

## MOULTON PARISH COUNCIL

Laura Yates (Clerk to Moulton Parish Council)

moultonpc@gmail.com - 38 Lester Piggott Way, Newmarket, CB8 0BJ - 07527 777942

### West Suffolk District Council Local Plan - Moulton's Future – Moulton's Response

#### *Summary*

Moulton Parish Council believes that the best interests of its parishioners will be served by limited, small scale developments, especially by infill. The “Included Housing” sites WS143 and WS144, identified in the SHELAA, would be detrimental to the character of the village. They would harm its setting in the rural landscape and create serious infrastructure challenges. Designation as a “Local Service Centre” seems arbitrary and we are concerned that this might enable or encourage future inappropriate developments that would damage the community. We have reached this position after detailed consultation with our parishioners. 86% of our respondents said they favoured development in existing towns or a new village. 83% favoured small-scale development like infill, or no further development.

#### *Background*

In response to the invitation to comment on the Local Plan, Moulton Parish Council chose to circulate leaflets in the village to all residents with a brief questionnaire. We included the SHELAA map showing two sites designated as “Included Housing” along with an outline of the potential issues this, the “Planning for The Future” white paper, and designation of Moulton as a “Local Service Centre”, might present.

- The questionnaire was in two parts with an optional comments box:

#### **Question 1: - I would prefer West Suffolk to meet their need for additional houses by....** ***(tick all that apply)***

- Building a new village somewhere in the district
- Developing mainly within the existing towns (Newmarket, Mildenhall etc)
- Spreading the development across towns and villages including Moulton

#### **Question 2: - And specifically for Moulton (choose one option)**

- I am happy with the proposals for major development in Moulton
- I would prefer small scale development and infill as at present
- I do not want to see any developments at all

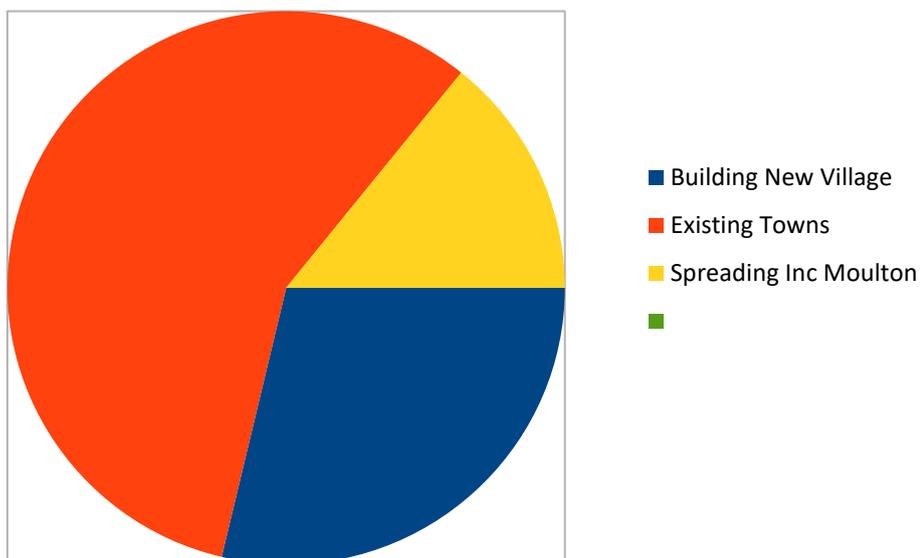
We delivered one leaflet per household (374 addresses) with a return box located prominently in the village shop. We also urged those unable to visit the shop to deliver to their nearest parish Councillor or make their comments by phone if they were unable to leave home. 254 responses were returned, some of which were in letter form, some with additional sheets of comments attached to the reply form.

