

FLETCHING PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Gabriella Paterson-Griggs

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MINUTES of the Meeting of **FLETCHING PARISH COUNCIL** held on Monday 4th December 2023 in the Village Hall, High Street, Fletching (7 – 8.35pm).

PRESENT: Councillors R Hannay (Chair), A Abraham, N Collum, W Constantinou, K Minch and L Snelgrove.

Also in attendance: Gabriella Paterson-Griggs (Clerk and RFO), Councillors Christina Coleman (WDC) and Roy Galley (ESCC).

Members of the Public in Attendance: 6

APOLOGIES: Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R Borton, S De St Croix and D Greenish.

23/201. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

23/202. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the last meeting held on 6th November 2023 were a correct record and were duly signed by the Chairman.

23/203. SPLAYNES GREEN PHONEBOX

The Chair gave the background to the current position with the phone box and explained that it was an unfortunate sequence of events that had led to this point but that a decision was needed as to the future of the phone box. He confirmed that the Parish Council did want to save the phone box but that it was a question of cost. He then allowed the members of the public present at the meeting the opportunity to express their views.

It was noted that there was support from the residents for a defibrillator to be purchased and placed in the phone box. If this option was chosen there would be no need to replace the door as a defibrillator would have a watertight case. The issue of the current tilt of the box was discussed. The concern about the tilt was that a new door may not fit and would be very heavy to open. The cost of levelling the slab was not known but an offer was made to undertake this work by a local resident.

There was also a discussion about the need to sandblast the phone box to remove the existing paintwork for which a quote had previously been obtained. The Clerk reported that the cost of replacing the door and refurbishing the box would be in the region of £3k which would not include levelling the slab. It was suggested that there may be residents within the parish that could offer their skills and support towards the refurbishment of the phone box and that they be invited to do this through the parish magazine.

It was **AGREED** that as well as inviting everybody to offer their skills and support to the refurbishment that two options also be considered and put to residents in the next edition of the parish magazine: 1. To refurbish the box and install a defibrillator but not replace the door; and 2. Replace the door, refurbish and level the slab.

23/204. MATTERS ARISING

Fletching Village Speed Survey: The Chair reported that at the virtual meeting of the Sussex Police North Wealden Focus Group a presentation had been given by the traffic police. He had raised the issues of the dangers of the junction of the A272 with Golf Club Lane and speeding through the village and had been advised to request the triage data from the Police for those areas. It was noted that if that data identified concerns then the Police would undertake its own speed surveys.

It was **AGREED** that if no data had been received from the Police by the end of the year then a chase up would be sent in the new year.

23/205. REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR CHRISTINA COLEMAN

Councillor Coleman reported that the Wealden Council Strategy (previously known as the Corporate Plan) had been adopted at the Full Council meeting and would feed into the Local Plan. Also at that

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meeting a motion had been supported in respect of a better strategy from the Environment Agency in river conservation and CIL monies had been confirmed towards the new sports hub in Hailsham.

In respect of the Local Plan there would be an Extraordinary Full Council meeting on 8th February 2024 where the draft plan would be considered which would be followed by a consultation period.

Councillor Coleman also reported that there was a Climate and Ecological Emergency Bill going through parliament that had cross-party support and that Councils were being asked to support the Bill. It was noted that she would send details through to the Clerk.

In response to a question about the dog warden service Councillor Coleman stated that she would find out the information and reply to the councillor direct.

23/206. REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR GALLEY

Councillor Galley reported that he had been undertaking a number of civic duties in the past month in his role as Vice-Chairman of ESCC. He confirmed that the budget setting process had started at the Fire Authority and ESCC. It was noted that the biggest pressure on Children's Services currently, was in respect of looked after children and disadvantaged young adults and in particular school attendance.

It was reported that ESCC had received a grant from the Department of Energy and Climate Change towards supporting training in green related construction jobs.

With regards to Highways he re-iterated that Church Street was programmed in for works in January 2024 but he has not received a date for Ruston Bridge Road at this time. Councillor Galley confirmed that potholes could be reported both through the website or via the phone and advised residents that if there were any that had not been dealt with once they had been reported to let him know as the local county councillor.

23/207. GATWICK AIRPORT EXPANSION

The Clerk updated on the information she had received from Isfield Parish Council and confirmed that the information was freely available on the Communities Against Gatwick Noise Emissions (CAGNE) Aviation Town and Parish Forums website.

It was **AGREED** not to join the forum at this stage.

23/208. SLOW WAYS NATIONAL WALKING NETWORK

The details of the Slow Ways national walking network were sent to Councillors before the meeting.

It was noted that the footpaths identified on the site did not cross the parish of Fletching so it was **AGREED** that the Clerk would sign up to the newsletter in the first instance.

