

East Chiltington Parish Council

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Minutes of the planning and environment committee of **East Chiltington Parish Council**
held on Wednesday 6th June 2017 at 8.00 pm in East Chiltington Church

In attendance: C. Funnell (CF), E. Harrison (EH), M. Symes (Chair) (MS), R. Nurse (RN), J. Smith (JS)
and 6 members of the public.

1 To nominate person to take minutes in the absence of the clerk (who was on leave)

MS nominated CF to take minutes. CF took no further part in discussions.

2. Declarations of interest - None

3. Apologies for absence - None

4. Questions from the public

The Chair asked for questions from the public, reminding them to keep these brief – to around 3-4 minutes.

The applicant, Mr Vaisey, read a statement about the history of the site and the proposal and in response to objections. After 15 mins he was asked to step down, which he found unacceptable. Chair explained that he had had far more than the time allocated at the start. The statement to the point at which Mr Vaisey was asked to stop speaking is appended (appendix 1).

Mrs Vaisey read a statement, which is also appended (appendix 2).

A resident reiterated his views, already submitted to SDNP. He stated that he was not opposed to holiday lets *per se*, merely the size and scale of the proposal.

A resident urged the parish council to contact local farmers to assess whether the barn was in fact redundant. LV countered that it was deemed redundant by ECPC last year and that nothing has changed.

A resident stated that the footprint of the development, whilst smaller in area to that of the barn, was actually considerably larger if the courtyard were to be included in this calculation.

A resident wished to draw the PC's attention to the increase in traffic on an unregulated road and said that her safety and that of her animals had been compromised on several occasions.

LV stressed the significance of the PC comments on the previous application. EH explained that this was a new application and a different PEC, therefore would be assessed on its merits. It was later clarified that in fact this is a resubmission of the previous application.

JS reiterated that as a new PC member he would be focusing primarily on the current application.

5. To consider the P.C response to following planning application:

SDNP/17/02217/FUL Unit 1 Wootton Farm Novington Lane East Chiltington. Proposed demolition of existing agricultural building, surrender of open storage yard B8 use and construction of holiday let units

RN proposed to start with issue around traffic because this had been raised by many objectors. EH reported that she had made enquiries of ESCC Highways and had been advised that the calculations of traffic movements for a holiday let complex of this size would be around 20 movements per day. As this presumed full occupancy across the year and such a situation would be unlikely, then the actual movements would be fewer. EH was informed by the Highways officer that this would not be considered sufficient for Highways to object, especially as traffic movements were also unlikely to be at peak times of day.

There was a discussion of speed humps but no decision was made in relation to this. The track is owned and predominantly maintained by the owners of Wootton Farm.

There was discussion of whether or not the proposal meets current planning policy. There was general agreement that a principle of holiday lets within the SDNP and close to the South Downs Way would be

supported by the planning authority. It was also noted that there could be some positive effects on local businesses and benefits from employment in a rural area.

There was a discussion on size and design of the building. EH pointed out that size and design were the main reason for objection to the earlier submission. She noted to that in terms of numbers of bedrooms and parking spaces, this application is the same as the earlier submission. In this proposal, the building is significantly lower than the previous submission, though still higher than the existing barn. In her view, the C shaped design is an improvement. She noted that the calculation of the footprint is based on the built structure. However, if the inner part of the C is taken into account, this is larger than the existing barn. MS said that this proposal is close to the track and tithe barn.

EH noted that the owners of the tithe barn have not objected (as they are the applicants). Nonetheless, agreed that the proposed building is rather close to the tithe barn.

RN agreed that the proposal is lower than the previous submission. He noted the size of the proposed windows, especially on the south side. There was general agreement that there will be a problem with such windows facing and overlooking the windows of another property.

There was a discussion that one could infer from the application that this may be used as a venue for large family gatherings and celebrations. Councillors were in agreement that the design lends itself to attracting large groups of people. They noted that the fact that the bedroom number has not been reduced contributes to this, as does the size of some of the rooms. EH suggested that the additional noise and possible light pollution this could cause was undesirable. It was noted that no curfew or restriction of use of the holiday lets is proposed. JS commented that he had initially envisaged such a proposal attracting walkers and cyclists who would have less of an environmental impact. However, he had concerns about the current design leading to a different use. Issues of noise, light pollution and the loss of privacy for adjacent dwellings were key concerns.

EH explained that some residents had raised concerns with regard to disabled access in their responses to SDNP planning. MS had phoned the planning officer and it was agreed that this would be picked up under building regulations in due process.

The issue of the redundant barn was raised. Would planning subsequently be sought for new storage if this storage facility were to be removed? The meeting adjourned to ask the applicants about this. They confirmed that the barn was currently used for storing some vehicles, including occasionally tractors. They stated that no further storage was required. A resident reiterated his position that the views of neighbouring farmers concerning redundancy should be sought.

Meeting resumed.

