

**Minutes of the meeting of the Maresfield Parish Council Planning Committee
held on Thursday 13th July 2017 at 7.30 pm in Maresfield Village Hall.**

PRESENT: Cllrs. D Watson, (Chair), M Craddock, A Strevens, Ms G Hallin, K Ogden, R Galley, Clerk T Allen.

1. Public Session – Around 50 members of the public were in attendance, along with three representatives for the applicant, who were:-

Mr Adrian Standing	Art Projects
Mr Duncan Parr	Rapleys (Agent)
Mr John Mc Cormack	HMY (Architect)

Mr Parr made the following points:-

- There had been adequate public consultation for the site, starting in 2012 with the NDP process.
- This is an Outline application, so there is some room for adaptation of the proposals.
- The design of the proposed development has been made to minimise the impact on the area.
- Pre-application discussions have been held with WDC Planning Officers.
- Public comments on the Transport, Drainage and Environmental reports are being looked at.
- There is a stated need for a nursery.
- Traffic flow forecasts have shown a neutral impact on nitrogen deposition.
- Despite the limit set on housing numbers in the adopted WDC 2013 Core Strategy, WDC still need to build houses and this application is supported by the WDC Housing Department.
- In addition to the A26, the impact on other roads will be looked at.
- The nursery will be completed before occupation of the homes and may be subsidised to ensure its viability.
- WDC is to agree the type of affordable housing to be applied to this site.

Mr McCormack made the following points:-

- He was instructed in 2015 to produce a feasibility study for this site and to put it forward to WDC and the Parish Council in the call for sites.
- The outline application was being developed before 48/50 WDC Core Strategy allocated homes for Maresfield Village had been approved.
- Nine of the proposed 25 homes will be affordable homes.
- Proper consideration has been given to the development of this site, including its topography, slope, views and approaches.
- The proposed houses will face the road, in line with existing houses.
- New hedgerows will be planted along the site boundary with the Straight Half Mile and a new adjoining pavement will be created.
- The nursery has been sited closest to the village centre with its own access road; a separate access road will serve the proposed houses.
- There will be more than 60 parking spaces.
- 'Wedges' of planting will be placed around the site to mitigate the impact from the roofscape.
- This is an outline application so only the layout of the site will be set; there is scope to amend the designs/materials to be used.
- The setting of the access roads has been agreed with ESCC Highways.

Members of the public made the following points:-

- The space left in the field adjacent to the site suggested an additional development in the future.
- When and how was the traffic survey conducted? Rush hour levels are very high.
- This site was not considered suitable in a review by the Conservation Group; this side of the village needs to be protected, including the lanes.

- The Environmental/Ecological Study is flawed; e.g. there are ponds within 0.75Km of the site; one pond is within 0.1Km. This study was just a 'desk-top' exercise with one site visit conducted at a time of year when most things are dormant.
- This site was not near the top of the list of sites recommended by the NDP Steering Group.
- In the adopted Local Plan/Core Strategy (2013) 50 homes are allocated to Maresfield village, 48 of which have now been approved. The current Draft Local Plan classifies Maresfield as 'unsustainable' with no allocation of additional houses.
- The Habitats Regulations are applied by WDC and are Law, thus limiting development above the allocation of 50 homes; WDC has recently successfully defended its application of these Regulations.
- WDC does not have a five-year land supply which may weaken the position of its adopted Core Strategy.
- The proposed sewage plant will give off odours into the local atmosphere.
- The site will generate 125 vehicle movements per day using the ESCC formula; how can the nursery negate this? Regulations dictate that there will be a large number of staff required for 90 children (c. 40-50). Indoor space requirements proposed are inadequate and there is no suitable outside space for the children. Traffic will be backed-up at nursery drop-off/pick-up times.
- There is no detailed business plan for the proposed nursery; its need and sustainability has not been demonstrated. There is no industry/business in the village to ensure local demand for a nursery.
- High fees will make this proposed nursery unsustainable.
- Maresfield already has a pre-school and toddler groups; there is no need for this nursery.
- The accesses to the proposed houses and nursery are placed on a dangerous part of the road and additional traffic will travel through the lanes.
- Drainage, run-off and sewerage will need to be properly controlled and privately managed. There are already problems existing as a result of the sloping of the site land.
- The impact the development will have on the beauty, nature, wildlife etc. is unacceptable.
- Three local nurseries have closed in the past couple of years.
- Some places at the proposed nursery will be filled by children coming from recently approved development.
- Traffic through the village has reduced significantly over the last 20 years, but additional traffic from developments outside the village will be generated.

