Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on Thursday 5th February 2015 in the Small Hall of the Village Hall, Gilberths Drive, East Dean, commencing at 6.30 pm.

Councillors present: S Fuller (in the Chair), T Bryant, I Haydock, J Hine, R Page, and J Sargent.

In attendance: District Cllr C Peck (Items C.1093 – C.1101); Mrs K Larkin (Parish Clerk).

There were four members of the public present.

PUBLIC SESSION

Land at the Fridays

Mr T Maxwell commented on the revised plans. Overall the changes had made no difference to the visual amenity or landscape impact of the proposed development. The spread of frontage had actually increased from 60 to 65 meters.

A substantial amount of buffer planting was now shown. The ESCC landscape architect, whilst accepting that the changes had addressed her concerns, now stipulated that for buffer planting to be effective it must be ‘in the public domain’, i.e. not owned by any of the new residents as part of their plots. The surrounding land was in fact all owned by the applicant, which meant that the planting could not be controlled or maintained with any certainty, particularly to the west of the site and along the north side of The Drove. If deciduous, it would only have any effect for half the year, and evergreens would be out of keeping with the natural tree stock in the valley. Any reasonable height would still be ineffective when seen from the vantage point of Went Hill. Moreover, some new tree planting shown along the south side of the Drove might not be within the red line of the site. It would screen the view from the development towards Belle Tout and the coast, and the new residents were unlikely to tolerate this.

The revisions had made no change to the effect of the proposed development on the use of the recreation ground, and Sport England had registered their continued objection.

Regarding traffic management, the applicant had accepted that a 50mph approach speed should be allowed for, but the visibility splays remained inadequate for this, and buffer planting to the South of the entrance to plot 5 (South East corner of the site) would exacerbate the problem. Mrs Jan Smith, a very near neighbour, had made a trenchant objection to the worsened congestion that would be caused.

The SDNPA’s own design officer (Richard Dollamore) had registered his continued objection to the revised plans on a number of design issues.

In discussion, a question was raised as to whether The Drove was strictly part of the Gilbert Estate or was part of a separate title including the Went Field.

SDNPA Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment

Mr Maxwell made the following observations on the sites assessed in East Dean.

Site WE001 (adjacent to the Vicarage) was not rejected outright. The elevated section outside the current housing line was rejected, but the small section adjacent to Gilberths Drive within the current housing line was ‘considered suitable for a small number of dwellings in principle’. However, it was still rejected as ‘the yield is expected to be less
than 5 units’. That expectation was based on the assumption that housing must be ‘low density’ to be in keeping; but this was to ignore existing development such as Churchfields (immediately opposite the church on a very sensitive site), which was a close formation that could be echoed at the Vicarage field. The frontage of the field was actually slightly longer than the frontage of Gore Farm Close (6 houses in the front row) and there was ample room at the Vicarage for more than one row, or some other deeper configuration.

Site WE 003 (the Horse Field/land adjacent to village hall) was rejected due to the relationship of this open space to the Conservation Area. However, use of the small corner section at the North East would not impinge on that at all. A combination of this corner section and the frontage of the vicarage site could very easily yield 10 housing units without crowding.

Finally it should be noted that whereas Site WE 002 (Land at The Fridays) was categorised overall as medium/high sensitivity, the ‘western (upper) part’ was categorised as high sensitivity – more sensitive than the other sites. Thus the SDNPA had already established the principle that each site could be considered in parcels, rather than as a whole.

In discussion, objections were raised to the suggestion that even part of Site WE003 be deemed suitable for development. Apart from its sensitive location, it contained East Dean Pond which was essential as a storm drain keeping the A259 clear of flooding.

**Other objections to development on Land at The Fridays**

It was noted that the great majority of the objections raised against the original plans were unaffected by the revision of the plans, and still stood. These included the fact that the development would not meet the needs of the village but would primarily be a business venture and could even be used in part for holiday lets.

*The Chair closed the Public Session and opened the meeting.*

---

C.1093 **Apologies for absence:** - Cllr D Cooper, Cllr P Hill, and Cllr S Hunt.

C.1094 **Declarations of Interests:** - None.