EH raised issue of creeping development, as noted by some objectors, and queried whether a whole site plan might be considered appropriate by SDNP given the number of separate applications that have been presented over the years. MS or EH will approach SDNP to seek their views on this, though the response to the current proposal will be submitted as agreed.

In summary - council will object to the application principally on grounds of size and design, leading to potential loss of privacy, noise and light pollution. Council will note the various positive elements of the plan and that it is not against the principle of holiday lets. However, the improvements in this resubmission do not outweigh the negative elements.

Meeting closed at 21.11

signed.....Dated.....2017

Appendix 1. Statement read by Mr Vaisey

Notes for submission.

1. Presumption that this meeting has the same form as that of 9 August 2016 attended by Cllr Harrison, Cllr Tingle and Cllr Fleming (Chair).
2. That meeting recognised four main considerations and I quote from the minutes:
 - a) Is the building redundant?
 - b) What are the traffic and road safety implications (a concern raised by all the objectors)?
 - c) Is the size/ design of the building appropriate and in keeping with the site?
 - d) What will be the impact on the local amenity.
3. The committee concluded that:
 - a) The building was redundant
 - b) The current proposal will not result in a significant increase in increased traffic levels, congestion or hazards, noise levels and other environmental considerations.
 - c) The conversion of agricultural buildings into holiday lets in this respect is consistent with local planning policy, which includes the development of the visitor economy, including through the development of accommodation.
 - d) The materials are of a quality, type colour and design which is appropriate to the character of the local area.
 - e) The development does respect the amenities of adjoining properties in terms of noise, privacy, natural daylight and visual amenities and smell.
 - f) The committee felt that the building did not comply with some aspects of policy ST3 of the Lewes district local plan – *The development should respect the overall scale, height, massing, site coverage, density, landscaping, character, rhythm and layout of neighbouring buildings and the local area more generally.*

The above are quotes from the comments made to the SDNP. It presumably follows that this meeting will be considering point (f) as none of the others have changed since the first meeting.

In the light of these concerns the application was withdrawn.

What steps have been taken to address the question of compliance with the perceived deficiency?

Informal discussions were held with the planning officer and the building design has been substantially amended as a result of those discussions, the views of the PC and comments of local residents.

Extracting from the application:

15.5. The previous application for this proposal envisaged a building which was an upturned truncated 'T' in plan form. It had a footprint of 246m² and a maximum ridge height of 8.5m.

15.6. This application envisages a redesigned structure. It would be 'C'-shaped in plan form, and of a reduced footprint extending to some 211m². This is a reduction of some 69m² over the existing building and 35m² over the previous scheme.

15.7. The proposal would have a maximum ridge height of 6.45m. This is a reduction of 2.05m over the previous scheme and is 1m taller than the existing building. It would be set at 106.5m AOD. This is 0.5m higher than the livery building to the north (106m AOD) and 2.5m lower than the tithe barn to the west (109m AOD). The proposed structure substantively sits on the same footprint as the existing building.

15.8. On this basis, it is considered that the overall scale and mass of the proposed building is comparable to the existing. It is of similar height to the livery to the north and much lower than the tithe barn to the west. The building will be of much reduced height, scale and mass in comparison to the previous scheme.

15.9. The design of the building has been significantly amended from the previous submission. It has been simplified in plan form and design. It is now reflective of a barn/stable range typology, with a main north-south element and two subservient projecting wings to the east. The outer walls of these are flush with the outer walls of the gable ends of the main element. The projecting roof canopy and glazed gablet details of the previous scheme has been deleted. 15.10. The scheme continues to envisage external facing materials

comprising a brick plinth and stained timber boarding to all elevations. The pitched roof would be faced with plain tiles.

15.11. It is considered that this amended design and use of external materials are wholly in keeping with a traditional agricultural vernacular, and in particular, the character of the adjacent tithe barn, which is currently the subject of residential conversion. Whilst this presently has a corrugated metal sheet roof, this will be replaced with plain tile as the work on the conversion scheme progresses.

15.12. The proposed development as amended will deliver a built form which is in scale, character, design and materials, wholly in keeping with the wider group of buildings and the character of the National Park.

This concludes my comments on the new proposal but it is essential to comment on statements made by some objectors and to set the record straight and put the application in context. All of the following can be checked.

