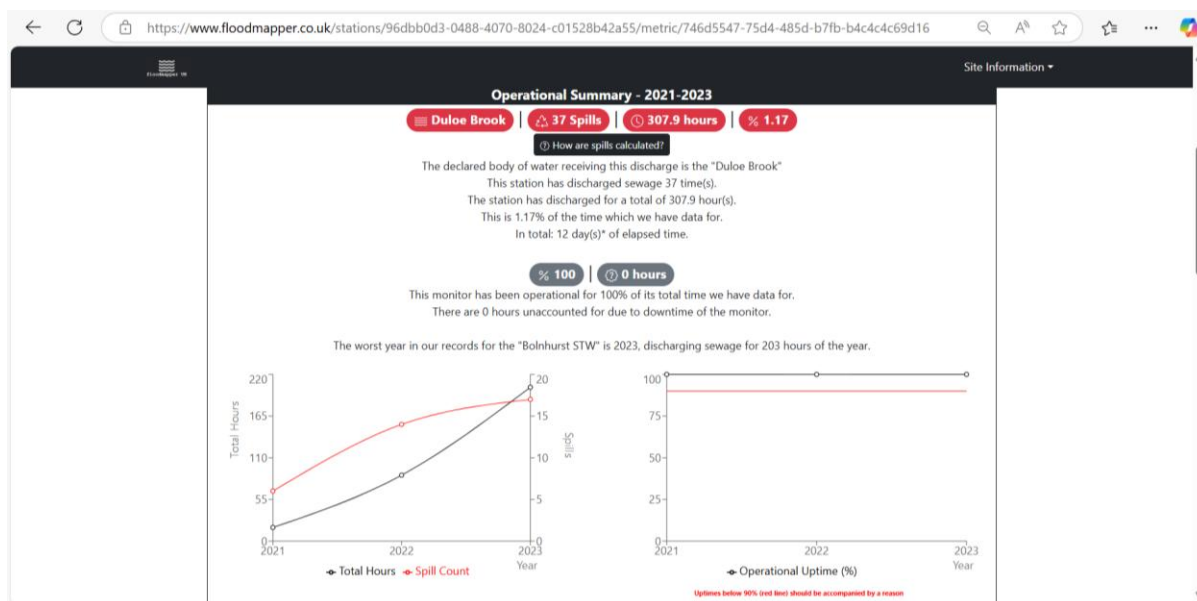
Application number	Type	Description	Location	Deadline	Link
25/00525/PIP	Permission in Principle	Erection of up to 5 self build dwellings	Land Adjacent To 1 Duloe Lane Duloe St Neots PE19 5HP	3rd April for residents - but the PC have an extension to 8th April	25/00525/PIP

It was resolved to respond as follows:

We object for the following reasons:

1. The site is not a sustainable location (a requirement of the National Planning Policy Framework)
 - a. There is no public transport
 - b. There is no pavement and the verge is uneven and narrow in places with deep ditches and it is unlit therefore it is dangerous to walk along the road either by day or by night
 - c. The road is narrow and poorly maintained with deep ruts and sharp edges to the road making cycling unsafe
 - d. There are no facilities in the village – no shop, school, doctor etc. Any facilities would be in Cambridgeshire 2km away. Cambridgeshire are not accounting for additional development in our parish when planning their services and infrastructure and the development would bring no benefit to Bedford town.
2. The sewage treatment plant at Duloe is very small and is currently unable to manage the existing capacity. The Parish Council are very concerned that There were 37 sewage spills for

a total of 308 hours in 2021-2023 and this is increasing dramatically. See the graph below taken from <https://www.floodmapper.co.uk/stations/96dbb0d3-0488-4070-8024-c01528b42a55/metric/746d5547-75d4-485d-b7fb-b4c4c4c69d16>



- In Local Plan 2030 and the emerging Local Plan 2040 the whole hamlet and parish including this field was classified as Open Countryside. The Parish have been given no housing needs requirement because the parish is not a key service centre or a rural service centre and it doesn't even have a settlement policy area – this is because it is not a sustainable location; there is no public transport and there are no facilities. When the Borough Council refused planning permission for new houses at Manor Farm in Duloe 23/02335/FUL they stated that:

“The proposed development, including the gated vehicular access, the hardsurfacing, and removal of important hedgerow, would represent inappropriate and unjustified development in the open countryside and result in harm to the intrinsic agricultural character and appearance of the rural area, as well as to an ‘Important’ Hedgerow. Furthermore, it is not apparent that there are any material considerations to clearly outweigh the inappropriate development and the other identified harm. Accordingly, the proposed development is contrary to the aims of Policies 7S, 28S, 29, 30, 31 and 40 of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030; and the Hedgerows Regulations 1997.

