

Minutes of the **Additional Ordinary Meeting of the Parish Council**
held on Wednesday 10th August 2022 at 7.00 p.m in Brightling Village Hall

Parish Councillors Present: Cllrs Caroline Croft, Andrew Wedmore, Joanna Coleman (Chair), Dianne Mower and Judy Petty

District/County Councillors: Cllr John Barnes (RDC) and Cllr Eleanor Kirby-Green (ESCC)

In attendance: Gilly Lowe, Clerk to the Council and approximately 6 members of the public

1. Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Jane Oxenford & Daniel Lambert-Gorwyn.
2. Open Forum

Robert Banks read a statement on behalf of David Ablitt, a long-term resident who lives very close to the property referred to in Item 3 on the agenda: he is concerned about the impact on the AONB and neighbouring properties. It shouldn't become a lorry park, and he invited the council to object. There is no screening from the road and there is limited permission in place so if they want to create a major lorry park, it needs to go elsewhere. He feels it is an eyesore and he asked the council to consider his comments.

Jamie Croft then spoke to say that the business had been present on the site since the 1950's, and that today's lorries are larger but there is not a greater number. The workshop replaces several other buildings and is now better insulated and made of better materials – the footprint size has only increased by 10%. It may look different because the apex has been turned for easier access from the road.

Stanley Quinn informed the meeting that not having the new workshop and larger barn could also impact other businesses around the village, for example his forestry trade, as it is used for maintenance on their lorries.

The Clerk then read comments that had been submitted by another resident who couldn't attend the meeting (attached as an appendix) and Cllr Lambert-Gorwyn who felt the new building was tidier and being better insulated was an improvement both

environmentally and in reducing noise. He wished to support a local business providing employment in difficult times.

3. The Chairman then moved to the next item, to discuss the following planning application:

RR/2022/1796/P located at: 4, Riverhouses, Battle Road, Brightling TN32 5JB

The Proposal: Erection of HGV and motor vehicle service and repair building (Retrospective.)

Cllr Coleman asked members present for their comments: Cllr Petty (JP) said that considering it as if it was a new application, she felt that they should support a local business. It is an improvement on what was there before. However, there should be no external lighting to protect dark skies and the colour of the roof should blend in better with the surroundings; Cllr Mower (DM) said that overall she agreed with Cllr Petty's comments, but would add that there should be additional planting to screen it from the road; Cllr Wedmore (AW) said that in his opinion villages work best with a mix of residential/business/old/young etc. and protecting the AONB, businesses need to survive. However, that does require businesses to be considerate of residents also. People often struggle with retrospective applications, but that is a procedural issue. Considering the application that has arisen now, albeit retrospectively, the building is quite visible, not helped by the reflective nature of the roof. He echoed calls for conditions of additional screening and no external lighting.

Cllr Croft had previously declared a personal interest and therefore did not comment.

Cllr Coleman then summarised and proposed the following comments be submitted on behalf of the Parish Council:

Brightling Parish Council does not object to the application, but the impact of the building should be mitigated by further planting, a change of roof colour and a condition of no external lighting to protect 'dark skies'. Cllr Petty seconded this proposal, and all members were in favour. The clerk was asked to submit comments online before the deadline of 16th August.

4. To discuss the proposed TPO's at Wood's Corner, Dallington.

Cllr Wedmore provide some background on the matter: Dallington Parish Council had asked for support of their request for some temporary Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's) to be made permanent, on the boundary of the two parishes. Cllr Wedmore had written in a personal capacity and feels strongly that mature trees are irreplaceable – no amount of new planting will replace a mature tree.

After further discussion, Cllr Coleman proposed a motion to support Dallington Parish Council's request with the addition of Cllr Wedmore's comments. AW seconded the motion, and all members were in favour. The clerk was asked to write to the appropriate authorities.

5. Cllr Barnes reported on a recent planning decision (RR/2022/840/P) at Sedlescombe.

There were some troubling issues surrounding the application which is not identified on the Neighbourhood Plan. The application for a barn-like building is on land owned by the chairman of the planning committee, so procedurally the application should have been submitted by somebody else. It is a very awkward situation where members are involved, and the decision should really be referred to a neighbouring council. Burwash PC think there were procedural irregularities and have asked for a stay. However, even more worrying is the over-riding of paragraph 80 E of the NPPF which states that new building in the countryside should only be allowed if it is 'exceptional in design'. This is not a bespoke building – it is a kit house. Cllr Barnes felt that if this decision is allowed to stand, there could be a rash of similar applications as it would set a precedent. He felt it drove a coach and horses through the local plan.

Robert Banks then spoke on the matter, reiterating Cllr Barnes' comments. The conditions of Paragraph 80 (e) such as enhancing the immediate setting and helping to raise design standards etc. have been disregarded. The irregularities of the case are also paramount, and stem from earlier in the year when changes to the planning application process were suggested, and fortunately were refused.

Cllr Kirby-Green said that it was a concern for any parish with green fields - since 1997 only 101 houses in the whole country have been granted permission based on exceptional design, and it certainly wouldn't apply to a kit house.

Cllr Petty said that she was in agreement with all the points made and felt that it does set a very dangerous precedent. She moved to support Burwash PC's letter to Rother DC asking for a stay in the decision.

Cllr Wedmore was concerned that the environmental character of the house had been used to over-ride other elements. He also agreed that a kit house cannot be exceptional. However, Brightling PC doesn't have the resources to do original work and therefore he felt that supporting Burwash PC's letter was the best way forward. He then proposed this as a resolution. Cllr Petty seconded the proposal, and all members were in favour. The clerk was asked to communicate with the neighbouring parishes on the matter to ensure a co-ordinated approach and write to support Burwash parish council's position.

Meeting closed 8.16pm