23/209. WORKING GROUPS / EXTERNAL GROUPS

- i. *Neighbourhood Plan*: Councillor Hannay reported that, to date, 85 responses had been received to the questionnaire and he strongly encouraged everyone at the meeting to complete it. It was confirmed that of those received 83 had been online and that the Group was hoping for a minimum of 100 responses. It was noted that that the deadline of 11 December may be extended.
- ii. *Fletching Recreation Ground Committee (FRGC)*: The Clerk reported that Fletching Football Club had withdrawn from the league for the rest of the season as it had not been able to field enough players for the matches. It was hoped that it would be back up to strength for the 2024 season. In respect of the pavilion refurbishment it was noted that the quotes had been received and a meeting set up to finalise the programme of works.
- iii. *East Sussex Association of Local Councils*: The Clerk informed the Councillors that she had attended the ESALC AGM and Conference at the end of November. It was noted that there had been presentations from ESCC Highways, the details of which had been circulated to members via email, Action in Rural Sussex and a Planning Update.

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- iv. *Sussex Police North Wealden Focus Group*: Councillor Hannay reported that a new PCSO for the Fletching area would be starting in January 2024 but that support was always available even when there was not a named PCSO in post as they worked as a team.

23/210. CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

- i. *ESCC – Proposed Road Safety Improvements – A272 Piltdown*: Councillors welcome the email that had been received from Nick Skelton, Assistant Director Communities at ESCC stating that the A272 through Piltdown had been identified as a site where community focussed road safety interventions would be delivered as part of the community match underspend programme. The scheme, which it was anticipated would be completed by Winter 2024 included:
 - Improvements to the existing speed limit terminal signs
 - Installation of new village name plates
 - Refresh of '40mph' roundels
 - Refresh of road markings
 - Installation of red surfacing at the gateways.
- ii. *Wealden District Council – Neighbourhood Recycling Points*: the removal, by WDC, of the community recycling bins and installation of a textile bank in their place was noted. Councillor Coleman explained the Council's rationale behind removing neighbourhood recycling points which had been taking place across the District over a period of time. It was noted that with kerbside recycling collections available for all households the community points were no longer environmentally or economically viable. Some concern was raised that the removal of the bins could result in an increase in littering along the verges.
- iii. *Gatwick Airport – Annual Public Meeting*: It was **AGREED** that Councillor Minch should represent the Parish Council at the meeting that was being held on 6 December 2023 and report back at the next parish council meeting.
- iv. *Working Group Against Over Development*: The letter sent in response to the one received from the Leader of Wealden District Council, circulated to councillors before the meeting, was noted.

23/211. FINANCE AND ASSETS

- i. The invoices and payments for December 2023 were **AUTHORISED** and the Council's current financial position and bank reconciliation were noted.
- ii. The first draft of the budget for 2024/25, circulated prior to the meeting was **NOTED**.

23/212. GRANT AWARDS

Fletching CE Primary School

The grant request from Fletching CE Primary School for £350 match funding towards reading books for the 'Reading for Pleasure' corner was considered and it was **RESOLVED** that the grant be awarded in full.

23/213. BURIAL GROUND

There were no applications for permits since the last meeting.

23/214. ENFORCEMENT – PLANNING

- i. *Flitteridge Farm*: The Clerk reported that the final caravan had been removed from the site and this had been confirmed by the Planning Enforcement Officer. With regards to the hard standing it was reported that this was a helipad which it was confirmed required planning permission and that the landowner had been requested to remove it. The reasons why the planning enforcement process could be lengthy was explained to those present at the meeting. There was also concern raised regarding the sales of paving slabs and the earth bund being created before the landscaping plan had been received by Wealden. It was also reported that there were caravans

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within the farmyard that were occupied. It was agreed the Clerk would feedback to Wealden on the additional issues raised.

- ii. *The Griffin Inn*: The enforcement notice issued by Wealden District Council in respect of 'without planning permission the erection of an outbuilding' was noted.

23/215. PLANNING APPLICATIONS - RECEIVED

It was **RESOLVED** to make the comments as set out after each application in respect of the following:

i. **WD/2023/2345/F Splaynes Green Farm, North Hall Lane, Fletching TN22 3SA**

Construction of an outbuilding garden store for the secure storage of garden machinery and pond maintenance equipment/materials.

The application is for the construction of an "outbuilding garden store" on open ground overlooking a pond lying several hundred yards to the south of the main house. The proposed building is substantial at a little under 100sq.m. with a pitched roof at a height of 7.75m. The site lies within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It will not be screened and will be prominent within the preserved landscape.

According to the Environment Agency the site also lies within Flood Zones 2 and 3, which is land defined by the Planning Practice Guidance for the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for Flood Risk and Coastal Change as having a high and medium probability of flooding.

Given that the site lies within the AONB, it is surprising that the application is not supported by at least a Design and Access Statement.

The Council does not consider that this application meets the requirements of paragraphs 171-177 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Also, the NPPF (paragraph 167, footnote 55) states that a Flood Risk Assessment (RFA) must be submitted when development is proposed in such locations. There is no RFA in this case.

