

BRABOURNE PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council
Held at 7.00pm on Tuesday 8th December 2015
At Brabourne Baptist Church

1. Present

Clr Hickmott (Chairman), Cllr Mrs Tanner, Cllrs Joules and Mayland, and Mrs Wood (Clerk). Twenty-three members of the public attended.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from Cllr Mrs Young and Cllr Spokes (prior commitments) and Cllr Jane Martin and Cllr Howard (ward members).

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

4. Open Session

The meeting was suspended to allow members of the public present to comment on agenda item 5.

It was acknowledged that the application would protect the open space but there were concerns at the involvement of a planning consortium with offices in Manchester and London; the company deals in high-value commercial properties.

It was noted that no reply had been received to an offer from a local resident to buy the field; had this gone through the resident had indicated that a protective covenant would be put in place to keep the area as open space.

The field is unsuitable for the keeping of horses because the ground is waterlogged from autumn to spring. The current arable crops prevent water run-off, but if these are no longer grown then there would be a flood risk to Mountbatten Way; it was noted that the culvert can only just cope with existing water run-off and is in need of maintenance. There would be concomitant damage to the footpaths.

Flooding in Knatchbull Way approx 10 years ago was reported, arising from a lack of maintenance to the drains.

The rationale behind the application was queried; would it lead to the installation of a ménage or floodlighting. [These would both require planning permission.]

Reference was made to a similar application in which additional development was later permitted and, eventually, housing.

Its location outside the village confines could lead to additional development.

Concerns were expressed that the agent is a major property development company, based in Manchester, which specializes in setting up difficult applications for factory development and housing estates. The directors also act as expert witnesses in High Court cases.

Clarification was sought with regard to the role of Miss Jones, cited on the application. It was noted that Miss Jones is named as the agent, being an employee of the aforementioned development company and acting in a professional capacity on behalf of the owner, Mr Johnson.

An objection letter and statement from the Mountbatten Way Residents' Group were circulated, these had also been sent to the Parish Council. The statement noted breaches of adopted Borough Council policies, and the Parish Council was asked to take these into account. The Parish Council was advised that the application will be determined by the Borough Council Planning Committee at the request of the Planning Officer. The Parish Council could speak at the meeting if it so wished; it was noted that the Committee rarely goes against the wishes of the Parish Council or ward members. It was suggested that residents contact the ward members for their support. [Post-meeting note: ward member contact details are: Cllr Jane Martin jane.martin@ashford.gov.uk Cllr Howard william.howard@ashford.gov.uk .] It was suggested that the Residents' Group communication be sent to the ward members.

The site is greenfield and concern was expressed with regard to the government's relaxation on planning guidelines; Prospect Way and Mountbatten Way had been built on farmland, this has given rise to fears that the site would be developed.

The need to protect the village against creeping development was stressed.

The site is unsuitable for horses because grass cannot grow on the waterlogged areas, this may be due to natural springs.

The historic nature of the site was noted.

When planning permission was given for Mountbatten Way, Mr Johnson had sought to develop the rest of the area; however it was thought that a condition had been attached that the remaining fields could not be developed while the land was being farmed by the tenant. [Post-meeting note: clarification will be sought from the Planning Department.]

Speculation as to the future of the site was noted, but reasons to object to the application should be given, eg the soil is unsuitable for horses, the ground retains moisture, notice has not been served on the tenant. The Chairman replied that the required notice had been served on Mr Jeanes, who leases the land from Mr Johnson, but not on the Wanstalls who farm it on his behalf. Cllr Joules advised that they farm on a short-term tenancy and that notice is not, therefore, required.

Lack of detail in the application was noted, eg who would own the animals, who would have responsibility for them and where would these persons live. The Chairman noted that there are other sites where large fields have been divided into paddocks, eg at West Hougham, and that horses are liveried.

The DEFRA recommendation is for 1 horse per 3.5 acres, for horses kept outside year-round, therefore the maximum on the site would be 7. It was noted that this does not take account of the unsuitability of part of the ground on the site.

Concerns were expressed that if the site was unsuitable for animals this may increase the likelihood of development. The Clerk replied that during the ongoing review of the Local Plan for the borough, no potential development sites had been put forward in Brabourne. Sites not included in the new Plan would not be approved for development.

Concerns re increased traffic were raised.

Residents were urged to object individually rather than en bloc.

The number of consultees and the timing of the application were queried, given that that the Parish Council was not scheduled to meet until January and the upcoming Christmas holiday. Wider consultation was suggested, given the number of people who use the Public Rights of Way across the site. The Clerk replied that the consultation period is statutory, but Planning Officers have previously indicated that they will take comments after the close of consultation. Furthermore, neighbourhood consultees are in the remit of the Planning Officer, there are no requirements to notify, eg residents who live within 500m of the application. The Chairman noted that consultees are, in practice, those with a contiguous boundary to the application site.

It was noted that planning permission would not be needed for the grazing of horses, because this is classed as agricultural. 'Keeping' would require planning permission, because of the need for, eg stabling, bringing-in of food. Fencing as described in the application would not need planning permission, its inclusion was questioned.

The Parish Council was asked to request the making of a Direction under Article 4 of the Permitted Development Order removing any rights to carry out inappropriate development.

Information on the Local Plan review was requested. The Clerk replied that the Local Plan for the borough is being updated; as part of this process landowners, agents and developers had been asked to nominate sites they thought would be suitable for development. Any sites thus put forward are being assessed for suitability by the Planning Department and a draft Local Plan will be sent out for consultation in the spring of 2016. No sites in Brabourne had been put forward, however sites may still be put forward until publication of the draft Plan. The new Plan will run to 2030, but developers could object that their proposed sites had not been included.

It was noted that the site could be made suitable for the proposed use but that this would require expenditure on, eg drainage.

The meeting was reconvened.

5. Planning application 15/01501/AS

The Chairman stated that the Parish Council should represent residents' views, and that residents had objected to the application.

Cllr Joules queried the Mountbatten Way Residents' Group's assertion that that fencing would make the footpaths less safe. It was noted that this would depend on the type of fencing put in, eg a 400-500m walk bounded by close-boarded fencing with no escape route would give rise to safety issues.

It was proposed that an objection be made to the application, because of concerns re animal welfare, breaches of Planning Policy and that an archaeological assessment should be carried out because of the site's significance during the Napoleonic Wars.

Resolved:

That the Parish Council objects to the application, because of concerns re animal welfare arising from unsuitability of the site, breaches of Planning Policy and its archaeological significance.

6. Any Other Business

No other business was raised.

7. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Monday, 18th January 2016 at 7.00pm in Brabourne Village Hall.

The meeting closed at 8.10pm.