C.1095 **Approval of the minutes:** - the Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on 8th January 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

C.1096 **LAND AT THE FRIDAYS – REVISED PLANS**

The Chair summarised the current position. Sport England had asked for an independent risk assessment to be undertaken and in the meantime would maintain their original objection. The SDNPA’s own Design Officer had objected that the proposed development was not characteristic of the village setting. The ESCC Landscape Architect had withdrawn her objection, albeit with some criticisms of the landscaping and tree planting. Numerous residents had restated their original objections, which had not been addressed. The Parish Council had objected to the original plans under a number of headings:

1. Site suitability and lack of consideration of other sites
2. Prematurity of the application
3. Extension of the village footprint, impacting on landscape character
4. Unsuitable mix of housing in relation to local needs
5. Adverse impact on recreation ground and its users
6. Highway and road safety issues

The amended plans included more landscaping (point 5), and catered to some extent for the highway and road safety issues (point 6). Members agreed that the landscaping was still unsatisfactory for the reasons given in the Public Session. The planning officer had been notified that some of the planting along the south side of The Drove appeared to be outside the red line, on parish council land. This strip of land was used as a seating area during cricket marches and contained a row of memorial seats. The council would not want to implement the proposed planting on this land.

Members noted that the applicant had now accepted that the approach speed along Gilberts Drive from the south would be 50 mph but this still had not been catered for.

Overall, members were unanimous that the council’s previous objections remained substantially unaddressed, and were critical of the fact that there had been extended discussions between the applicant and the SDNPA from which the parish had been excluded and its needs not assessed. The parish council’s initial response making this point had been ignored as negotiations had continued in private. The point should be made again.

A detailed argument was being mounted by Mr G Johnson that the application constituted a ‘major development’ and that there should therefore be a presumption against allowing it in a National Park. The applicant’s agent had attempted a rebuttal of this argument, and it was noted that the existence of a housing need was a point in the applicant’s favour. However, there was no official definition of what constituted a major development, and the point was unresolved. Members agreed to assert the ‘major’ nature of the application in relation to the scale of East Dean. It would use up the entire housing allocation for the parish in the Local Plan for the whole of the period to 2026, and would do so without meeting local needs. Development to the north of the A259 was not relevant to this discussion.

Three speakers from the parish would attend the SDNPA Planning Committee on 12 March 2015. Representations would be made on behalf of the Parish Council and the Residents’ Association, and a separate technical argument would be mounted in favour of treating the application as a major development.

**It was resolved:**

**C.1096.1** That the council should maintain all its previous objections to the proposed development; should draw attention to the fact that some tree planting appeared to be shown on council land outside the red line of the site; and should support the argument in favour of the application being treated as a major development.

**C.1097 REPORT FROM STANDING COMMITTEE - PLANNING**

a) Members took note of the draft minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 20 January 2014.
b) Members took note of the South Downs National Park Authority’s press release dated 21 January 2015, on the first publication of evidence to be taken into account in the Park’s Local Plan.
c) Members took note of the SDNPA’s Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment report, and in particular that sites WE001 and WE003 were both “Rejected” whereas WE002 “Has Potential”. The points made in the Public Session qualifying the overall judgments made on these sites, and separating them into separate parcels, were also noted.
The Chair suspended Standing Orders to enable Mr Maxwell to ask whether his comments on the SHLAA sites could be included in his future statements on The Fridays planning application. The council would have no objection to this. Standing Orders were re-imposed.

C.1098 URGENT ITEMS, FOR CONSIDERATION BUT NOT DECISION: - None.

C.1099 MOWING THE GREENSWARD TRIANGLE

Members considered the motion that the Greensward triangle should be included in its mowing contract 2015-18. The argument in favour was that the triangle was part of the registered village green, and should be treated equally with the rest. In practice, however, this could not be done without the agreement of the landowner(s), and this condition had not been fulfilled.

It was resolved
C.1099.1 That the Greensward triangle should not be included in the mowing contract without the agreement of the landowner(s).

Members considered a request from the Residents’ Association that the council should pay their contractor £145 for the mowing of the triangle in the previous three years, 2011-14. This would be Section 137 expenditure.

It was resolved:
C.1099.2 To approve the payment of £145 to the Residents’ Association’s contractor for the mowing of the triangle in 2011-14.

C.1100 PAYMENTS AND RECEIPTS

A note of receipts and of payments requested for the month of February had been circulated. The payment of £145 to the RA’s contractor (see above) was added to the list. The total amount of payments requested was £2,307.16. It was noted that the receipts included sponsorship monies for Bonfire 2014, generously donated by Emslie & Tarrant, Climpsons Tree Surgeons, and The Tiger Inn. A generous bequest of £10,000 had been received from the estate of the late Lois Edythe Hurter, which was to be used for the benefit of the village hall.

