

CHALVINGTON WITH RIPE PARISH COUNCIL

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING OF

4th November 2019

held at The Hayton Baker Hall, Ripe.

98. Present: Cllr Lady Conway (Chairman), Cllr Dunbar Dempsey, Cllr Dashfield, Cllr Rogers, Cllr Turner, Cllr Ward and Cllr White.
99. Attending: County Councillor Bennett, A Stevens (Clerk) and nine members of the public were also in attendance.
100. Public Session:

County Councillor Bennett said that following the Parish Council's request for weight restrictions he visited officers on the issue. They reiterated their original points which were;

- There is currently no Traffic Regulation Order preventing HGV usage in Darp Lane.
- It is not possible to introduce restrictions on all roads where concerns over HGV movements have been brought to their attention. Only those roads which are environmentally unsuitable and which have a disproportionate level of through traffic are considered. Such a restriction would also only be looked into if a more suitable alternative route exists.
- There must also be an existing crash record along the route involving HGVs. Officers have checked and confirm there have not been any personal injury crashes reported.
- A member of the Traffic and Safety Team has visited the site and noted that there are properties at the south end of the lane where building works are being carried out. They suggested that if there has been a recent increase in HGV usage of the lane, it may be due to lorry movements to and from those sites.
- The road is mainly agricultural with livestock and crops accessed from the lane. A weight restriction in the lane would not prevent access or use by agricultural vehicles, such as tractors, and therefore these vehicles would still be able to use the road anyway.

County Councillor Bennett offered to make contact with the freight companies concerned and explain the consternation they are causing. Councillors accepted his offer.

County Councillor Bennett also said he has only just been made aware of an MHCLG consultation on 5G masts. The consultation is purely about the siting of masts. The consultation period finished today so he responded as follows:

'I have only recently been made aware of the 5G consultation and so have not had a chance to discuss the matter with the rural communities that I serve. I have been told that the consultation document, which I have now seen, was sent to all councillors. Would you be in a position to confirm or otherwise if that was the case?

The only comment I can make now is that the unopposable imposition of a mast onto private property would not be acceptable and under current legislation likely to be vigorously challenged.'

In the meantime he said he would be happy to forward any points residents wish to raise on the principle of any future siting policy. If residents prefer to write themselves the email is mobileplanningconsultation@communities.gov.uk

Councillor Lady Conway;

- pointed out the Parish Council recently supported a planning application for a 5G mast at Deanland industrial park. It was noted that 5G masts are generally wider and taller than previous masts.
- Asked if residents should take details of large trucks driving through the villages. Councillors suggested they could then be sent to the Clerk so she can keep a portfolio. County Councillor Bennett reminded residents they can report any vehicles which are committing an offence to the police via Operation Crackdown. It was also noted that Councillors Rogers and White are looking into other ways to restrict traffic and will bring a plan to Full Council in due course.

Residents said;

- They find it difficult to direct lorry drivers because they often speak little or no English.
- The minutes for the last meeting and the agenda for this meeting were not on the website. They are on the home page.

The meeting was then opened.

101. Apologies for absence:

Apologies for absence were received from District Councillor David Watts.

102. Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 7th October 2019:

The Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on the 7th October 2019 were approved by all and signed as a true and accurate record by the Chairman.

103. Clerk's Report on any Matters' Arising:

All matter's arising were included elsewhere on the agenda.

104. Disclosures of Interest:

Councillor Turner declared a disclosable pecuniary interest in planning application WD/2019/1780/F and left the room whilst discussions and the vote took place.

105. Reports from Outside Meetings:

Councillors Dashfield and Ward attended the Cuckmere Community Bus Annual Social Event and said it was attended by a lot of local councillors.

106. Planning Applications:

The following planning applications were considered;

WD/2019/1961/O - Land opposite Lovers Farmhouse, Church Farm Lane, Chalvington, BN27 3TD - Outline application for the erection of two semi-detached dwellings

WD/2019/1962/O - Land opposite Lovers Farmhouse, Church Farm Lane, Chalvington, BN27 3TD - Outline application for the erection of two detached dwellings

WD/2019/1963/F - Land opposite Lovers Farmhouse, Church Farm Lane, Chalvington, BN27 3TD - Erection of 3 No. dwellings.

The applicants for these applications clarified their position and said;

- They have had pre application talks with Wealden and have submitted three separate applications in line with Wealden's policies.
- The proposed applications are low impact and respect their settings.

