

**MINUTES OF A PLANNING MEETING OF BRENCHLEY PARISH COUNCIL ON TUESDAY 18th
APRIL 2017 IN MATFIELD PAVILION AT 7.30pm**

Present

Chairman C Woodley presided, Vice Chairman R Wickham, Cllrs J Grant, D Batty, A deGuingand, Mrs G Warner, Mrs L Butler, Mrs N Marriott, Borough Cllr A McDermott, Clerk M Powell, C Brooks, 17 members of the public, Mr E Newman of Rydon Homes Ltd

No Item

1 To accept apologies for absence

None

2 To approve Minutes of the last meeting

2.1 Approve minutes of the full meeting of 3rd April 2017

Resolved: - To accept the minutes as accurate. The Chairman then duly signed them.

3 To record declaration of interests on any item on the Agenda

Members were reminded that if any have a *prejudicial* interest in an agenda item, this should be declared at the start of the meeting.

Personal interests could be declared at this point or, alternatively, could be declared at the time a specific item is being discussed if that member wishes to speak on the item in which s/he has a personal interest. In case of doubt about such an interest Councillors have been advised to contact the Monitoring

4 To adjourn to allow public participation- questions and comments

Various members of the public spoke in opposition to item 5.1. It was noted that the site was outside the LBD and the PC was asked if a Section 106 agreement had been discussed to ensure that the affordable homes proposed were offered to local people in the first instance. Concerns were also raised about possible flooding due to an impermeable layer below the surface and the attenuation pond filling faster than potential runoff. Lack of parking was a substantial issue as was the lack of a footpath to allow access from the site to the local businesses in Maidstone Road without crossing this busy road at least twice. Mr Newman gave some responses to these questions, in particular that Rydon usually provided a contribution for S106 arrangements of around £7000/ unit. Beyond the westerly tree line was an ecological area to address the issues of preserving indigenous wildlife and a management company would maintain that land in perpetuity.

It was also requested by a resident that planning applications would serve the community better if they could be advertised both on the web site and BandM News,

5 To consider the following planning application.

5.1 **17/01142** Land between Long Leas and Pear Tree Cottage, Maidstone Road Matfield

Erection of **20 No. dwellings** consisting of two 1 bedroom apartments, seven 2 bedroom apartments & houses, six 3 bedroom houses, five 4 bedroom houses and associated development.

Cllr Mrs Marriott as Chair of the planning sub-committee gave a detailed summary to the thinking behind the recommendation. The site had some merit with some development being required in the parish, but there were failings in the proposal, which needed to be addressed first.

Resolved: - To recommend refusal on the following grounds: -

1. The site is outside the Limits to Built Development and is within the AONB.
2. There are serious Highways considerations pertaining to the site. In pre-application advice, Margaret Parker of Kent Highways advised the applicant that "great weight [is placed] on the provision of suitable pedestrian facilities to link the site with existing facilities". She further commented that "Of perhaps greater significance, is the possible difficulty of linking with existing footways on the northern side of Matfield (sic) Road due to possible land constraints" and she

considered that, given the size of the development, linking to the southern side of the road would not “alone be an acceptable solution”. The applicant’s proposed solution of linking the site by a crossing to the southern side cannot in any way be considered acceptable; the footway on the southern side would require the removal of the verge (loss of rural character) and the leveling of the pavement, which is difficult because the boundary of the adjoining land is a high hedge.

Much more significant, this proposal would necessitate residents crossing Maidstone Road at a point just inside the 30mph restriction where the applicant’s own traffic survey recorded average speeds of 39mph. They would then have to cross the wide and busy Brenchley Road at the Standings Cross junction before crossing back again to access the butcher’s shop and two of the pubs. The applicants consider this preferable to creating a northern footway because there are problems with the hedge outside Pear Tree Cottages and the car park for the Poet pub. The current proposals therefore fail the Highways Authority’s test of sustainability as Mrs Parker’s letter stated that “in a village setting such as this we do expect development to ensure that short journeys can be safely made on foot.”