## Analysis of the responses

*I would prefer West Suffolk to meet their need for additional houses by:*

Building New Village	Build in Existing Towns	Spreading Including Moulton
28.7%	57.1%	14.2%

- Percentage Responses Per Development Option

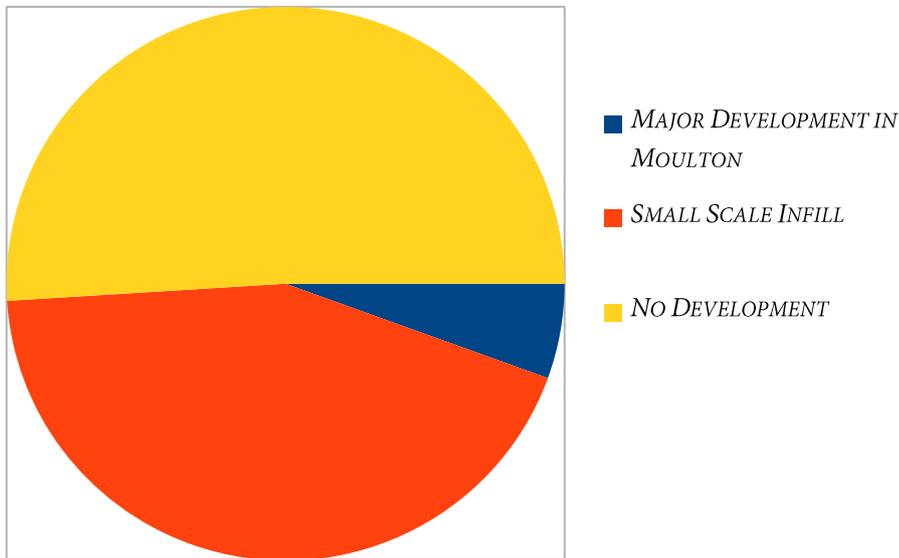


- Continued Analysis of the responses

*And specifically for Moulton:*

Major Development in Moulton	Small Scale Infill	No Development
5.53	43.48	50.99

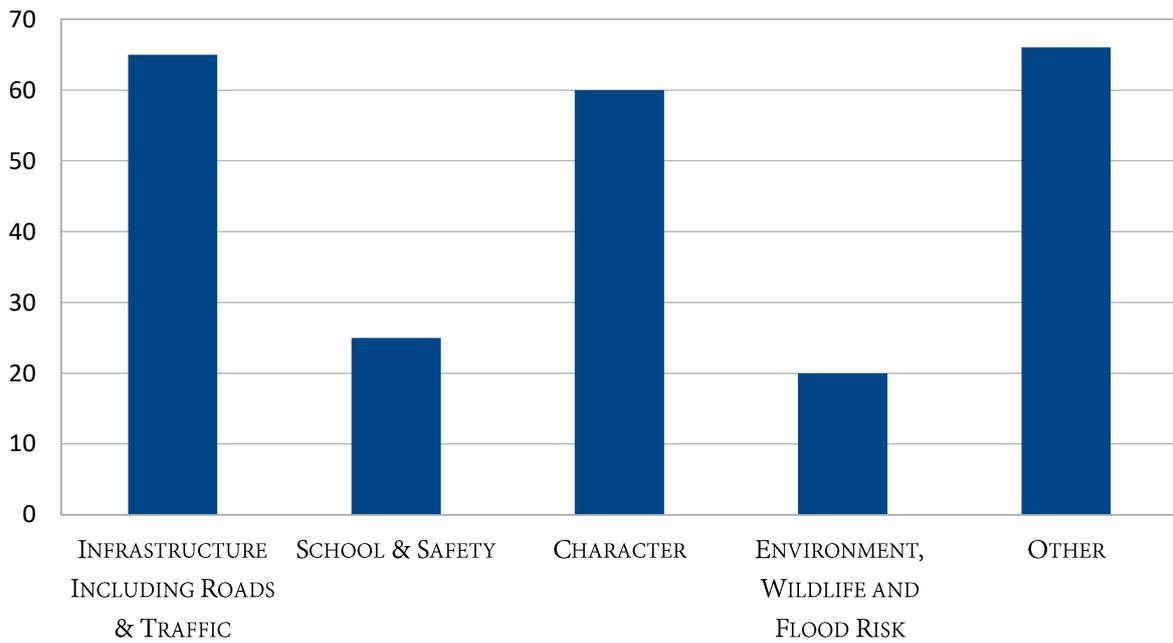
Preferred Development Type In Moulton



## Analysis of Comments

We grouped the comments into 5 categories.

There was a slight overlap as road capacity and traffic also has implications for safety issues around the school.