1. It is unreasonable for an overall development plan to be demanded. Circumstances have changed dramatically over the years, for instance the possibility of using redundant farm buildings for other uses was only facilitated as a result of government legislation in 2012. For Wootton this resulted in the late decision to relocate the current commercial kitchen away from what would become a residential area.
2. The development has seven bedrooms and not eight.
3. The proposed building is not substantially higher and wider than the existing building. It is actually one metre higher than the existing building, actually lower than the tithe barn and 69.2 sq.metres less in area.
4. The building is acknowledged as redundant by the planning officer and ECPC
5. Hay storage has not occurred in this area for a considerable time and there are no proposals for additional farm buildings. There are adequate storage facilities for storage of wedding items. Irrelevant to the current application.
6. Weddings are not held throughout the summer, they are limited by virtue of Class B of part 4 of schedule 2 of the town and country planning act (general permitted development) (England) order 2015. This includes for the purposes of holding weddings. Irrelevant to the current application.
7. There are no licenses as such and the activity at Wootton is confirmed as legitimate by the planning officer. Irrelevant to the current application.
8. This proposal has absolutely nothing to do with weddings. It would be folly to make the investment to service just eight nights of accommodation each year.
9. There has been discussion with the environmental officer at Lewes DC and they have raised no concerns about noise or any other aspect of the wedding business. They have made the comment about this application *“Thank you for consulting me about this application. There is no reason to believe that this development would result in a nuisance to other residents”*
10. There appears to be a concern that the area is overdeveloped. There has been no increase in developed area on the Wootton Estate, in actual fact it has decreased. The same cannot be said for The Grange, Ashingate, Novington Oak, Bowling Green, North Hall, The Jolly Sportsman, Birchington Cottage. In the case of one of these the owner is seeking to extend by 86% of the original built area! The Jolly Sportsman was substantially extended with the express objective of increasing trade including weddings. The Michelin guide quotes that *“The Jolly Sportsman attracts visitors in their droves.”* There were no objections from anyone including ECPC despite the massive increase in traffic movements. In fact the Jolly was endorsed as *“making a sustainable family business”* by ECPC Irrelevant to the current application.
11. Whilst not relevant to the current application the committee should not be misled. Wootton hosted 4 weddings in 2015. 8 in 2016 and is scheduled for 8 this year. There has never been any wedding

with more than 150 guests. Guests do not all travel by car on their own. The idea of 499 cars or people is frankly ridiculous. Most weddings have around 30 to 40 cars parked in an allocated area. Throughout the day there is no noise or disruption. There may be music from around 9pm but the volume is strictly controlled and there is an absolute curfew (put in place by us) for amplified music and the bar at 11.30pm. This has never been breached. Residents at Ashingate and Novington Oak have said they have never experienced a problem with noise.

Appendix 2. Statement read by Mrs Vaisey

I have lived and more importantly made my living at Wootton Farm since 1978. Owned from 1919-1998 by ESCC planning changes during this period were instigated by them and after 1998 by us.

Wootton is not a residential area as claimed it is a working farm which has residencies along its privately owned entrance road, historically occupied by working farmers these are now privately owned by individuals who have chosen to live surrounded by Wootton land and its associated businesses.

The journey in planning terms from an intensive Dairy Farm to farmed land with associated leisure businesses has been an expensive and lengthy one. At times local opposition to this has been hostile and we have been in my view unfairly criticised recently for our supposedly piece-meal approach to planning, however these individuals are in terms of the life of this farm are very recent residents and therefore have little or no knowledge of the journey this farm has made.

Planning policy especially that associated with Agricultural buildings has changed drastically in recent years and governed by their responsibility to outside agencies and their financial supporters. Farmers at times have struggled to keep up, Wootton is no exception to this and the recent application to move the Commercial Kitchen to a more suitable site on the Farm having already gained permission for its extension is a clear example of this.

I have run a Catering Company since 2000, this has been housed at Wootton Farm in the redundant old Dairy since 2005, although irrelevant to this application but for the sake of clarity this building because of its single skinned nature required extensive refurbishment and increased storage facilities and planning was gained in 2014, as it was to have a demonstration area toilet facilities were applied for including showers for Campers which we are still considering as a possible enterprise.

Wootton Farmhouse remains one of the few historic houses in EC not to have been drastically extended, Warningore House, Chappel House, Northhall and what is now the Grange have all been extended beyond recognition. We have provided guest accommodation at Wootton Farmhouse since 2005, we are over-subscribed during Summer months and often pass business on to other B&B's in EC namely Southover Cottage, Willow Cottage and Chappel Farm. This application seeks to satisfy what is an increasing demand to stay in such a beautiful place. Opposition to this Application has sought to associate it with the Weddings that we hold under the 28 Temporary structure rule- this does not make commercial sense – no one and more especially Wootton would make this investment for essentially 8 days a year.

However again for the sake of clarification weddings at Wootton are sympathetically managed along with its environmental responsibilities, Parking, Road use, Noise, and waste are all managed to the required standards, we recycle 80% of the waste associated with the Weddings and Guest accommodation, much of the produce used is produced on the Farm or sourced from local neighbouring Land owners. Wootton is one of the few farms locally that has initiated the new Stewardship scheme planting 6 acres of margin primarily for Bird feed. We have resident Badgers, Geese, Coots, Swallows, Barn Owls and Dragonfly's and all get along quite happily with the ongoing visitors and associated businesses.

Despite the sometimes hostile opposition to its objectives from some in the locality, Wootton has gained important support from outside agencies and this application is again potentially in line to receive further support through Defra sponsorship – subject to extensive scrutiny they clearly consider Wootton to be a worthwhile enterprise and one that provides sustained employment in a staggering rural community, one also that is interested in allowing many visitors to enjoy its beauty and not aspicing it for the selective few.