The Parish Council does not consider that the current proposal is acceptable in terms of road safety or sustainability

3. The recent Settlements Role and Functions Survey (SRFS) placed Matfield in the category of lower scoring settlements. Whilst it is appreciated that the SRFS is subject to further detailed consideration and possible revision, the findings are relevant to this application. The village has lost its convenience store since the SRFS was completed and the part-time post office will have to be rehoused. The hairdresser’s premises are the subject of a yet to be determined application for conversion to residential use. The primary school is in Brenchley and Mascalls School is in Paddock Wood. The applicant’s Traffic Survey suggests that both are accessible on foot or by bicycle. There are no footways between the site and either school and neither would be considered safe to cycle to, particularly during peak hours. In reality, most journeys from the site will be undertaken by car, leading to an increase in traffic movements within a short distance of an already busy crossroads.
4. Whilst the mix of smaller units is to be welcomed, there has not been a recent survey assessing the need for affordable housing within the parish.
5. The recently completed Parish Plan Survey (PPS) showed that the majority of residents taking part in the survey did not wish to see estate development, preferring to see developments of no more than 2-4 dwellings, totaling no more than 10 p.a. in Brenchley Parish as a whole. At twenty dwellings, this site does not comply with those wishes and, in any event, is too large to be considered sustainable in this location.
6. There are concerns about the adequacy of the parking facilities on site. Contrary to the pre-application advice from Kent Highways, there is tandem parking and there are concerns about the number of unallocated parking spaces being adequate to prevent overspill parking on Maidstone Road.
7. The recently completed Borough Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) stresses the importance of the essentially rural, working agricultural character of the Matfield and Brenchley Fruit Belt and the limiting of linear development. The development would infill one of the open spaces along the Maidstone Road. The LCA also points out the value of the dark skies over this area and the need to restrict incremental development that could impact on this asset. In a development of this size, light pollution could put this at risk.

8. The majority of existing housing around the proposed site is single storey. The proposed new buildings within the site are intended to be two storey and are therefore out of keeping with their surroundings and will have an undue prominence on this slightly rising site.
9. There are no firm proposals for Section 106 and / or CIL matters: the planning statement simply states that "consideration will be given to such matters" without any firm commitment to put such matters in place. As such the Council cannot take a view on the appropriateness (or otherwise) of such matters and any wider community improvements which may result.

If, however, the Borough were minded to grant permission for the proposal notwithstanding the foregoing, the Council would wish to see fewer four-bedroom dwellings and would wish to see conditions imposed:-

- a) To secure a proper and safe means of pedestrian access to the remaining facilities of the village
- b) To extend the 30mph limit beyond Coppers Lane to attempt to control the speed of vehicles travelling past the site
- c) To control of lighting in and around the site to prevent light pollution
- d) To ensure maintenance of the ecology site, the boundary hedges and the landscaped areas within the site, including safe fencing of the attenuation basin
- e) To ensure the proper provision of parking within the site to prevent overspill parking on Maidstone Road
- f) To ensure that housing designated as affordable/being in shared ownership are retained as such for the use of people connected to Brenchley Parish
- g) To ensure that Section 106 and / or CIL obligations are appropriate and provide meaningful community improvements
- h) To ensure that concerns expressed by the Environment Agency regarding the impervious layer that appears to cause local flooding. Any necessary further surveys should be undertaken to check the depth of the impervious layer and thus ensure that the appropriate depth of soakaway is used and the risk of contamination of the regional aquifer is eliminated
- i) To ensure that the existing ditches bordering the site are maintained and continue in service in view of concerns regarding flooding expressed by residents at the Parish Council's meeting to discuss the application

6 To receive items for information

6.1 Decisions by TWBC

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|-------------|-----------------|---|
| 6.11 | 17/00568 | Walters Farm High Street Brenchley Installation of 3 Velux conservation roof windows to first floor accommodation
<i>Recommendation-Approval. Decision-Approval</i> |
| 6.12 | 17/00274 | 9 Church Close Brenchley
Single storey rear extension
<i>Recommendation-Approval. Decision-Approval</i> |
| 6.13 | 17/00370 | Land and garages, Birch Close, Matfield
2 No. homes with 11 parking spaces, following demolition of existing garage block
<i>Recommendation-Approval. Decision-Approval</i> |

7 Decisions Required

7.1 Co-opting a new Councillor

A proposed process for the selection of prospective candidates to replace Ian McEwen has been circulated and needs agreement.

Agreed: - that the process as detailed should be used with the ballot being held in private.

7.2 Parish Plan

Consideration was given to the way forward. There had been insufficient volunteers from the meeting of the 25th to form a working team to create a plan. The matter could be raised again at the APM in May.

7.3 Neighbourhood Plan

Consideration was given to the appropriateness of the creation of a neighbourhood plan. Concerns were raised about taking on additional work and the costs involved. It was generally thought that it would be necessary to employ consultants and Cllr Batty agreed to investigate possible companies and approximate costs. It was agreed to delay a decision on this matter until more research had been carried out.

8 Date of next meeting

Monday 8th May at 7.30pm