It was resolved:
C.1100.1 That the payments as detailed be approved and the Clerk be authorised to release the cheques.
C.1100.2 That the receipts as detailed be noted.

C.1101 REPORT OF THE DISTRICT COUNCILLOR

District Cllr C Peck reported on the following matters:

a) Land at The Fridays – the SDNPA committee would probably consider this application at their meeting on 12 March 2015.

b) Upgrading the A27 – a meeting had been held for parishes along the section of route between Lewes and Polegate, but the improvements favoured by the Eastbourne Chamber of Commerce, taking the A27 directly to the Cophall roundabout, had been rejected. Parishes still hoped for relatively modest improvements that would make it easier to turn onto the A27 [See also minute C.1069 (c), December 2014]. Talks were ongoing with the contractor.

c) Wealden District Council – there were no issues locally.

It was resolved:
C.1101.1 That the report of the District Councillor be noted.
C.1102 VILLAGE ACTION PLAN

Members considered an updated list of Actions live at 12 January 2015. It was noted that the delivery of faster broadband (VAP 37) was being delayed longer than expected. It might not be complete until the end of the year. The SDNPA had advised that the erection of flagpoles (VAP 50) would require planning permission, as the whole of the National Park was a ‘controlled area’.

C.1103 REPORT OF THE COUNTY COUNCILLOR: - None.

C.1104 REPORT OF THE CHAIR OF COUNCIL

The Chair reported on the following matters:

a) **Greensward – travellers** - East Dean Greensward Ltd had issued a *Protocol Regarding the Arrival of Travellers or Gypsies on the Greensward*. In the event of any such arrival the council Chair and Clerk would be advised.

b) **Memorial, Grass Cutting, Horsefield** - discussions were ongoing with the Gilbert Estate. The Estate now accepted that the council was the ‘guardian’ of the memorial, but still disputed the handling of insurance arrangements when council contractors entered onto the green to maintain council assets or to mow the grass. The standard rate for the hire of The Horsefield was now £100 per half day.

c) **Bird Scarer** - the Pollution Control Officer and a local farmer had agreed to liaise prior to use of the bird scarer to help determine best practice re location, acoustic screening, and the time and frequency of use. The department could not prohibit the use of such devices at a farm but they could enforce best practice if required.

d) **Church Village Service** - 1 March, 6-7pm. Names to be provided to David Baker if attending

e) **Meetings** – the Chair was attending meetings with the group preparing to speak at The Fridays planning application hearing

f) **Car Park closure for repairs** – Wealden had given notice that they would close half the car park on 19 February for three days to carry out refurbishment, and the other half on 26 February for three days. Members asked whether the refurbishment had anything to do with the provision of low level lighting.

ACTION: SF to enquire.

g) **PCSO Mick Morter** – the PCSO intended to leave in June, and might not be replaced. Members noted this with regret and agreed that special thanks should be sent to PCSO Morter at the time.

It was resolved:

C.1104.1 That the Chair’s report be noted.

C.1105 REPORTS FROM STANDING COMMITTEE

See minute C.1097 above for the report from the Planning Committee.

a) **Rights of Way**

Members reported on the following matters:

(i) **Private Memorial at Friston Pond** – a bouquet of flowers had appeared at the unauthorised memorial site and should be removed. A relative had affixed the memorial plaque to the tree as requested, but had not removed other items. **ACTION: request PH to deal on his return.**

(ii) **New fingerpost contractor** – a replacement was still needed for Mr Franklin. **ACTION: TB to supply contact details of a possible successor to PH.** A commercial contractor would otherwise be required.

It was resolved:

C.1105.1 That the Rights of Way report be noted and action taken as discussed.
C.1106 REPORTS FROM LEAD COUNCILLORS

a) Finance & General Purposes

(i) The Lead Member reported that at the end of January receipts in the current financial year amounted to £64,099; and payments to £46,443; and the balance in hand was £37,016. Receipts included a bequest of £10,000 for the upkeep of the village hall. The council must consider how best to record/deal with this sum before the financial year-end. Cllr Fuller declared a personal interest in his capacity as Treasurer of the Village Hall Trust. The Clerk had written to Heringtons LLP asking for the exact wording of the bequest. **ACTION: KL to speak to the solicitor to find out more about the scope of the bequest.** A report should be brought to the March meeting.

