



Local Government for Langton Green, Speldhurst, Ashurst and Old Groombridge

**MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY FULL COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON MONDAY, 23rd April 2012 at 7.30pm
IN THE ELLIS ROOM, LANGTON GREEN VILLAGE HALL**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Cllrs Mrs Jeffreys (Chairman), Mrs Hull, Mrs Podbury, Mrs Soyke, Hemming, Langridge, Milner, Parker, Owen, Pendleton and Woodward

OFFICERS PRESENT: Mr C May – Clerk and Mrs M Flemington – Assistant Clerk

Borough Cllr Julian Stanyer

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC: There were eighteen members of the public present

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Borough Cllr David Jukes

12/183 DECLARATIONS OF PERSONAL AND PREJUDICIAL INTEREST: There were none

12/184 DECLARATIONS OF LOBBYING: Cllr Mrs Hull – She has been spoken to by residents regarding Local Needs Housing.

12/185 PARISH POLL – AN UPDATE ON TWBC'S DECISION:

Cllr Mrs Jeffreys reported that TWBC have taken advice from Central Government and decided that the Parish Poll could not go ahead because the wording proposed at the Parish Meeting held on 27th March 2012 was not a question that could be answered yes or no.

12/186 PUBLIC OPEN SESSION:

Cllr Mrs Jeffreys opened the public open session at 7.37pm

Ken Gornall said he had been looking at the Parish Council Website and the date of 19th April for the Parish Poll is still shown.

Sana Smith-Tilley said it would have been helpful if the website had made it clearer that this Extraordinary Full Council Meeting was solely to discuss the Local Needs Housing project. She read out a statement from a resident who was unable to attend the meeting who was opposed to the development. She also asked whether the Parish Council will reconsider a referendum. Cllr Mrs Jeffreys advised that this could be discussed later under Agenda Item 8 – Review of the next steps.

Alan Marriott said that travel to a place of work from the development would be impractical without a car and he is against building on Green Belt and thinks priority should always be given to brown field sites.

Joanna Horne spoke of her concerns of speeding traffic overtaking on Langton Road. Cllr Mrs Jeffreys said that she is aware of this and accidents that have happened recently and that the Highways Committee will continue to deal with this matter regardless of the decision made on the Local Needs Housing project.

Borough Cllr Julian Stanyer said that TWBC have to allocate land supply for housing and that this is already done for the next five years. The Local Development Framework runs until 2026 and TWBC has to allocate enough land

for 6,000 units with site specific allocations taking place autumn 2012. He said there is a distinction between housing 'need' and 'demand' and urged the Parish Council to aim for the preservation of Green Belt and carry out a further survey of housing need in Speldhurst.

Roy Langman asked if this meeting will agree a re-wording of the Parish Poll. Cllr Mrs Jeffreys advised him this was a matter for the electors who called the original Parish Meeting, whereas this meeting was to discuss what further work the Parish Council still needed to do on the LNH proposal.

Alan Marriott said he thinks there is ambiguity in discussions between Local Needs Housing and Affordable Housing. Cllr Mrs Jeffreys replied that the Parish Council have always been careful to use the correct term of Local Needs Housing for this project and that Local Needs Housing is a specific sub-section of Affordable Housing. She confirmed that an applicant's housing need is assessed by TWBC and the applicant's 'local' criteria assessed by ERHA in consultation with the Parish Council.

Borough Cllr Julian Stanyer read out the qualifying definitions of 'need' and 'local' criteria.

Ken Gornall was concerned that an important service could mean a postman living there and this would be the thin end of the wedge.

Alan Marriott asked about the twenty year tenancy and if the family of the tenant are able to stay on if the tenant moves away. He felt that extended families make the criteria nonsense.

Cllr Milner said that it was not for the Parish Council to discuss the underlying morality of the policy. He emphasised that the Parish Council had always referred to this proposal as Local Needs Housing and not Affordable Housing. Cllr Mrs Jeffreys said sub-letting is not permitted.

Richard Larkin said he has received a letter from Greg Clark saying it is entirely the decision of the Parish Council whether or not this scheme goes ahead. He was asked if a copy of this could be sent to the Clerk.

