

Minutes of a meeting of the Planning Committee held in the East Dean and Friston Village (Small) Hall, Village Green Lane, East Dean, BN20 0DR on Tuesday 21 November 2023 commencing at 7.30 pm.

Present: Cllr G Fowler (Chairman), Cllr M Bustard, Cllr P Hill, Cllr H Milligan and Cllr P Seeley

In attendance: K Larkin (Deputy Clerk)

There was one member of the public present

Public Session

Black Robin Farm – Mr C Davies Gilbert asked whether the parish council had been consulted about the project to turn Black Robin Farm into a culture and education centre, supported by £11 million government funding from the Levelling Up fund. The number of visitors to the new attraction was projected to be approx. 100,000, and there was cause for concern that not enough parking was being provided on site. Visitors would be pointed to Birling Gap where parking was already under pressure in the tourist season. The Chair replied that the parish council had seen the publicity video but had not been formally consulted. The site was within the Borough of Eastbourne.

In discussion it was noted that the site was intended to be linked to Birling Gap by a footpath, and should also be accessed by a new cycleway. However, the point was taken that the development was likely to put serious pressure on Birling Gap and could also increase the number of people walking down the Birling Gap Road, which was already a safety hazard. It was agreed that the parish council should request to be formally consulted **ACTION: KL; GF.** The Chair thanked Mr Davies Gilbert for his contribution.

The Chair closed the Public Session, and opened the meeting.

P.557 Apologies for absence – Cllr T Bryant, Cllr C Lees and Cllr G Street

P.558 Declarations of Interest: - Cllr Fowler: - Birling Manor and Darby Cottages (tenant of the applicant in both cases). Cllr Fowler would vacate the Chair for discussion of both applications, and the Chair of the Council would stand in for him.

P.559 Minutes of previous meeting - The Minutes of the planning committee meeting held on 17 October 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman

Councillor Seeley took the Chair and varied the order of business to consider the applications for Birling Manor and Darby Cottages first. Councillor Fowler withdrew from discussion.

P.560 NEW APPLICATIONS

SDNP/23/04055/FUL - Birling Manor, Gilberts Drive, East Dean, BN20 0AA

Installation of a 20.8kW ground mounted Solar Photovoltaic System

The committee considered this application and no issues were identified. There was support for the move towards sustainability and low-energy housing.

RESOLVED – To recommend that the application be approved

SDNP/23/04644/FUL and 04645/LIS - Darby Cottages and Old Wheelwrights, Upper Street, East Dean, East Sussex

Internal alterations to provide seven en-suite holiday guest rooms, together with construction of an associated boiler/drying room and bike store

The committee had no issues with the external appearance of the proposed conversion, but did take note of the pre-application advice given by the South Downs National Park Authority [Planning Statement para 3.8]. In summary, this advice ‘confirmed that whilst there was broad policy support for tourism accommodation in the National Park this should not be at the expense of housing in defined settlement boundaries. The advice identified the loss of two residential dwellings arising from the proposal and reference was made to Local Plan policies SD25 (requiring developments to be of a scale and nature appropriate to the character and function of the settlement while making the best use of suitable previously developed sites), SD23 1) f) (requiring proposals to have no negative impacts on the vitality and viability of town and village centres) and SD27 (provision of a mix of homes) to support this position. Reference was also made to the DEFRA 2010 Vision and Circular for English National Parks in terms of the lack of affordable housing options for local people.’ For this reason, the advice concluded that ‘the Authority would not encourage the submission of a planning application for the proposal.’

The Chair of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group stated that the Neighbourhood Plan would have the same concerns, to avoid the loss of two relatively small homes, and to support the provision of more affordable homes. In mitigation, it was suggested that the proposal might provide a precedent for splitting larger properties into smaller units. A further issue raised in discussion was the additional need for parking with no additional space for parking provided. The hope was expressed that visitors using the cottages would be allowed to use the section of the village car park nearest to The Tiger Inn.

