

MINUTES OF THE BALCOMBE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING (BPC) HELD IN BRAMBLE HALL ON WEDNESDAY 4th October 2023

Present: Cllrs Alison Stevenson - Chairman (AS), Lloyd Thompsett (LT), Nicky Gould (NG), Paul Williams (PW), Manouchehr Nahvi (MN), Nick Major (NM), Nick Beecroft (NB), Jo Blundell (JB), and Helen Caudrey (HC), Massi Smith (MS). Ian Black (IB) – Co-opted Councillor.

746. Declarations of personal or pecuniary interest in any agenda item listed

Cllrs MS & IB declared a Personal interest in item 8, planning application for Stumble Cottage - DM/23/0657.

Cllr NB declared a personal interest in item 8, planning application for Robin Shaw.

747. To approve the Minutes of the Meeting held on 6th September 2023

The minutes were agreed as a true reflection of the meeting. They were then signed by the chairman.

748. Chairman's Announcements

AS on behalf of BPC wanted to pay tribute to former Parish Councillor and Balcombe Resident Rodney Saunders who sadly passed away on Sunday 1st October. Rodney served on the PC for eight years, the last four as Vice-Chairman. Rodney contributed and helped to progress various projects that resulted in better parking in Newlands, a reduced speed limit to the north of the village and in part the Neighbourhood plan. Latterly he was involved in plans to improve the village center. He dedicated hours of his time to managing the PCs response to the oil issues in 2015/6. His contribution was considerable and his personality enormous. We will remember him with much fondness and gratitude and will miss him very much.

749. Matters currently being pursued, report from the Clerk

Re-Power Balcombe granted BPC £5000 towards the upgrade of 16 lampposts including remaining lanterns to be upgraded on the Haywards Heath Road, Oldlands Avenue and Stumble Mead. This will be placed on the November agenda for BPC to agree to fund the remaining works in order to instruct the contractor to proceed with the associated works.

750. Updates on Planning applications:

Number	Site/Address	Proposal	Decision/ Decision Date
DM/23/1978	New Barns, Brantridge Lane	Conversion of existing Barn to form single 4 no. bedroom residential dwelling with associated parking provision and landscaping.	Permission granted: 20 th September 23
DM/23/1980	Rose Cottage, Haywards Heath Road	Proposed side extension, loft conversion with rear dormer and front and side roof light windows. Removal of existing chimney and installation of new flue.	Permission granted: 18 th September 23
DM/23/1761	Pemby, Oldlands Avenue	Single storey rear extension, garage conversion and partial infill under open porch.	Permission granted: 27 th Sept 2023

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751. Planning - to consider the following applications:

Number	Site/Address	Proposal	Assigned
DM/23/0657	Stumble Cottage, Oldlands Avenue, RH17 6LY	Two storey side extension, new porch to front elevation, demolition of existing garage and erection of new garage. Amended plans received 18.08.2023 and 06.09.2023 showing revisions to porch and fenestration.	NG
<p>BPC does not object to the planning application. Although BPC appreciate the conservation officer's comments, they note that there are already a varied variety of property styles (with wood cladding) in the road. The current property lacks character and BPC feel that the proposed changes will enhance the property aesthetically.</p>			
DM/23/2158 (*Note-This was called in by District Councillors G. Marsh & J. Edwards – no updates received to date)	Robin Shaw & Wayside House, Haywards Heath Road, RH17 6NJ	Proposed erection of four dwellings, two semi-detached and two detached properties as well as 6 parking spaces and a single-storey garage structure to the existing house at Upper Stumble. The two semi-detached properties will replace the bungalow at "Robin Shaw" and an upgraded access created to the two new detached properties to the land at the rear (west).	JB
<p>Balcombe Parish Council discussed planning application DM/23/2158 on October 4th. They have a number of fundamental concerns about the application and BPC's view would be that it should not proceed on the basis of the plans submitted. BPC strongly object to the elements of this application outside the built-up area, to housing mix and to the development of areas beyond the defined boundary for unnecessary houses. There are 2 issues for discussion in this application. Firstly, the suitability of the site for housing development and secondly the type of development which would be acceptable should the site be deemed acceptable.</p> <p>Site Acceptability: The proposal includes land within the defined, built-up area of Balcombe and land outside the defined built-up boundary. The property at Robin Shaw and its existing garden lies within the built-up boundary whilst the recently constructed property permitted under DM/16/3979 lies outside the built-up boundary.</p> <p>Within the built-up boundary - The application to demolish the bungalow at Robin Shaw and its replacement with 2 semi-detached homes (Houses A & B) is in accordance with planning policy for the built-up area and the Parish Council would consider the principle for its replacement favourably should it come forward as a standalone application.</p> <p>However, the application for replacement of the property Robin Shaw is currently included in this application and so we must also reject it. We would also note that the current proposal for Houses A & B does not provide adequate parking and standalone application would need to address that.</p> <p>Outside the built-up boundary - The proposed new dwelling (House C) lies partly in the garden of Robin Shaw and partly outside the built-up boundary. Part of its proposed garden and its parking lie outside the boundary. House D lies entirely outside the built-up boundary.</p> <p>The built-up boundary was remade in 2016 by the adopted Balcombe Neighbourhood Plan (NP) which saw the addition of 3 allocated development sites. Development outside the boundary is subject to countryside planning restrictions in DP 15 of the District Plan (DP). This site however is contiguous with the built-up boundary and, at less than 10 houses, conforms to the requirement of</p>			

