

CRANBROOK & SISSINGHURST PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE PLANNING & PRESERVATION COMMITTEE
HELD ON 12TH MAY 2020

The meeting was held remotely using Zoom software.

Declaration of Interests, Dispensations, Predetermination or Lobbying:

Members are required to declare any interests, dispensations, predetermination or lobbying on items on this agenda. Members are reminded that changes to the Register of Interests should be notified to the Clerk.

Present: Cllr. Bunyan (in the Chair), Cllr. Smith, Fermor, Fletcher, Gilbert, Hall, Hatcher, Kings and Pethurst. Also in attendance members of the Brick Kiln Farm Steering Group: Liz Daley, June Bell and Annie Hopper.

PLANNING APPLICATION:

20/00814/REM

Land at Brick Kiln Farm High Street Cranbrook Kent

Approval of Reserved Matters (Layout, Appearance, Scale and Landscape) following Outline Permission 16/502860/OUT (Erection of up to 180 dwellings (including up to 35% affordable housing) with means of access to be determined at this stage together with structural woodland planting and landscaping, informal public open space, community orchard, children's play area, attenuation basin, vehicular access point from Hartley Road and associated ancillary development)

Cllr. Bunyan explained to those present that the different aspects of the reserved matters had been investigated and researched by several Councillors as follows:

Drainage – Cllr. Gilbert was concerned that the increase in surface water into the Crane river may cause flooding as at certain times during heavy rainfall it was already at capacity. This fact had been completely overlooked. There were attenuation ponds to slow down the surface water from the site, but in order for this to work efficiently the weeds/silt needed to be cleared once a year which is stated in the application. However, he was concerned regarding enforcement of this action. He also raised the question regarding the Hydro brake from the Suds pond and who would be responsible for controlling this. Cllr. Fletcher reported that the current 225mm diameter pipe from Brick Kiln was currently blocked. Annie Hatcher raised concern about the pollutants running off from Brick Kiln into the nature reserve with its abundance of wildlife being at risk.

Connectivity & Traffic – Cllr. Hatcher pointed out that further details would be received regarding highway matters, however no date had been given. He was extremely concerned regarding safety, assuming all the proposed development goes ahead there will be six vehicular access points on to the A229 within 200 metres, with a large blind bend in the middle, restricting visibility. He also felt that there would be a significant increase in traffic generated from the new development and from planned developments further afield such as Hawkhurst which needs to be considered. Cllr. Hatcher pointed out that children attending the local schools are more likely to be driven as walking and crossing the busy road would be seen as a danger by their parents. The current 40mph speed limit is rarely observed or policed.

He wanted to see the developer engage with the adjacent developers so that a footway/cycle route could be constructed though the site emerging to the back of the Co-op store.

The current proposals show pedestrian access from the estate is; via the main vehicular access point on A229 between Orchard Way and High Street, via ‘hoggin’ between Orchard Way and Turnden and via a tarmac path that exits opposite New Road. Cllr. Hatcher would like confirmation sought that this exit is pedestrian only.

Cllr. Hatcher pointed out that the developer had not taken on board comments submitted by Cranbrook Conservation Area Advisory Committee, that residents should be encouraged to leave their cars at home and this required a better link to the High Street.

Cllr. Hatcher also raised concern that the detail on bin storage was insufficient and required clarification e.g. does the plan for collection points infer residents will need to take their bins to the nearest point?

Cllr. Fletcher commented that Stephen Baughen, the Head of Planning at TWBC was asking developers from Turnden, Brick Kiln Farm and Corn Hall to masterplan so that these access issues could be overcome. Cllr. Hatcher felt that this is essential before any development proceeds.

Design & Streetscape – Cllr. Hall reported that she was very disappointed at the overall appearance of the estate. The developer had not consulted the policies on design in the Local Plan. There was insufficient variety of materials, styles and colours – which made the whole estate bland and boring. Windows, doors and canopies all the same, properties all the same height. They could have put in some two/three storey houses just to break it up a little. No rendering or bay windows the little details which makes all the difference. Cllr. Hall went on to comments that there were red tiles throughout the development and roof pitches were the same. In her view the design had been compromised and sacrificed to save on cost. Members of the Committee agreed entirely it was a cost cutting exercise. The rear of the properties were even less inspiring and there were no windows on the gable ends of the properties. Cllr. Fletcher informed the meeting that the bulk of the property was built in large factories which saved on cost and restricted design.

Housing Mix/Affordable Housing – Cllr. Smith began by commenting on the market housing, the bulk of units, 43.5% are in the 3 & 4 bed category. The only 1 bedroom apartment/flats are in the affordable element of this application, none are included in the open market category. In his view the housing mix needed to reflect local requirements and demand. Only 13% are in the 2 bed category which is in demand locally. There is a significant demand for 1 & 2 bed units of market housing as opposed to social rented/shared ownership. The housing mix on this site should reflect this. There are no single story bungalows which are also in demand as is evidenced by the quick sale of these types of properties locally. Cllr. Smith reported that many of the smaller properties locally had been extended reducing the amount available in the market category of 1 & 2 bed properties.

