

Minutes of the Withyham Parish Council **PLANNING COMMITTEE** meeting held
at The Parish Office, Station Road, Groombridge on
8th January 2024 at 6.30pm

PRESENT: Cllrs Robert Gordon-James (Chair), Diana Kelly,
Penny Lawne, Jill Pardey and Beth Rhodes.
In attendance via Zoom: Cllr Allan Gaukroger (able to comment but not vote)
Natalie Brett – Assistant Clerk
In attendance Wealden District Councillor Jessika Hulbert

Members of the public are encouraged to attend the meetings in person or via Zoom and there is a 10-minute opportunity at the start of the meeting for them to address the Planning Committee. There were two members of the public in attendance for 8.3 WD/2022/2499/F. One member of the public read the following statement:

Considerable amendments have been made to this application, effectively creating a new scheme. While we acknowledge this has removed a number of negative elements which we are relieved to see, we, and many of the original 80 objectors, believe there are still substantial issues with the proposal as it stands.

Firstly, contrary to saved policies GD2 and DC17, the site is outside our local Development Boundary. Wealden's planning officers have consistently defended the line here and at the 2 adjacent sites for more than half a century, by refusing all applications for new dwellings, stating development here is an: 'unwarranted intrusion and consolidation of residential development in this rural area beyond the limits of the town.'

There are no new exceptional circumstances warranting a break of boundary here. The three new houses are neither affordable, nor sustainable and material objections considerably outweigh the limited benefit to Wealden's housing land supply.

Permitting new buildings here will set a dangerous precedent for the legal teams of big developers already pressurising local landowners to sell, ready to exploit the fragmentation of the boundary and destroy the precious green fields and countryside on this side of Crowborough.

The site is a rest home set in landscaped gardens, and while the building itself may be classified as brownfield, the new NPPF is clear: Make as much use as possible of brownfield land, except where this would conflict with other policies in the framework, including causing harm to designated sites of importance for biodiversity. Warren Drive is within just 700 metres of 3 statutory protected sites and borders the High Weald AONB's open countryside and ancient woodland on two sides. As such, it's deemed an AONB setting for planning purposes.

In conflict with NPPF 182 and in a declared climate emergency, this proposal expands the original building footprint, concreting over at least 28% more of the existing site's gardens with new residential buildings closer to these protected sites and biodiverse environments than ever before. The AONB's setting is chipped away by a development that neither conserves, nor enhances the natural landscape.

The 2018 Wealden Local Plan describes the Warren as exhibiting an established Arcadian character comprising of large detached properties set in extensive gardens.

The proposed row of 3 houses, in a backland cul-de-sac layout is alien to Fielden Road. In addition, no houses in the area have their backs to the road with their gardens behind them and they lack an active frontage or connection with the existing neighbourhood and street block. The layout introduces new build lines that bear no relationship to the neighbouring property and the spaces around it and for all these reasons they do not reflect the character of properties here, conflicting with the aims of paragraphs 128d, 135a and 135c of the new NPPF to ensure developments are sympathetic to local character, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting and saved policies CR2 and EN27, which seek to protect the established character of Crowborough Warren.

On the built-up Southern 700 metres of Fielden Road, there are 18 houses. On the Northern 700 metres where Warren Drive rest home sits, there are just 3. This single development would double this density, leaving the remaining rural spaces here, increasingly vulnerable. Neighbours are also concerned this could be a gateway or Trojan Horse development, that once it's begun, could turn into much, much more.

The site is a considerable distance from local transport and car-dependent for schools and amenities and therefore unsustainable. The proposal, based on the 20 bedrooms, would likely attract 4 families to the site with multiple vehicles, pets, deliveries etc which would add noise pollution to this tranquil rural area, cause further damage to the unadopted surrounding roads that existing residents have to fund, plus add pressure to a sewage system that already overflows downhill.

Finally, the title of Chapter 6 of the Wealden Local Plan Direction of Travel, is 'Deliver the right type of homes, in the right location to meet local need'. We must think ahead. Approving this application puts a backland development in a sensitive rural location without meeting any genuine, identified local need and puts the adjacent AONB and immediate surrounds at great risk.

The chairman thanked the members of the public for their comments and opened the meeting.

1. ENQUIRE WHETHER ANYONE PRESENT INTENDS TO FILM, PHOTOGRAPH AND/OR RECORD THE MEETING - No

2. APOLOGIES – – Deviani Parekh-Jones - Illness

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – None

4. MINUTES

4.1 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 27th NOVEMBER 2023

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 13th November 2023 be agreed and signed by the Chairman.

4.2 MATTERS OUTSTANDING FROM THESE MINUTES - None

5. COMMENTS MADE UNDER DELEGATED AUTHORITY FOLLOWING CANCELLATION OF THE DECEMBER MEETING DUE TO ILLNESS

RESOLVED that the comments made under delegated authority be agreed and signed by the Chairman.

6. ENFORCEMENT - None

7. NOTIFICATION OF APPEAL

WD/2023/1756/F WINDLESHAW HOUSE, BEECH GREEN LANE, WITHYHAM, TN7 4DB Proposal: DEMOLITION OF THE EXISTING GARAGE BUILDING AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF A FOUR BAY GARAGE BUILDING WITH ANCILLARY ACCOMMODATION AT FIRST FLOOR LEVEL. Planning Inspectorate Ref: APP/C1435/W/23/3334078
The appeal was noted, and no additional comment were made.

8. PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMENTS TO BE RETURNED TO WEALDEN DISTRICT COUNCIL

It was agreed to move 8.3 up the agenda.

8.3 **WD/2022/2499/F** WARREN DRIVE REST HOME, FIELDEN ROAD, CROWBOROUGH, TN6 1TP. Description REDEVELOPMENT OF THE EXISTING RETIREMENT HOME SITE COMPRISING PART DEMOLITION OF EXISTING BUILDING AND REINSTATEMENT OF ORIGINAL DETACHED DWELLING TOGETHER WITH THREE NEW DETACHED DWELLINGS WITHIN THE SITE BOUNDARY.

Wealden District Council Expiry date for comments: 9 January 2024

Link to documents on web:

<https://planning.wealden.gov.uk/plandisp.aspx?recno=159493>

The committee fully supported the excellent comments made by the members of the public in attendance. It was felt that this new application was unsuitable for the area. The choice of housing type was not what was needed in the area, the location is unsuitable being outside the development boundary and bordering the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Concerns were also raised about sewage issues. The committee was disappointed that there was not a new Design and Access Statement or Traffic Survey.

Withyham Parish Council Objects to this Application

The members of the public left the meeting.

8.1 **WD/2023/3023/LB** WARREN HOUSE, WARREN ROAD, CROWBOROUGH, TN6 1TX Description: REMOVAL OF SYNTHETIC SPRAY COATING FROM THE ENTIRETY OF THE BUILDING (PRE-LISTED STATUS) AND APPLICATION OF TRADITIONAL LIME RENDER TO ALLOW THE EXTERNAL WALLS TO BREATHE AND ADDRESS THE SIGNIFICANT DAMP INSIDE

Wealden District Council Expiry date for comments: 12 January 2024

Link to documents on web:

<https://planning.wealden.gov.uk/plandisp.aspx?recno=164196>

It was agreed that this would be an improvement which would help preserve the building. The design and access statement and historic masonry survey were noted as excellent.

Withyham Parish Council Supports this Application subject to the comments of the Listed Buildings Officer.

- 8.2 WD/2023/2978/F** ARCHERS, SUMMERSALES HILL, CROWBOROUGH, TN6 1UT. Description: DEMOLITION OF EXISTING OUTBUILDING AND REPLACEMENT WITH NEW ANCILLARY OUTBUILDING WITH ANNEXE ACCOMMODATION AND INTEGRATED GARAGE.

Wealden District Council Expiry date for comments: 9 January 2024

Link to documents on web:

<https://planning.wealden.gov.uk/plandisp.aspx?recno=164147>

This application had been previously agreed in 2019 and permission subsequently expired. It was noted that this application was not overlooked and would not affect neighbours. No neighbour comments were noted.

Withyham Parish Council Supports this Application subject to a section 106 agreement.

- 8.4 WD/2023/2838/F** HOLLY COTTAGE, STATION ROAD, GROOMBRIDGE, TN3 9NF. Description CONVERSION OF ROOF SPACE TO INCLUDE ROOF LIGHTS TO THE REAR ELEVATION AS APPROVED UNDER PLANNING PERMISSION WD/2013/2425/F. NEW PORCH, ALTERATION TO ROOF PLAN INCLUDING A DORMER ON ANNEX. ALTERATIONS TO FENESTRATION ON EXISTING OUTBUILDING

Wealden District Council Expiry date for comments: 4 January 2024 (extended to 9 January 2024)

Link to documents on web:

<https://planning.wealden.gov.uk/plandisp.aspx?recno=163989>

The application was not visible by neighbours and the outbuilding had been in place for some time. It was noted that the number of roof windows had increased from 4 to 10 which raised a concern.

Withyham Parish Council Supports this Application but would have liked to have seen less roof windows.

- 9. APPLICATIONS RECEIVED AFTER THE AGENDA BY THE CLERK** - None
RESOLVED that the observations on the planning issues detailed in these minutes be submitted to the Planning Authority.

- 10. PLANNING DECISIONS FOR NOTING**
APPEAL DISMISSED

WD/2022/2568, Appeal Ref: APP/C1435/W/22/3307502 LITTLE WOLD AND LAND TO THE REAR (SOUTH), STATION ROAD, GROOMBRIDGE, TN3 9NE

This was noted. - ***The Assistant Clerk advised that this appeal related to the initial application for this site and there is still on application outstanding with Wealden.***

- 11. MATTERS OF URGENT IMPORTANCE FOR NOTING OR INCLUSION ON A FUTURE AGENDA** including letter from WGOD – The letter from WGOD was noted. Withyham Parish Council fully intends to comment on the Wealden District Council Local Plan when it is out for consultation. Cllr Gordon-James would be happy to attend the proposed WGOD meeting.

- 12. DATE OF MEETING** - to note that the date of the next meeting is on **Monday 29th January 2024 at 6.30pm** to be held at The Parish Office unless otherwise notified by the agenda

The meeting closed at 7.02pm