The Acting Chair suspended Standing Orders to allow the applicant to state that one of the cottages was already 3-bed, i.e. of moderate size, and that there was a local shortage of short term B & B accommodation. The cottages had originally housed farm labourers doing jobs which no longer existed, and would be better used for tourism and

as a facility for residents needing short term visitor accommodation. Standing Orders were re-imposed.

RESOLVED – Not to object to the application but to draw attention to the comments made in the pre-application advice and on behalf of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

The Acting Chair handed the chairmanship back to Councillor Fowler

SDNP/23/04407/HOUS – Eastwick Cottage, 9 Summerdown Lane, East Dean BN20 0LF

Proposed replacement of detached garage

In discussion members agreed that the design of the proposed replacement garage would be an improvement on the existing structure, and only slightly larger.

RESOLVED - To recommend that the application be approved

SDNP/23/04432/HOUS - 40 Peakdean Lane, East Dean, East Sussex BN20 0JE

Rear extension, rooflights, replacement windows, external alterations, installation of photovoltaic panels on main roof and on detached garage and erection of rear glass canopy over patio

In discussion members agreed that the proposed loft conversion which was the main part of the project would have minimal impact on the front elevation. The rear elevation could look congested, but due to the lie of the land there would be little overlooking.

RESOLVED - To recommend that the application be approved

P.561 DECISION NOTICES

The committee took note of the following applications approved by the SDNPA, the parish council having recommended approval:

SDNP/23/03719/FUL – St Simon and St Jude’s Church Lower Street East Dean Eastbourne East Sussex BN20 0DE

New low level flint wall to edge of the remembrance garden

SDNP/23/03698/HOUS – Highwood, 5 Windmill Lane, Friston, BN20 0EE

Proposed first floor extension to side

P.562 WITHDRAWN APPLICATION

The committee took note of the following withdrawn application, the parish council having recommended refusal:

SDNP/23/02877/FUL - Foxfields Old Willingdon Road Friston East Sussex BN20 OAT

Demolition of existing dwelling, garages & outbuildings, erection of replacement dwelling, pool room and garden store, hard and soft landscaping, parking and new access

P.563 NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

The Chair of the Steering Group reported that the Group was in receipt of government funded technical help both for its Housing Needs Assessment and for the Design element of the proposed Neighbourhood Plan. Work had begun on the Housing Needs Assessment which would be a technical exercise undertaken independently of the parish council. The committee took note.

P.564 ENFORCEMENT

No update was available. The committee requested a meeting with the current Enforcement Officer for the locality, and an updated list of cases the planning authority still regarded as ‘live’ **ACTION: KL**

P.565 CORRESPONDENCE – None

P.566 URGENT ITEMS

The following matters were raised for information but not decision:

- a) Trees at The Grange – the Tree Warden reported that the trees on the boundary adjacent to the village hall car park, previously reported as being in unsafe condition, were now being reduced or felled, with the exception that one large fir tree which had been omitted from the contractors’ schedule of work (possibly accidentally, as being of a different species). The contractors would be prepared to fell the tree for an additional £250 which the care home would not pay. The Tree Warden asked whether the parish council would agree to pay. The committee took note of the following:
 - o that it did not have power to approve the expenditure, which would need to be justified as urgent under the Financial Regulations, and would be subject to retrospective consideration by the full council;
 - o that the landowner would need to give specific approval to the felling; and
 - o that if the tree were subject to a Tree Preservation Order the council must make sure that the planning authority approved of the felling.
 - o that the Grange care home should be requested not rely on use of the village hall defibrillator, which was put out of commission for the general public after each such use.

- b) Proposed levy on home extensions and new builds on the Downlands Estate – It was noted that the Roads Company proposed to begin imposing such a levy to contribute to the maintenance of the Estate roads, which were underfunded and

often damaged by building works. The parish council was requested in future to notify the Company of any planning applications where the levy might apply.

ACTION: KL

P.567 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: - Tuesday 19 December 2023 in the Small Hall of the Village Hall, East Dean, starting at 7.30 pm.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.09 pm

Signed..... (Chairman)

Date.....