## Response to the “Included Housing” sites

### ➤ WS143

#### Loss of Visual Amenity

Moulton is a classic Suffolk village nestling in the folds of the West Suffolk Hills between Primrose Hill in the East and Folly Hill in the West. The view from the brow of the hill on School Road captures this, looking down towards the River. The existing houses on the East side of Chippenham Road are set relatively low down and blend into the landscape as the land drops down to the River, set against the backdrop of Primrose Hill. The Conservation Assessment for Moulton commented that Moulton is a 'low density landscape dominated area'. The proposed new development would change this view and landscape completely. The proposed site is set higher up and would present the dominant view entering the Village from Kentford Road or School Road.

#### Hazardous Road Junction

This is already a dangerous corner with poor sight lines. Traffic approaching the corner from the North is often above the 30mph speed limit. The 20mph permitted speed, that applies for the safety for the school children, is almost never observed. The risks at this corner have previously been recognised as an issue by Highways. The Junction is very busy with parents and children crossing the Road combined with the existing 5-way Junction. The location is high risk without additional traffic from the Carrot Wash site. Exacerbated by on-road parking, on verges at School Road, and spilling out to Chippenham Road. Increasing the mix of pedestrians and traffic would result in a heightened risk of death or injury.

#### Impact on School Road

This proposed development, together with the impact of the other site would create unacceptable risks to pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles on School Road. This is a restricted width road with passing places and totally inadequate for the level and range of current traffic. It serves as a direct route to the A11. Vehicles often travel along the edge and onto the verge, this causes the edge of the road to break away and the road surface is constantly being repaired. And of course there is already the risk at the School where fast-moving traffic is mixing with pupils crossing the road on an unsupervised crossing with restricted visibility due to parked cars.

#### Damage to Habitat

The River Kennett, adjacent to WS143, provides a habitat to Kingfishers and Little Egrets. The reservoir, which is also adjacent to the site, acts as a temporary refuge to a number of wading birds. The River is also a habitat for water voles which are an increasingly endangered species and already being monitored. The footpath alongside the River is used by occasional leisure walkers and the frequency is low enough to not be a disturbance to the birds and waterfowl.

The proposed development would have an adverse impact, not just during construction phase, but with a permanent substantial increase in activity on this part of the Riverbank. The juxtaposition of a large housing development would change the character of this stretch of the River and experience much more intensive use. This unspoilt habitat would be permanently damaged. Kingfishers are protected under Schedule 1 of the Countryside and Wildlife Act and Water Voles are protected under Section 5.

The River Kennett is part of a network of chalk streams and rivers across Southern England that are of global significance. They are in crisis, in part due to infrastructure pressures and urbanisation. This proposal can only make matters worse.

### **Flood Risk**

This site is identified as being at risk from potential groundwater flooding in the latest detailed analysis. Building on this site would inevitably involve the majority of the site being converted to hard surfaces with accompanying problems of run off which are currently absorbed by the land during normal rainfall. National policy is to minimise conversion of permeable to hard surfaces in order to avoid flooding downstream.

### **Pipeline**

The site is host to a spur from the main 6 ft. diameter pipeline which runs from Kentford pumping station to Kirtling Outfall. This is a high-pressure pipeline carrying up to 400 megalitres of water a day from Denver Sluice to Essex reservoirs. The pipeline is buried in a trench 1 to 1.2 m deep. The spur in WS143 runs from the School Road junction down to the River and is used as a wash out facility during maintenance. This is a hazard to future construction activity.

### **Loss of High-Quality Farmland**

The site consists of 'best quality and versatile' agricultural land (ALC Classification 2/3a) and is currently in continuous use for a range of crops throughout the year. It is also used to supply hay for the horse racing industry. The whole field is farmed as one and is equally productive, not split as suggested in the Constraints Plan. National Planning Guidelines indicate that this should be protected for agricultural use. Priority for development should be given to the use of brownfield sites and poor-quality land. An emerging national matter of greatest importance is to increase the proportion of food produced in the UK over the current level of 40%.

