

Berwick Parish Council

Minutes of the Full Council Meeting of Berwick Parish Council held on Wednesday 15th June 2022 at 7:00pm. This meeting was held in Berwick Village Hall.

22. Present

Cllrs K Winter (Chairman), S Carnie, B Smith, V Burrough and T Mills.

18 members of the public were also in attendance

23. Apologies for absence

There were no apologies for absence.

24. Declarations of Interests

There were no declarations of interests.

The meeting was then suspended.

25. Public Question Time

The Chairman began by reading out the following statement which he said the Parish Council intends to make at the Planning Committee South Meeting on the 16th June 2022. The statement adds to its previously submitted objections in relation to Planning Application WD/2016/1659/MAO (Land at Station Farm, Station Road, Berwick, BN26 6TA - Erection of 33 dwellings, 3 shops and 2 offices and associated works).

'I am representing Berwick Parish Council which strongly objects to this planning application. I understand that Cllr. David Watts has also made representations to the Planning Committee outlining his concern regarding this matter. In addition, there are numerous individual objections from local residents.

The Parish Council has recently completed a parish survey to ascertain the views of the local residents. The results of which have unanimously rejected a development of this nature in the heart of the village. Wealden District Council has completely disregarded the views of both the Parish Council and local residents. The report produced by the Case Officer is entirely selective in its considerations of the evidence presented by statutory bodies and partners. It frequently suggests that they have "no objections" to this application when many, in fact, have outlined detailed conditions, mitigations and recommendations which require further investigation prior to the application being enacted.

Berwick Parish Council would draw to Wealden's attention that this application exceeds the quota outlined in the current local plan for new houses in the village by 13. In addition, there have already been 12 houses built, therefore the Council would expect the planning committee to only grant permission for a further 8. The report itself states, "that the proposed development conflicts with the local plan and should be refused unless material considerations indicate otherwise". It is clear that the presentation of evidence to the Planning Committee is framed to support the plan and assist Wealden District Council with the outstanding issues relating to the lack of a 5 year housing supply.

Flooding remains a very significant concern for the village and for the Planning Officer to describe the LLFA as being in support of the drainage strategy, is disingenuous at best, given that there is no

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published strategy. The report states that there is no detailed ground water monitoring and in filtration tests therefore, final details cannot be confirmed.

The Parish Council have clearly outlined that there is no need for additional commercial space, and yet our report continues to recommend this aspect of the application. This is despite also stating that there is no local plan or policy support in WC56 and core strategy therefore, "this is contrary to the local plan and should be refused".

Berwick Parish Council and the local residents are extremely concerned about sustainability in the area particularly in relation to access to health, education, vital amenities such as shops and recreational facilities. The WCSLP has already determined this to be an unsustainable settlement.

This planning application sites that there is good connectivity to amenities. However, in reality, good connectivity equates to 1 train per hour or the need to be a car driver. Many of the local amenities have no access via public transport such as the local Medical Centre, which is based in Alfriston, or shops and supermarkets in Hailsham.'

Residents approved the statement and suggested a few tweaks.

The meeting was then re-opened.

26. Planning Applications

It was agreed there will be a co-ordinated approach at the meeting. Lord Lloyd will be the first speaker, Councillor Mills will be the second and read the condensed statement and Mr Cooper will speak last and scoop up any outstanding objections.

Lloyd Lord and Mr Cooper's statement will be read jointly and is annexed to these minutes

27. Questions from Parish Councillors

There were no further questions and this meeting closed at 7.25pm

Signed: _____
Chairman

Date: _____

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Appendix 1

DRAFT NOTES to SPEAK AGAINST PLANNING APPLICATION at PCS Meeting on 16th June 2022: Final

1. The NPPF "presumption" is in favour of development, that is SUSTAINABLE.
2. Within the Summary of Proposal Report (page 30) is listed some forty eight paragraphs of the NPPF that have, it states, been give "due consideration". However, what is not clear from this report is if the Framework, when taken as a whole, has been correctly interpreted in relation to this application.
3. It's clear from the "Officer Update Report" that Council Officers have seen the written legal advice from Lord Lloyd's solicitor dated 14th June. The previous letters from 2018 and 2020 I'll refer to together as 'the advice'.
4. The advice states, as set out in 2018, the fact that the Core Strategy Policy WCS6 removed the development boundary from Berwick Station "for reasons of limited sustainability and accessibility, together with limited services and landscape character" - this is particularly important. It's plainly not appropriate to promote growth in settlements where, as here, small quantities of development will not be capable of increasing sustainability. Thus, as the current proposal is neither promoted on the back of any evidence of local need, nor does it comprise 'sustainable development', it will simply deliver an estate of 'dormitory homes' for families who will travel elsewhere for their work, facilities and leisure, which is of course, the antithesis of sustainability.
2. The Summary of Proposal Report also acknowledges, "the proposal remains contrary to the Development Plan, and the (now withdrawn) Draft Local Plan is no longer a material consideration". The proposal must therefore be refused unless material considerations indicate otherwise;
3. The first "material consideration" relied upon in the Committee Report is the NPPF. This is in the context of the lack of a 5 year housing supply. The advice points out, however, the courts have made it clear that the NPPF does not, and cannot, displace the Development Plan and, as the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, it makes little sense to approve development in unsustainable locations simply to meet arbitrary housing targets.
5. Another "material consideration" relied on in the Committee Report is the previous development of another "important gap" to the south of the village. This is not a justification for surrendering the gap in the centre of the village which must be considered entirely on its own merits.
7. The advice indicates that the Council's Appropriate Assessment of the impacts of the proposal on the Ashdown Forest SCA cannot, in terms, be based on "**current data and complete, precise and definitive findings**" as required by law.

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8. It appears that many aspects of SUSTAINABILITY and the NPPF are being misrepresented in this application -presumably to try to force APPROVAL by this committee, and against the OVERWHELMINGLY OPPOSING views of the local community.