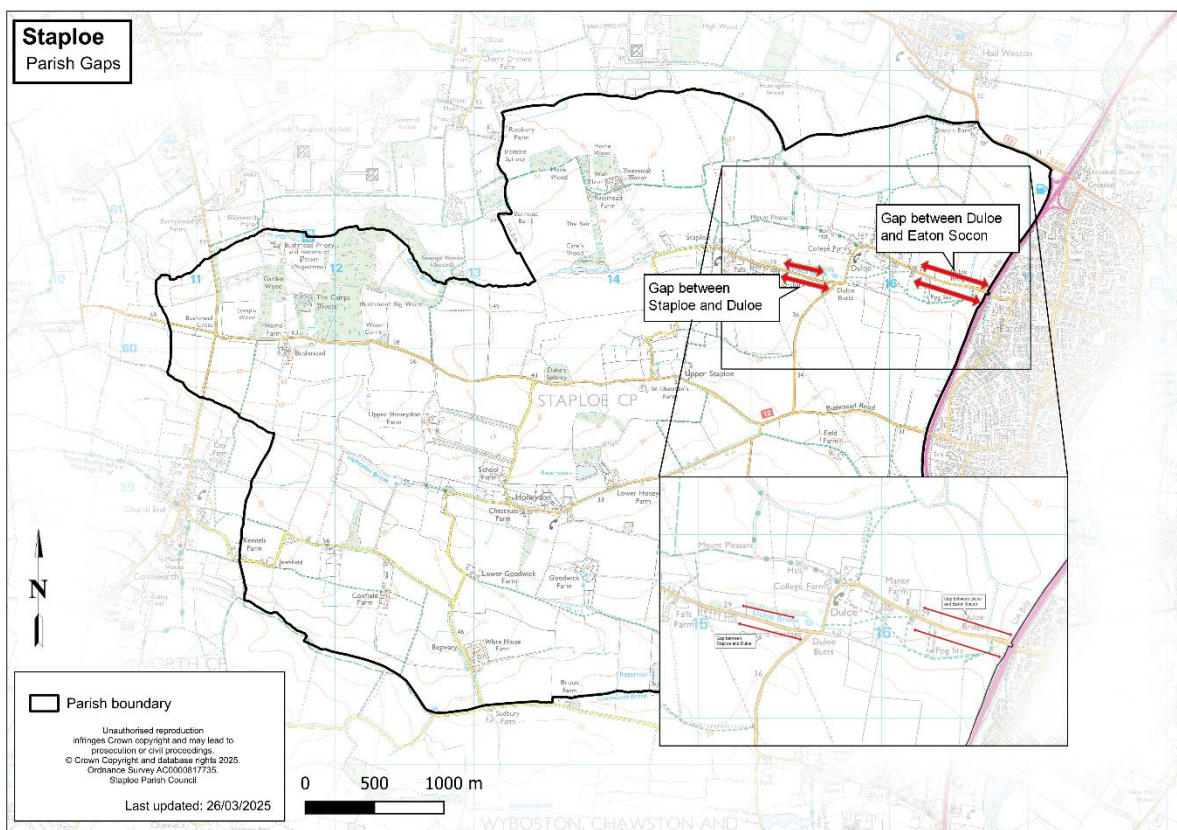
The site is located within a Yellow risk zone for Great Crested Newts and would involve the removal of important mature hedgerow. Insufficient information has been submitted with respect to what the reasonable impacts of the development would be upon protected species and particularly bats, birds and Great Crested Newts. Furthermore, no ecology report has been submitted to demonstrate / evidence how the development would mitigate any impacts or provide a net increase in biodiversity across the site. The proposal therefore conflicts with Policy 42S and 43 of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030.”