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DP6 for contiguous development. However, this policy is altered by the requirements of DP 16 – AONB whereby development must ‘support the economy and social well-being of the AONB’ and that is, ‘compatible with the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty’, of the AONB. The designation of the AONB gives further protection in the NPPF to conserving landscapes. The Balcombe NP determined need in the village as smaller affordable housing. (Housing needs survey 2014 data and housing register). As such the NP has sought to bring forward sufficient development to meet the affordable need in the village as set out in the documentation supporting the NP.

The priority as set out in the Neighbourhood Development Plan (Policy 3) is that no more than 25% of new housing developments in the village should be 4 bedrooms or more. This has been met by the existing developments in Barn Field and Rectory Gardens. Our priority for future developments are for 3 beds, 1-2 bed and affordable rental properties to meet the needs of families and older adults looking to downsize from family sized homes.

The 3 sites adopted in the 2016 NP were chosen from a set of 21 sites put forward in the parish. These were measured against a set of sustainability criteria. The land at Wayside/ Robin Shaw was not put forward for that assessment. However, given the poor highway access to the site, the proximity to ancient woodland and its inability to contribute significantly to the provision of affordable housing, it is unlikely that this site would have been chosen over those adopted. If it had it would be subject to a policy allocation in Policy 2 of the NP and to the housing mix in Policy 3 of the NP. Indeed, it still is subject to Policy 3 on housing mix.

Being outside the built-up area new dwellings would need to demonstrate that they contribute to the economy and social wellbeing in the AONB and that that need cannot be provided outside the designated area. We argue that the development of 2 additional larger properties on this site does not provide for an established need and should not be allowed. Precedent is an important point. The allowance in DP 6 for development contiguous with the built-up boundary is one which should be resisted in the AONB, especially where the need has been met through a Neighbourhood Plan and where the site would not contribute to the defined need. Put simply every owner of land adjacent to the built-up boundary in Balcombe could put forward a small site of large executive homes but that would change the character and setting of the village for the enrichment of the landowners not for the benefit of the community. This is desire not need. Should such a precedent be set then the cumulative effect of the policy constitutes major development which is prohibited in the NPPF.

Acceptability of the current proposal:

To address the acceptability of the proposal regardless of our objection to the proposal.

Housing Mix -This application does not conform to Policy 3 and does not contribute smaller housing in Balcombe. The DP has no policy contrary to Policy 3 in the NP and so Policy 3 of the NP is entirely applicable to this site.

Furthermore, any affordable housing arising must be provided in the Parish (or at least within the AONB) where the need arises, not elsewhere in the district and not outside the AONB. This is to comply with policies on AONB development in the NPPF. Commuted sums for affordable provision is not an acceptable mechanism on this site as it is unlikely that provision could be made within the Parish.