Tina Arnold mentioned that in 2011 Speldhurst School was oversubscribed and that a number of younger siblings of families living in Speldhurst did not get places and expressed concern that additional housing would add to this problem. Cllr Mrs Jeffreys said that the school expected all children in the village to get places this year and that it is not possible to speculate about the future and how many school age children might or might not live in these properties if they are built.

Philip Tew said he wonders on what basis the scheme was originally even considered. Cllr Mrs Jeffreys said the Parish Council were approached by TWBC and the survey of housing need was carried out and that there are approximately twenty people who have expressed an interest and who would qualify on the basis of housing need and local criteria. Mr Tew said he was not surprised there were applicants because the housing was cheap.

Alan Marriott expressed concern that ACRK who carried out the survey of housing need are not independent. Cllr Mrs Jeffreys confirmed that ACRK do not have any vested interest in Local Needs Housing.

Anne Richards said she thinks the issue of building on Green Belt was not sufficiently addressed in the original survey and is not convinced at the reasons for rejection of all the other sites. Cllr Mrs Jeffreys confirmed that Green Belt can only be used for Local Needs Housing and not other types of 'affordable housing'.

Borough Cllr Julian Stanyer said more consideration should be given to brown field and other sites. Cllr Mrs Jeffreys advised that the Parish Council has already considered the brown field sites around the village and can only work within the guidelines of TWBC and that there is no merit whatsoever in promoting a site that simply would not get planning permission.

Mr Larkin said a new review should be made of sites because things have changed.

The public open session closed at 8.19pm

12/187 CONSIDERATION OF THE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM TWBC AND ERHA:

Cllr Mrs Jeffreys asked Cllrs whether they are satisfied with the responses received from TWBC and ERHA following the Parish Council's requests for further information.

Cllr Owen asked if a map of all the original sites considered could be disclosed. The Clerk advised that it can and is being given to the Save Our Green Belt Group this week with other information.

Cllr Podbury expressed concern that there is no mention of traffic calming measures. Cllr Mrs Jeffreys advised that this is likely to be because the visibility splays are being extended to allow for average speeds on this section of road. Several Cllrs expressed concern at this and the recent accidents outside the School were mentioned. **The Clerk is to seek confirmation from ERHA whether any further traffic calming measures are being planned by ERHA.**

Cllr Milner said the ERHA twenty year tenancy period is still an issue in his opinion as the majority of Housing Associations select five or ten year periods initially. Cllr Mrs Jeffreys advised that she believes this might be negotiable.

12/188 CONSIDERATION OF THE OFFER FROM GREG CLARK MP TO HOST A MEETING ON FRIDAY 25th MAY:

Cllr Mrs Jeffreys reported that Greg Clark MP has offered to chair a meeting for open discussion on 25th May.

After discussion it was **AGREED** that the scope of the meeting should be the Local Needs Housing project and that representatives of ERHA and TWBC should be at the meeting. Cllr Langridge suggested inviting one of the senior Planning Officers from TWBC.

12/189 REVIEW OF THE NEXT STEPS:

Cllr Mrs Jeffreys asked Cllrs if they wished to consider the idea raised in the open session of a referendum. Cllr Mrs Hull stated that a Poll or referendum would not change Borough Policy.

Cllr Hemming referred to the informative Parish Vision document and said that a Poll was unhelpful by comparison.

Cllr Milner said that the Council should refer to Greg Clark for guidance and in the meantime work on a referendum or questionnaire with members of the public and there should be an opportunity to comment. It should not be too complex. He also referred to suggestions that brown field sites are available and should be considered first. He asked members of the public to suggest sites but mentioned that price was also an issue.

Cllr Mrs Hull said that there were ten Town and Country sites in the village and all affordable housing should be based on the Local Needs criteria and there needs to be a policy change. She said that Town and Country should be invited to the meeting hosted by Greg Clark.

Cllr Mrs Jeffreys advised that these are Policy matters which were unlikely to be able to be addressed or changed within the timescale of the Local Needs Housing scheme.

Cllr Parker asked who would do the analysis. Cllr Milner asked if the Council would be bound by it.

The wording for the referendum/questionnaire will be considered after the meeting on 25th May but any suggestions in the meantime should be sent to the Clerk.

12/190 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION: There were none.

There being nothing further to discuss the meeting closed at 9.08pm

CHAIRMAN