Residents who objected did so on the following grounds;

Conservation Area:

Residents said they were astonished that the Applications for residential development have been permitted, given the area's status within the Chalvington Conservation Area - a designation that has been implemented by Wealden in recent years. These applications do nothing to 'protect or enhance' that status. There were only a small number of open spaces that were included, of which this is one and it should remain as one.

Potentially conflicting interests

Residents said that officers should not be under any undue pressure to maximise the approval of residential applications to facilitate the meeting of top-down housing targets set by Central Government. It is understood that a Freedom of Information request has been submitted to establish whether there are in place incentives, targets or objectives contained within the planning team's performance metrics that could compromise the professional judgement of those involved in assessing planning applications.

Road safety, capacity, infrastructure, negative impact on community

Residents said that even if this area was outside the Conservation Area there are overriding concerns that should make any one of these applications fail, namely;

1. The properties would access onto Church Farm Lane which is a single track road serving eight dwellings and numerous commercial and agricultural activities. It is frequently congested with passing traffic and is a serious safety consideration. Four additional properties would represent a 50% increase in dwellings on a lane which is barely able to cope with present traffic volumes and is unfit for even current volumes of traffic.
2. Creating an access road to a development in such a narrow and frequently congested point would create a significant additional safety hazard.
3. The safety issues would be heightened by the significant amount of pedestrian and equine traffic using the lane for access to public footpaths and bridleways.
4. The site is elevated and any properties built would be visible directly across Poundfield Lane to the frontage of Lovers Farm, which is in the Conservation Area and is one of the finest period houses in the area.
5. Lovers Farmhouse, presently occupied by the applicant, would be materially disadvantaged by any development. Planning considerations should take into account the interests of future owners and the damaging impact on that property which is a listed building and of course in the Conservation Area
6. A modern development, regardless of how tastefully constructed, would detract from the short approach to the 11th Century church.
7. Existing drainage is inadequate. The lane is often under standing water and property owners often have to rod their drains as it is. Additional built-over land would be bound to generate more surface water and further undermine an already degraded and collapsing substructure of the lane.
8. Local social infrastructure is already challenged - Ripe and Chalvington nursery can barely cope with the existing level of demand.

Councillors considered all the comments and agreed they unanimously object to these applications on the grounds listed above, and they added the following;

- Wealden has recently declared a Climate Emergency. This proposed development will mean there will be an increase in traffic movements which will conflict with that.
- The applications do not appear to mitigate for the effects they will have on the Ashdown Forest.
- If it goes ahead it will exceed our housing allocation.
- Whilst the designs are nice, they do nothing to alleviate the safety factor or the impact they will have.
- This is the closure of another open space, the value of which are really important.
- Church Farm Lane is not fit for purpose and needs completely relaying.
- These applications are a complete overdevelopment of the site.
- That if these applications are allowed to go ahead they should count towards our allocation within the Wealden Local Plan.

WD/2019/1780/F - New House Farm, Chalvington Road, Chalvington BN27 3TB - New open fronted agricultural barn - Alterations to location and block plan and revised position of agricultural barn – Chalvington with Ripe Parish Council has no objections on any planning grounds to this application.

107. Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

The Working Party (which consists of one Councillor from Ripe, one from Chalvington and one from Deanland) will now consider each proposal to make sure they comply with all the regulations. Councillor White said that Wealden were reluctant to give specific guidance regarding CIL expenditure but had said that the Parish Council should make its own decisions but should take legal advice to ensure that it complied with Government regulations.

Councillors agreed that Councillor White can call Ian Davison, the SSALC Solicitor, and run through the proposals with him. They will also ask about Local Green Spaces. They agreed he can meet him (with Councillor Ward), if the solicitor thinks it would be a good idea. Councillors resolved that if the meeting goes ahead they will pay for one hour of Mr Davison's time. If Mr Davison thinks more time is needed Councillor White will notify Councillors by email for their approval.

108. Parish Council Communication:

Councillor Turner has drafted a list of quick fixes for the Parish Council website which she will send to the Clerk to forward on to the website editor. The Website Working Party will then meet and review the website

109. Defibrillator:

The Clerk has now signed the BT contract and will be notified when BT has disconnected the telephony.

Councillors have looked into funding options of which will take time to apply for so they agreed to add the defibrillator and its ongoing servicing costs to the list of CIL proposals instead.