In response to some of the points raised by members of the public, Mr Parr made the following points:-

- The proposed site layout is appropriate for this land close to the centre of the village.
- As this is an Outline planning application, only the layout for the homes and roads will be set; designs and materials remain open to change.
- Will look into how the traffic surveys were conducted.
- Detailed discussions have been held with ESCC Highways regarding site accesses, layouts, pavements etc. but a Condition to improve the pavements in the area would be looked at sympathetically.
- Parking details for the proposed houses and nursery have been submitted to ESCC and a response is awaited.
- The Environmental/Ecological Study is in accordance with WDC's requirements but it will be updated to include the local ponds now identified.
- The application has not been discouraged by WDC even though in the adopted Local Plan/Core Strategy (2013) 50 homes are allocated to Maresfield village, 48 of which have now been approved.
- Sewerage plant and pollution management will be provided privately on-site in liaison with the WDC Environmental Health Officer to ensure that there are no adverse effects.
- There are no known Covenants on this land.
- Flooding and drainage matters have been looked at in detail and reports submitted to WDC.
- Regarding Habitats Regulations, the development, including the nursery, is estimated to have a neutral effect on the Ashdown Forest.

- The nursery will be delivered before the homes are occupied.
- The nursery may not operate at or near its capacity and children will be arriving and leaving at different times of day.
- Is aware of the need for proper indoor and open space for the nursery and suitable parking provision.

(The Chairman closed the public session and opened the meeting).

2. Apologies for absence – None.

3. Declarations of interest – Cllr Ogden & Cllr Ms Hallin as members of the Maresfield Conservation Group.

4. New Application:-

4.1 Application No. WD/2017/0694/MAO

Expiry date for comments: 14th July 2017

LOCATION: LAND AT STRAIGHT HALF MILE, MARESFIELD

DESCRIPTION: OUTLINE APPLICATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE SITE TO PROVIDE 25 DWELLINGS AND A NURSERY/COMMUNITY FACILITY, WITH APPEARANCE, LANDSCAPING AND SCALE RESERVED.

Applicant: Portman Homes

Cllr Ms Hallin stated that this is already a busy stretch of road and increased traffic from the proposed development would increase the danger of accidents to an unacceptable level.

Cllr Strevens stated that the proposed development would urbanise this main village approach and the view to the AONB would be lost; spoiling the character of the village.

Cllr Ogden expressed his concern regarding problems from run-off water/poor drainage from the site via Underhill and then entering the culvert near Budletts roundabout; this problem is already a concern as a result of the approval for the building of 9 homes below the School.

Cllr Craddock stated his opposition to the application on legitimate planning grounds as follows:-

- There would be an unacceptable increase in traffic numbers, causing increased pollution and danger.
- The inaccuracy and poor content of the Environmental Report.
- The proposal for a nursery was unsound; a full business case should be supplied to demonstrate its requirement and sustainability.
- The development will produce a significant number of additional vehicle movements, creating more pollution which contravenes provisions of the Habitats Regulations; the argument that the nursery will create a 'neutral' effect in this respect is not sound, especially if the nursery is not full.
- WDC's Planning Committee (North) will determine this application.

The Chairman proposed that this application is recommended for refusal for the following reasons:-

- The scale, mass and high density of the proposed development is out of character with its surroundings and the village in general.
- It is clear that the proposed development and nursery will create a significant increase in traffic movements at a point which is already considered dangerous, as well as in the lanes and the rest of the village.
- The proposed development will create an increased risk of flooding, particularly from increased rain run-off on the slope down to Nursery Lane, the Shortbridge Stream and beyond.

- The Environmental Report is insufficient and inaccurate and only a token effort seems to have been made to cover this highly important aspect. For example, there are several ponds in proximity to the proposed development site, one of which is within 0.1Km, with numerous important and some protected fauna in this area.
- The proposed development and nursery will create a significant increase in traffic movements resulting in additional nitrogen pollution on the Ashdown Forest and in contravention of the Habitats Regulations Laws. The neutral effect on traffic movements suggested by the applicant's figures is highly questionable.
- The proposed development of a 52/7 90 place day nursery is highly speculative and can only be justified if it is supported by a comprehensive business plan and an appropriate agreement to fund the operation of the nursery for an extensive period of years to ensure its sustainability.

The Chairman's proposal was seconded by Cllr Craddock and **resolved** unanimously.

It was unanimously resolved to recommend refusal for the above reasons.

5. Date of next meeting – Monday 31st July 2017.

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 20:42.