Cllr. Smith pointed out that there were no plots available for self build units, not necessary for sale as plots but for potential purchasers to add their own design and appearance which would in his opinion improve and add variation to the street scene. Cllr. Smith recommended the area to the north of the site with plots 122 to 130 should be allocated for single story properties and/or self-build.

Cllr. Pethurst commented that the developer was not interested in what the community needs they were only interested in maximizing profit.

Regarding Affordable/Shared Ownership, Cllr. Smith was of the opinion that this should be split more 50/50 rather than the current 35% affordable element being 26% social rented and 9% shared ownership. Local residents of the Parish and key workers should be prioritised for allocation purposes. The Parish Council should be party to this. Cllr. Smith also noted that the ‘affordable element’ housing is mainly in the center of the development; it should be more evenly distributed throughout the site.

Cllr. Fletcher pointed out that if the social housing element was allocated by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Housing Department, this would not be specific to those with a connection with Cranbrook.

Landscaping –Cllr. Fermor apologised to those present as she had not looked at the plans due to other commitments. Liz Daley kindly offered to work with Cllr. Fermor to produce a report and forward it to the Parish Council for inclusion in the submission to TWBC. Cllr. Hall suggested comments made by Sally Marsh were very informative especially regarding damage to the archeology of the site which should be avoided if at all possible, for historic reasons. Liz Daley would consult with Sally Marsh to establish her views to be included in the landscape response.

Annie Hopper was very concerned regarding the removal of the established hedge right along the A229 which in her view needed to be protected and preserved. Discussion then ensued regarding the 15 meters barrier between development and surrounding properties/ancient woodland. It was agreed that this needed to be increased in places, however Cllr. Hall pointed out that 15 meters was in the fact adhering to current planning policy.

Liz Daley informed the Committee that Berkeley Homes had been in contact with her regarding further meetings with Brick Kiln Farm Advisory Group, however no further discussion would take place with Berkeley Homes until development commenced. Cllr. Gilbert and herself would make site visits when development starts. Berkeley Homes had also offered her other means of downloading the complete planning application and would be providing her with a cd if anyone wanted to borrow it.

Cllr. Bunyan commented that the building quality was to Part L Building Regulations and in her view it should be much higher and was not acceptable. Cllr. Bunyan also raised the question of spoil from the site. Cllr. Gilbert noted that much of the spoil would be distributed on site following the natural contours of the land. It was also noted that the issues raised by David Scully the Landscape and Biodiversity Officer at TWBC had not been addressed.

It was agreed to forward a copy of the Parish Council's concerns regarding this site direct to the Environmental Agency with a copy forwarded to TWBC.

The Parish Council recommended **REFUSAL** of the Reserved Matters for the following reasons:

Drainage:

- There is the assumption that ditches and existing basin discharge to the Crane Book via a 225mm dia. Pipe. This is stated in the Drainage Strategy and needs to be tested and confirmed. The proposed storm water scheme uses this pipe.
- It is noted that the Suds Pond has increased in size from the Outline planning stage. Have the calculations used the current climate change thinking i.e. greater than a 100 year event?
- Who has control of the Hydro brake from the Suds pond?
- There has been no mention of the Crane Brooks capacity to take all the storm water run off and a requirement should be undertaken to masterplan the area with all the other developments that affect the Crane valley i.e. the Turnden development for example (planning application 20/00815) prior to approval.
- A Condition is required to ensure the regular essential maintenance of the Suds Pond. This is to include the maintenance timetable as per the engineer's requirements as noted in Table 4 and Appendix F in Part 3 of the Drainage Strategy.

Connectivity & Traffic:

- Pedestrian Connectivity - There is a lack of connectivity into the town via cycling/pedestrian routes which is critical to reduce pollution from vehicles and contribute to sustainability. The pedestrian link on to the High Street is too limited to connect this development effectively to the town centre.
- Highway safety – too many junctions are being proposed onto the A229. Further analysis of traffic is required when the lockdown is lifted and traffic levels return to normal. The TWBC

Local Plan encourages housing to be built in rural areas such as Cranbrook with commercial development encouraged at the other side of the borough which only serves to encourage vehicle use as public transport in the rural area is woefully inadequate.

- Parking Issues –Lack of sufficient spaces have been allocated to each unit. Visitor parking is dotted around the estate. What parking restrictions will be applied? All parking spaces should have a porous surface to allow for improved surface water drainage across the site.

