



## HERNHILL PARISH COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held online on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> May 2020 from 8:00pm to 9:15pm.**

**Present:**

Cllr. J Geliot (Chairman of meeting) Cllr Couzens Cllr C. Page Cllr P. Heller  
Cllr A. Rumble Cllr S. Castle Cllr S. Edgington

**Also Present:** Mrs R. Parr (Clerk) and 8 members of the public.

**142 APOLOGIES**

None

**143 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Declarations of interest had previously been expressed by Cllr Rumble, Page and Heller regarding this planning application in the Parish Council meeting of the 26th February 2020 where the Parish Council had voted to provide a dispensation for one year for Cllr Rumble, Page and Heller.

**144 PLANNING**

A. Planning Applications - 20/500858/FULL *Land On The North East Staple Street  
Hernhill Kent*

Cllr Geliot confirmed with the councillors that they had received all emailed comments from parishioners and also review the comments and plans loaded on the Swale Borough Council planning portal. Cllr Geliot then invited Ms Thompson from English Rural as the applicant to comment.

Ms Thompson mentioned the over 20 years of experience in the Swale borough on affordable housing in 5 villages. She mentioned that she had been invited by the Parish Council (PC) in 2016 following an independent survey, which had showed that there was a need and to review two potential sites following the site selection process. A later survey confirmed that there was still a need for affordable housing. There have been two community consultation events as well as additional meetings with the PC and the Hernhill Village Conservation Society (HHVCS) in order to respond to design and highways comments and amend designs accordingly. ER's experience shows that there is a benefit from retaining local households and bringing communities together.

The Chair then invited Mr Brenchely, a representative of the HHVCS to speak, which consists of 30 households. He highlighted 39 letters outlining objections and that the resident group had taken professional planning advice. Full details have been provided on the planning portal concerns shortfalls in the process. Mr Brenchley highlighted a number of points. One being the lack of communication and engagement in the process. The 2015 survey had only 57% respondents, which

was considered not to show overwhelming support for affordable housing. It was also considered that many misunderstood the available options for such a scheme. The HHVCS made a presentation in August 2018 to the PC indicating a lack of support for the Staplestreet location. An offer was made to the PC for an independent questionnaire by the HHVCS, which was turned down. Other sites not given appropriate consideration. Two sites were not pursued, only a few or a better site found, only 2 pieces of land available for sale. An appropriate site should be close to amenities. Concerns were made over last minute changes by ER on detached garages and parking. Councillors are custodians and should create a positive legacy. The cul-de-sac design is out of character. Streetscene has an urban element and backdrop. The development is at the expense of resident parking with the loss of the verge. Location not safe for pedestrians and is an isolated location. Exception site status under planning law should be widely supported, which is not considered to be the case here and urge the councillors not to support the application.

Ms Morgan, requested to speak. She asked if all councillors had read her objection on the Swale planning portal, which was confirmed. She considered that the planning laws were being massaged for this project. Rural exception site requirements and whether meets those for services, character impact. She questioned whether the site is really affordable. There were concerns expressed regarding the loss of agricultural land and the need to have self sufficiency. An increasing number of pests means there is a need to increase biodiversity and habitat. Ms Morgan queried the dates of any Pre-application advice, which was not clear and to the councillor what due diligence had been undertaken in respect of the landscape and Conservation Area. The view from Kays Lane across to Perry Wood would be impacted by the new development in the foreground and the view across to the estuary. Concerns over the reduction in hedge height. The application is considered misleading when it comments that no trees or boundaries are considered important to the landscape character. That boundary as a headline on the old OS map so it must be at least 40-50 years old and expressed concerns that it must be protected. Focus must be given the carbon dioxide levels and climate impact.

Ms Thompson responded to Ms Morgan's query regarding the pre-application date. that there was no formal pre-application to SBC, hence no date.

The Chair then asked the planning sub-committee for their comments. Cllr Edgington responded that he had read all the comments from residents and all the individual drawings and made observations and hoped that these could be taken on board by ER. The site plan developed further from previous drawings with the introduction of garages, which has added additional structures and does not add positively to the streetscape. There were concerns expressed on the height reduction of the hedgerow as it provides screening. Another concern was over the gap in the hedge for the collection of bins. If not able to move the collection site, perhaps create a gate as opposed to take out the whole hedge. Loss of parking with the withdrawal of the verge and would prefer to see additional bays within the development. Plot 1 & Plot 2 brick arch detail misleading not showing a sprung arch. Plot 3 & 4 the visual appearance is not in proportion and all wrong. and potential needs looking at again in terms of the roof design for plot 3. Plot 5 & 6 visually provides positive interest to the gable end. Plot 5 may be better with a hipped end as opposed to a gable end. Plot 7 & 8, have no adverse comments and the buildings are considered attractive. The development of the scheme over time in terms of materials are now more sympathetic and complement the conservation area. Need to clarify the situation on external lighting which did not appear in the application. Suggestive motion sensor may be suitable.