110. Noise Pollution at Deanland:

Chalvington with Ripe Parish Council has received complaints about excessive noise from a weekend event held at Wicks Farm. It is understood that a lot of complaints have been made to Wealden because the noise was allowed to continue until 2am on both the Saturday and Sunday mornings. It is understood that another event has been planned for next year.

Wealden has now confirmed that if the event does go ahead the applicant will need to apply for a different type of licence – a Premise Licence – which will enable the event to be more carefully monitored.

Councillors also asked the Clerk to write to the District Council and support the letter sent by Laughton Parish Council about the excessive amount of noise events generally this summer. The letter from Laughton asks for;

1. Advance notice – it suggests 10 months for events which run over more than one night - so that residents have the same opportunity to plan as the festival organisers
2. The finish time for any outdoor music, amplified or not, is 10.30 pm for two night events and 11 pm for one night events.
3. Licences given in the future restrict all noise generated on the festival site, not just the stage - so that the organisers are responsible for controlling all the volume at all times - it could then all be enforceable by Pollution Control.
4. One three day event per year per venue, ideally Bentley and Laughton Lodge on the same weekend because it would at least get it over in one hit.
5. No amplified music or drumming before midday and a two hour break late afternoon before the evening programme begins.
6. A phone number to be published on event websites and to be manned by an event organiser throughout the event.
7. Terms of the licence to be easily available to residents, and to be sent to the Clerks to the relevant Parish Councils as soon as they are issued.
8. For new events to pay a premium licence fee to cover any extra supervision by Pollution Control Officers.
9. Internet research and contact with previous licensing councils when an event organiser requests a licence.

Deanland Resident's Association will also write in support.

111. Local Green Spaces:

This was covered under Minute 107.

112. Proposed Footpath Diversion:

Some of the problems highlighted by the Footpath Officer in his September report have now been rectified, namely the;

- Stile at Fowler's Barn below Church Farm (Eckington Corner, Ripe). It has now been made good, and seems safe for the foreseeable future.
- Footpath between Fowler's Barn and Chalvington Lane, which emerges onto the Lane about half a mile north east of the Yew Tree Inn. The maize has now been harvested but there is no trace of footpath, so people need to use it in order to re-establish it.
- The path beyond the fishing lake in Ripe, which runs along the stream and leads towards Little Stream Farm on Mill Lane, Laughton. This has now been cleared, and is useable.

The owner of Little Meadow Stud has applied to have the existing footpath (footpath 17) diverted around the hedge line. Mr Robertson (the Footpath Officer) has walked the existing footpath and said it seems likely to him that the owner's intention is to divert the path so that it does not cross a field where livestock are grazing.

Councillors agreed it seems sensible to run the path along the hedge line and asked that;

- new way signs and a footbridge over the ditch are fitted.
- ESCC includes our Footpath Officer in future consultations.

113. Update on traffic calming:

The speed monitor from the Safer Wealden Partnership is expected soon. Councillors Rogers and White will then work with the data provided and suggest ways to reduce the speed limits.

114. Hand bells:

The current holder of the Parish Council's hand bells, the Churchwarden, would like to return them to the Parish Council to store. Councillors suggested various groups who might be interested in using them. Councillor Lady Conway will look after them until a more permanent home can be found. The Clerk confirmed the hand bells are currently insured by the Parish Council.

115. Precept 2020-2021:

Councillors resolved to;

- defer the decision about next year's precept to the January Meeting when they should know what the cost of employing the new Clerk and the cost of repairing the fingerposts will be.
- repair two fingerposts each year to maximise the match funding which is currently available from ESCC. The two most urgent will be repaired this financial year.

Councillors also agreed;

- a format for the advertisement for the Clerk vacancy
- they will advertise the vacancy through SSALC.
- the Job Description and Person Specification.
- Councillors Ward, Turner and the Chair will conduct the interviews.

The Clerk was not present for the recruitment discussions.

116. Cheques for Payment:

The following cheques were approved for payment;

101104	Mass Media - Website	£ 67.20
101105	A Stevens – Salary – October	
101106	ESCC – Pension	
101107	WDALC – Subscription	£ 21.00

117. Questions from Parish Councillors:

Councillor White asked;

- What happens when the parish reaches the number of houses in its housing allocation within the Wealden Local Plan and what order applications are processed in. Those attending the Parish Conference agreed to ask Planning Officers there.
- Is the Planning Panel Meeting which is due to take place on the 20th November still going ahead. The Clerk will find out and let him know.