Design & Streetscape:

- The design and streetscape are disappointing. Variety of design enables orientation through the site, but the developer has not implemented TWBC's own policies under EN in the Local Plan, which insist that the context or character of a historic town with three Conservation Areas and many listed buildings should be preserved and enhanced. The most glaring failure lies in the lack of variety in design, materials and colour, with excessive emphasis on black weather boarding, grey window frames and brown tiles and red brick. Detailing makes all the difference. The windows, doors and door canopies should be not be identical and need more variety and thought.
- Persimmon show details in their photos of old Cranbrook, but they have failed to reflect these in their designs. Dormer windows; glazing bars; gable ends decorated with scalloped barge boards; render on some houses, cornicing under the eaves; ground floor bay windows; variation of roof heights provided by adjacent two and three storey houses; there are just a few hipped roofs; and chimneys only on the most expensive houses. This is a new estate with no links to the existing architecture of Cranbrook
- The Streetscape does not seem to adhere to the Kent Design Guide -the site is inundated with semi-detached and detached housing. Terraces are only blocks of the cheapest 3 houses. At Poundbury even the expensive houses are arranged as terraces of at least 10 or 12 dwellings. Design excellence and creativity are the key criteria that are missing in these anonymous designs.

Housing Mix/Affordable Housing:

- More smaller market housing units. 2 bed semi-detached/terrace market housing. As evidenced by the NDP feedback & consultation.
- 50/50 split on Social rented/shared ownership.
- Provision for 6 to 8 single storey bungalows.
- Provision for 6 to 8 self-build plots.
- Clarification of 'up to' in the number of units proposed on the site.
- Prioritise allocation of affordable housing to local people with a connection to the Parish & key workers.
- Better distribution/dilution of the affordable houses throughout the site.

Landscape Analysis:

- **Hedges - Fagus (beech) hedging adjacent to housing** is not characteristic of the area and is a poor habitat by itself.
- All hedging, domestic and common, should be mixed local native species as elsewhere on site. Some evergreen planting e.g. holly should be included within the hedges.
- The report says that 'other hedges are unlikely to qualify as ecologically important' The implication is that not all hedges have been assessed in this respect. Notably Hedge 39/40 adjacent to the A229 which should be retained as far as visibility splays allow. The roadside hedge is a characteristic of the High Weald AONB to mark the boundary of a field where it abuts the historic routeway not be placed randomly mid field.
- There is no clear indication of what 'part removal' of hedging means.

- It is anticipated that the amount of hedging removed should be exceeded by the amount of hedging planted and that the number of trees removed will be exceeded by the number of trees planted.
- It is unclear why there is a significant amount of ‘estate railing’ as this is not in the local vernacular. Where it is in conjunction with a hedge, it is not needed and should be removed.
- **Tree Planting** - There are noticeable areas within the estate where there is no apparent intent to plant trees. It should be remembered that historically, the Weald was wooded and this type of habitat remains important. As such, we would expect much more tree planting on site.
- PJC Consultancy (Arboricultural, Ecological & Landscape) 2.2 state the site offers ample opportunity for both replacement and additional tree planting.
- Comment...planting lime trees adjacent to parking spaces will result in considerable detritus on cars underneath.
- The planting of rows of trees ‘like lollipops’ is not appropriate in this setting where trees in the locality are clustered.
- It is not clear that appropriate space will be left between orchard trees to allow pruning and picking or the passage of necessary machinery.
- Suggest tree planting near the ‘swale’ to absorb water
- T24 is the Category A2+3 Oak – PJC suggest to consider retaining stump as an ecological feature - It is on the main route into the estate
- **Hop Over Sites** - The intention is good to have hop over sites, but in more than one case, the trees that are at one side of the hop over, are scheduled to be removed: see Detailed Planting Plan sheet 2 (attached) T13 is removed at the Wildlife Hop-over as indicated by Aspect Ecology as an Ecological Enhancement measure.
- The trees being planted to facilitate hop over, e.g. malus are not sufficiently large at maturity to bridge two pavements and a road.
- There is need for the Ecological Consultants to reassess with PJC Arboricultural Consultancy to ensure the retention and planting are aligned to secure ecological gains.
- **Ponds** - It is unclear why there is a wildlife pond in close proximity to the A229
- It is not good enough to say that ponds will be the subject of ‘general ongoing management’ and general tasks ‘may include’. Whilst acknowledging that this type of management is weather determined, nevertheless it is important to have time guidelines and parameters.
- **Light Pollution** - Whilst acknowledging the intention for low level lighting, further measures should be taken in respect of light pollution, particularly as there can be over 3000 bat flyovers at night.
- **General Comments** - It is noted that the ‘green corridor’ near the centre of the site which is served by an underpass and hop over planting, is particularly narrow and therefore less likely to be used than the green space crossing the road nearer the exit, which finishes surrounded by hard landscaping.
- There is no apparent indication that green materials will be sourced in the UK and preferably locally.
- It is critically important that the management of the ancient woodland particularly, but also of the ponds, orchard and hedges within the site are undertaken by a company with experience in managing such sensitive landscapes.
- This is not indicated in the application.
- It is anticipated that advice from the AONB unit will be followed in respect of the flora, fauna and landscaping of the site.
- Due to noise on A229 request quiet tarmac (known as SMA) when the new road layout is made.

Proposed by Cllr. Bunyan, seconded by Cllr Hall and agreed.