(sound bad) Cllr Couzens agrees with Simon regarding concerns on the hedge gap and bin collection. Not surprised by the objections due to NIBYSM. He also mentioned the need for substantially more visitor parking spaces within the boundary of the site, preferably a total of 6, that is one per affordable home and questioned whether the Staplestreet residents would object if the site was elsewhere in the village giving the example of the black barn development in Crockham Lane. which is on a dangerous bend, also has 16 bedrooms of accommodation and has used prime agricultural land for the gardens which no one objected to at the time.

Cllr Page said it should be recognised that this is not a normal application but a rural exception site application and we must ensure it had the support of the community, before it could be supported. He could see no evidence of such support. The two surveys carried out at the request of the Parish Council did not ask if this particular site is right for development for affordable housing. The only evidence of the community's view is the survey carried out by Hernhill Village Conservation Society. The overwhelming view was that the site was not suitable. It had been suggested this view was just nimbyism. That cannot be correct as the point of a rural exception site was that it should be supported by the local community. He had read the comments filed on the Swale planning site. All except one were objecting. With a few exceptions, the reasons given were logical and reasonable. Rural exception sites were intended to revitalise communities by providing housing that young couples and families could afford. The two Parish Council surveys showed most wanting affordable housing were elderly or retired. The site was not suitable for young people as it is not practical for shops or walking to school. Cllr Page supported the comments Cllr Edgington made particularly the concerns of loss of the hedge height, the gap requirement for bin collection and what lighting the development would have and potential harm it would cause.

Cllr Castle commented that concerns had been raised about how it is not a good place to live but that people objecting are all living in the same area. Cllr Castle as a non-homeowner considered that there was a need for this type of housing and that it was appropriate to speak up for those that are not homeowners.

Cllr Rumble said that the housing needs survey was done a long time ago and she could not understand why the parish council refused the offer of a more up to date survey. She listened to the very well reasoned arguments against the project and concluded that clearly the project does not have community support.

Cllr Heller feels that having local social needs housing is important although not at this site which involves the loss of farmland, it would have been better distributed more widely across the hamlets that make up the parish and focussed on brownfield or unused buildings. In relation to the appropriateness of the development, Cllr Heller particularly objects to the inclusion of the two new open market executive houses, now with garages adding to the built over area. Finally she has not been convinced by the need that was allegedly demonstrated in the latest survey/request for indications of interest in local needs housing. In the absence of strong community support Cllr Heller votes to oppose this application.

The Chair would hope that the hedge would be retained as well as the replanting of new hedge alongside. The Chair would prefer that there was more parking and the place for the bin collection would be better at the end of the existing hedge rather than the gap proposed.

The vote was then undertaken with Cllr Castle, Couzens, Edgington and Geliot supporting the application. Cllr Heller, Page and Rumble opposing the application. The vote to support is carried. Discussions were then held to pull together the reasons for the support to be forwarded to swale Planning. The final comments were agreed as follows:

‘The results of the vote by the Parish Council were that the Parish Council support the application, with the votes carried of 4 in favour and 3 opposing. The Parish Council recognises that there is a need for affordable housing in the village and consider it to be a suitable site. English Rural have worked with the Parish Council and the Parish Council consider the development now to be well designed and with high quality materials and with a robust landscape plan. However, the Council do have some concerns and comments regarding certain aspects of the plan. There are concerns that the plans show a reduction in the hedge height. The Council would prefer to see the existing hedge height maintained and the gap for the bin access removed given that the location is considered dangerous by the crossroads. The Council would prefer for the design to include more parking to prevent any overspill into the road. The Council also comment that the application did not mention any design in respect of lighting. Any lighting scheme should be sympathetic, recognising the rural location and based on motion sensors. For Plots 1 and 2, the Council question the need for the detached garages that have now been incorporated into the design.’

The chair proposed a vote of thanks to the Clerk for the time she had spent in researching and setting up this on-line meeting.

There being no further business, the Chairman declared the Meeting closed.

CHAIRMAN