(ii) **Precept** - Parliament had confirmed that there was no intention for Town or Parish Councils to be subject to a referendum in cases of increases in the precept (i.e. no change from the current position).

(iii) **Website** - average of around 26 sessions per day; viewing 72 pages per day. The Village Hall website was now live and the Club/Society page on the council website had been withdrawn; the information was on the new Village Hall site. There were now 492 members on the council’s email register; this could be used infrequently for VH items pending a review of the VHT’s own needs. It was agreed that no names should be transferred without the specific approval of the individual.

(iv) **Clerk’s review** - the PC was asked to note the terms and condition for the clerk, and to note that the salary was in line with NALC rates which increased by 2.2% effective from January 2015. **The Clerk withdrew from the meeting.** In discussion it was agreed that the Clerk should receive the 2.2% increase. It was also agreed that the council should have a dedicated phone line, instead of sharing the Clerk’s personal line as at present. **ACTION: KL to organise a new line.** The Clerk was summoned back to the meeting and was informed of these decisions. The Chair on behalf of the council thanked the Clerk for her work, which was of a good standard.

It was resolved:

C.1106.1 That the Finance & General Purposes report be noted.

C.1106.2 That a 2.2% pay increase be given to the Clerk with effect from 01 January 2015 in accordance with the NALC scale (SP 27).

b) Recreation Ground

The Lead Member reported that there had been no recent changes.

c) Village Events

(i) **Bonfire 2015** - Cllr Bryant reported that Frontier Fireworks would only be available to do the East Dean bonfire on 5th November 2015. This point would be covered in the report on Bonfire that would be brought to the March meeting. In the meantime, the Clerk should check that the date of 5th November was kept open. **ACTION: KL.**

(ii) **Annual Village Meeting 2015** – the Chair outlined the provisional arrangements for a meeting which should open for browsing of stands etc. at 6.00 pm and commence formal business at 7.00 pm, with a projected finish at 9.00 pm. A provisional timetable had been drawn up for the organisation. The suggested theme was ‘Election Year – All Change’. The council should have an opportunity to report on its term of office, including the accounts for the year just ended, as well as inviting ideas for the next term of office. A paper would be brought to the March meeting. **ACTION: SF/KL.**

It was resolved:

C.1106.3 That the Village Events report be noted and action taken as discussed.
C.1107 CLERK’S REPORTS

a) Clerk’s progress report - a progress report had been circulated, and the following matters were noted/discussed:

(i) **Verge cutting** – the whole verge at The Fridays was apparently being cut by ESCC Highways, even though only part of it was highway verge and the rest was WDC land. This could simplify the parish’s bid to take over this part of the mowing service.

(ii) **Footpath 25** – it was actually the lower end of the twitten (the part furthest from the highway) that was being cut by ESCC Highways. When requests were made to ESCC Rights of Way to do strimming and hedge cutting in FP 25, they too cut the lower section. No one routinely took responsibility for the upper section, which only got attention when the parish complained. This was one of a number of issues to be raised at the next SLR meeting, and must be resolved in the reallocation of verge cutting etc.

(iii) **Downlands maintenance charges** – research showed that whereas solicitors used to contact the council on a change of shop owner, to ensure that the maintenance covenant was passed on, there may have been recent cases where this had not happened. However, the covenant still applied.

(iv) **Bonfire sponsorship** – the great majority of donations had been paid. Cllr Bryant would contact the remaining sponsors. **ACTION: TB.**

b) Correspondence report – a report on communications/correspondence sent to the Clerk on behalf of the Council had been circulated. The following matters were discussed:

(i) **ESCC Rights of Way stakeholder events** - the council had been invited to send representatives to these events in February and March. The ROW committee would organise this at their next meeting on 24 February 2015.

(ii) **Residents’ Association** – the council had been invited to take a stall at the Village Fete 2015 at a cost of £10 per pitch, as before. It was agreed to take a pitch. Cllr Sargent would run the stall with at least one helper. **ACTION: JS/KL.**

It was resolved:

C.1107.1 That the Clerk’s reports be noted and action taken as discussed.

C.1108 Date of next meeting: - Thursday 5th March 2015 at 6.30 pm in the Village Hall.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.07 pm.

Signed................................................................. (Chair) Date.................................................................