Highway and Access -Access to the site appears to be too restricted, particularly for emergency and refuse vehicles as noted by the Local Highways Authority. We would not support any proposal to widen the access road due to the adverse impact on Wayside House and other neighbouring properties. Visibility splays would be difficult to provide given that the hedge to the south of the road entrance belongs to the adjacent property.

Parking - There is insufficient parking provided in the current proposal.

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Disturbance -The development of land to the rear of houses on Haywards Heath Road will cause significant disruption to neighbouring properties and increase the density in an area of the village where residents value a peaceful, rural environment. These concerns are reflected in the objections made by residents. In the Neighbourhood Plan, we were careful to select development sites that balanced need whilst maintaining the character of Balcombe as a rural village. We do not believe that this development contributes to that or is required.			
DM/23/2447	Abercorn, Stockcroft Road, RH17 6LL	Trees in a Conservation Area 1 x Lime - Reduce height by 3m, 1 x Yew - Light trim, 1 x Goat Willow - reduce by 3m.	All
BPC do not object to the reduction of height proposed to all trees listed in the application.			

752. **To receive an update from working groups:**

Recreation, play, youth, halls – Cllrs LT is awaiting an update with regards to the playground refurbishments.

Neighbourhood Plan – no updates

Planning & New Development – as above for planning application DM/23/2158.

Transport – Cllr NG is awaiting a quote to install 2x posts to mount a Speed Indicator Device to. A working group traffic meeting is to be scheduled.

Cllr HC updated the councillors that WSCC have confirmed a CCTV Survey and Jetting on the Haywards Heath Road to be carried out hopefully on 18th October.

Energy – A grant for £5000 has been provided by Re-Power Balcombe to fund associated remedial works to convert a further 16 lampposts to LEDs.

No further update received with regards FFBRA's legal case held at the High Court in July.

Admin and Assurance – no updates received.

753. **Financial**

a) **To approve Septembers Cashbook and Receipts.**

September's cashbook receipts and payments were approved. Expenditures included: Window wise £2155 for Bramble Hall Windows.

754. **Notice of conclusion of external Audit – Financial Year 2022-2023.**

It was noted that the Audit was completed.

Comments raised by the Auditor were: "In the year the council identified that the sports pavilion shown on its fixed asset register was owned by the district council and not the parish council and removed it from its register. As this was also the case in the prior year, the comparative figure in box 9 should have also been restated. As this was a correction of an historic figure, we are not concerned that this could have any future impact. Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority: The Council's name was not entered on section 2 of the Annual Return on the initial submission. We consider the omission to be trivial, however, the Parish Council should take care to ensure the form is fully completed in the future to ensure full compliance with the regulations and code of practice. Incomplete information was received with regards to reserves breakdown between general and earmarked for the purposes of our testing. The Council should in future ensure that amounts are scheduled in their entirety. On the initial submission of Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return there was a typographical error contained within Box 3 prior year's audited figures into the 2022 column on this year's Accounting Statements (Section) as the figure should have read £16,411 but it stated £16,471. This was later corrected and resubmitted to us in which we have no further concerns in this area."

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755. **To review all Balcombe Parish Council Policies.**

The Councillors opted to postpone this until the November meeting; to enable all Councillors to read the policies and documents. It was suggested that the policies be allocated to councillors to lead on.

756. **To receive an update on allocated Section 106 monies.**

Cllr LT shared a spreadsheet obtained from Mid Sussex and provided an update on S106 money from the Barnfield and Rectory Gardens Developments.

757. **Correspondence**

Information was shared with Cllrs in advance of the meeting. No additional topics were discussed.

758. **Exchange of Information.**

Cllr NG to meet with the Clerk and a representative from Clarion Housing to attempt to discuss the issue with the permissive path through Barn Meadow.

Cllr NM noted that although the Mineral Spring boardwalk appears to be open and Completed there is still a barrier on the London Roadside. He has sent an email to WSCC and is awaiting a response.

The meeting was closed by the Chairman at 10.10pm

**THE NEXT REGULAR MEETING OF THE COUNCIL WILL BE Wednesday 1st November
2023 – at 8:00pm – Bramble Hall**