Staploe Parish Council still believe that these objections remain valid. We believe it would urbanise an agricultural landscape in the open countryside. There is a hedgerow along the verge which could be harmed and there are Great Crested Newts in the garden of Anchor Cottage and the pond west of Anchor Cottage and therefore they are likely to be present in this field.

4. We are concerned that this represents a loss of what we believe is grade 2 agricultural land. This is contrary to the policies of the NPPF Chapter 15 which highlights the importance of protecting the best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land, which includes Grades 1, 2, and 3a. We believe this is likely to be grade 3a or grade 2 land.
5. Our draft Neighbourhood Plan has been endorsed by the Parish Council and is due to start the pre-submission consultation (Regulation 14) on 12th April. In response to feedback from residents in our initial Neighbourhood Plan questionnaires we have included a policy of introducing strategic gaps. One of these is between Duloe and Eaton Socon and would include this parcel of land. This is to prevent coalescence with Eaton Socon – a suburban, built up area with a markedly different character to that of our very rural hamlets. Our Design Codes have been drawn up with the help of Locality and endorsed by the Parish Council and these also state in policy 01.RC.1 Settlement pattern 1.1:

“Staploe Parish is formed of the three hamlets Staploe, Duloe and Honeydon and includes the smaller, more isolated settlements of Upper Staploe, Begwary, Bassmead and Bushmead. These hamlets form distinct groups of dispersed settlements (refer to Figure 13) within the parish and future development must not disrupt this settlement pattern through building placement that resembles a coalescence village setting (a singular, connected settlement rather than the existing dispersed hamlets).”

This development would represent an encroachment into the gap between Duloe and Eaton Socon which could eventually lead to coalescence.



6. The Parish Council would also like to protect the land immediately west of the A1 in our parish from development. This is because we believe that if there was ever a need to widen the carriageway of the A1 it would be best to do so immediately to the west rather than moving the whole road from its current location. Whilst this plot of land is not immediately to the west of the A1 it would create new development closer to the A1 and residents of the new self build homes would be affected by the existing noise and air pollution and this could be

exacerbated if the A1 were to be widened in situ. Land may be required for landscaping if the road was widened in future.

7. We conducted a housing needs survey in 2021 and there was no requirement for self build homes in the parish.
8. The applicant makes reference to 22/02242/PIP – where permission was granted (on appeal) for self build homes in Great Barford. However, Great Barford is classified as a Key Service Centre in the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030. These are defined as large villages with a good level of services which are suitable for growth. Duloe is classified as open countryside. There is, therefore, no fair comparison to be made between the two applications.
9. The hamlet of Duloe consists of 33 homes. Therefore a development of 5 houses represents an increase of 15% in the number of homes in the hamlet which is disproportionate and there would be no community infrastructure money to help pay for eg. improved lighting, pavements, community facilities.

It should be noted that our Housing Needs Assessment conducted by Locality suggests that we should prioritise smaller homes (1 and 2 bedroom homes) if any development does occur in the parish.

It should also be noted that our design codes also express a desire to retain the existing settlement pattern of ribbon development and avoid cul de sacs.

If the development were to go ahead then the Parish Council would like to point out that the current gate is within the 30mph zone but any gate proposed for the eastern end of the site would be in the 40mph zone and therefore it may be necessary to extend the 30mph zone.

The Parish Council agrees with the Fire Brigade that the developer should pay to add an additional fire hydrant.

We would like to point out that the red line in the Location Plan covers the portion of the plot that faces onto the road. However, the red line in the Planning Statement covers the whole field. Please could you clarify which is correct.

The Parish Council also agree with the inaccuracies in the Planning Statement which are reported below in Appendix A (see highlighted section).

The Parish Council received three objections in writing to this application and 5 people attended our Parish Council meeting to object. Two residents from one household were unable to respond to the application in time and they asked me to include their objections with our response. Their objection is attached as Appendix A.

Proposed by Cllr. J. Thomson and seconded by Cllr. E. Meola. Unanimous.

2025/036. Neighbourhood Plan.

Consider amendments to the Neighbourhood Plan in view of Bedford Borough Council's comments.

It was resolved to accept the proposed amendments and commence the pre-submission consultation on 12th April. Proposed by Cllr. J. Thomson and seconded by Cllr. G. Meola. Unanimous.

Next meeting: Annual Meeting of the Parish Council Thursday 15th May 2025