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### **➤ WS144**

### **Loss of Visual Amenity**

Moulton is a classic Suffolk village nestling in the folds of the West Suffolk Hills between Primrose Hill in the East and Folly Hill in the West. The conservation assessment in 2007 described the village as a low density, landscaped dominated, area. The approach from the West along Newmarket Road offers a gradual entry to the village with the broad vista of undulating fields to the right, and flint cottages to the left. Straight ahead is a gradually emerging mix of established housing set amongst trees. The proposed site is on higher ground and would completely dominate this entrance to the village, it would be overbearing and not to scale with the current surroundings.

### **Flood Risk**

The site is identified at significant risk of pluvial flooding on a 1 in 75-year basis. The surface water route is then down Newmarket Road towards the centre of the village. The hard landscaping involved the proposed housing development would increase the adverse impact on properties further down Newmarket Road. There is historical evidence of flooding on this site. This has already happened at the Dalham end of the Village 3 years ago when surface water run-off created a mud slide which damaged a number of properties. It necessitated the Highways Authority resurfacing the road due to the surface damage.

### **Adverse Impact on traffic flows on Newmarket Road**

Both developments will increase traffic flows within the village with several hundred extra vehicles involved in both commuting and local journeys. Newmarket Road is already limited in width when passing buses and other heavy vehicles. The impact would also be particularly heavy on the Village crossroads, and on the junction with Station Road near the Clock Tower.

### **Risk to underground high pressure pipeline**

The site contains a pipeline running north to south. This is the main 6-foot diameter pipeline which runs from Kentford pumping station to Kirtling Outfall. This is a high-pressure pipeline carrying up to 400 megalitres of water from Denver Sluice to Essex reservoirs built in 1971. The pipeline is buried in a trench 1 to 1.2 m deep. Clearly the risk of disturbing this during construction work would be an unacceptable hazard with severe consequences.

### **Loss of High-Quality Farmland**

The site consists of 'best quality and versatile' agricultural land (ALC Classification 2/3a) and is currently in continuous use for a range of crops throughout the year. The whole field is farmed as one and is equally productive, not split as suggested in the Constraints Plan. National Planning Guidelines indicate that this should be protected for agricultural use. Priority should be given to the use of brownfield sites and poor-quality land for development. An emerging national priority is to increase the proportion of food produced in the UK over the current level of 40%.

### **Heritage**

This site is of particular significance. Its traditional name (1839 map refers) is Market Field. In 1289 King Edward 1 granted a Charter for a market to be held on this site. Moulton was a key trading point on the busy route between Cambridge and Bury St Edmunds. It flourished as a result of the wool trade and also attracted many pilgrims. This trade continued to develop and in later years led to the building of the Packhorse Bridge. Hence this area of land, forms an important part of the heritage of the village and the heritage value of this site is best protected by remaining as farmland.

### **Water Pressure**

This part of the village experiences regular problems with water pressure. This will be adversely affected by development on the site and would incur substantial infrastructure costs.

## Summary of Parishioner's Responses Received:

- *Inadequate road infrastructure*
- *Village school already full to capacity*
- *Possibility of flooding due to inadequate surface water drainage*
- *Current Water, Electricity and Telephone Services inadequate*
- *Destroying rich farmland*
- *Better alternative locations such as Newmarket, Mildenhall or create a new settlement*
- *The two sites are not large enough for the maximum quantity of houses*
- *Could more than double the population of the village*
- *Gradual growth of a village is sustainable*
- *Small villages like Moulton should be protected to maintain their identity*
- *Large expansion would lead to parking issues in the vicinity of the village shop*
- *Visual aspects of the village would be damaged entering the village from Newmarket and Kentford*
- *Site WS143 is situated on a bend and there is also a junction near by*
- *An acceptance of infill is inevitable*
- *Kentford is better placed for access to the A14/A11 and train station*
- *No advantage in becoming a "Local Service Centre"*
- *Should there be any development, it should be of mixed and not all executive homes*
- *Loss of habitat for wildlife and increased pollution with additional traffic*
- *High density housing is known to increase crime and have an impact on mental health*
- *Better to control the population to reduce the need for housing*
- *Look at some of the villages around Cambridge that have been destroyed through over extension and learn from previous mistakes*
- *Ensure West Suffolk is equipped to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions*
- *All housing developments need to be carbon neutral*
- *Sustain and support rural areas*
- *Why Moulton?*