The Parish Council OBJECTS to this application.

ii. **WD/2023/2612/F 2 Fern Cottages, Bell Lane, Splaynes Green, Fletching TN22 3TP**

Proposed single storey rear extension, proposed replacement garage and proposed front fence and gates.

This property is a 19th century semi-detached historic property set on a good size plot within the Fletching/Splaynes Conservation Area. There is (or more properly was) a garage, constructed of stone blocks with a felt flat roof. The proposal is to construct a single storey rear extension to the cottage and to replace the garage.

The rear extension will not be visible from the road and will broadly match the design of a similar extension already in existence at 1 Fern Cottages. The Parish Council is satisfied that these proposals (particularly the new garage) will be an improvement, accord with NPPF guidance and will not cause any harm to the Conservation Area.

The Parish Council SUPPORTS the application.

iii. **WD/2023/2653/F Fletching Garage, Bell Lane, Splaynes Green, Fletching TN22 3TN**

A partial demolition of the existing garage building and converting it to a 4 bedroom house; and erection of 2 x 4 bedroom houses with associated car parking, amenity space and landscaping.

The Parish Council suggests that the evidence from the subsequent implementation of the Acorn Garage consent fully supports its objections which can equally be made in response to this application. It is also unfortunate that this application does not include:

- *long elevations of the whole site and street to see how the new buildings relate to the old and to the Acorn Garage development.*

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- *full details of materials to match retained buildings with similar detailing etc – and not the new Acorn Buildings*
 - *a sunlight and daylight study to check impacts on Fern Cottages*
- all of which are, in its view, material issues on this application.*

The Parish Council therefore OBJECTS to this application. In particular:

- *The development fails to protect the Conservation Area*
- *The design and layout of the housing scheme does not reflect the site constraints nor the appearance and character of the settlement.*
- *The buildings are poorly designed and do not reflect village style. It comprises what is in effect an urban estate style of housing, comprising large over-dominant dwellings, minimal gardens, intrusive roadways and urban-style parking areas.*
- *Flooding is a continuing problem on the site which issue has not been properly addressed within the current phase of development.*
- *There is very limited access to public transport.*

iv. **WD/2023/2741/F The Old Archery, North Hall Lane, Fletching TN22 3SA**

Proposed extension works to existing dwelling house including side extension, attached garage, remodelling of front elevation and works to first floor accommodation including new roof structure.

The proposed works are substantial and will effectively convert what is presently a modest cottage-type property into a much larger country house. The site lies within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB).

Given that the site lies within the AONB, it is surprising that the application is not supported by a Design and Access Statement.

The Council does not consider that this application meets the requirements of paragraphs 171-177 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Also, it is also noted that the Environment Agency object to this application on surface water drainage grounds due to the lack of information.

The Council therefore OBJECTS to this application.

23/216. PLANNING APPLICATIONS - DECISIONS

Planning decisions RECEIVED from Wealden District Council since the last meeting:

Applications Approved

i. **WD/2022/2692/F The Wattles, Goldbridge Road, Piltdown TN22 3XL**

Construction of one detached three-bedroom dwelling and altered access with associated works. (APPROVED 24 November 2023)

ii. **WD/2023/1956/F Area of land at Piltdown Golf Club, Shortbridge Road, Piltdown TN22 3XJ**

Construction of 2 bay storage facility for sand etc. in existing car park. Existing surfacing in car park and access to be replaced. Replacement wider height restricted barrier. Enhanced screen planting and provision of linking track into existing track network. (APPROVED 27 November 2023)

iii. **WD/2023/2055/LB Black Ven Farm, Down Street, Nutley TN22 3EH**

Work to repair and re-roof farmhouse. (APPROVED 3 November 2023)

iv. **WD/2023/2514/FA Site adj. Hawthorn Cottage, Goldbridge Road, Piltdown TN22 3XG**

Variation of condition 11 of WD/2010/1130/F. (APPROVED 27 November 2023)

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Applications Refused – none since the last meeting

Applications Withdrawn

i. **WD/2023/0470/LB Moons Oast, Sharpsbridge Lane, Piltdown TN22 3XG**

Replacement roof tiles and rainwater goods. (WITHDRAWN 20 November 2023)

23/217. ITEMS FOR THE PARISH MAGAZINE

It was agreed that the following items be included for the next edition of the Parish Magazine:

- Splaynes Green Phone Box – inviting parishioners to offer any skills and support they can towards the refurbishment of the phone box and outline the options agreed at the meeting (Minute 23/203 above).

23/218. AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

It was requested that Councillors contact the Clerk with any other items they wish to be considered at the next meeting.

23/219. TIME AND DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

The next meeting would be held on Monday 8th January 2024 at 7pm in the Village Hall

The following dates and times were also agreed all at 7pm in the Village Hall:

Monday 5th February 2024

Monday 4th March 2024

Monday 8th April 2024