

BIDDENDEN PARISH COUNCIL

APPROVED Minutes of a meeting of the Planning Committee held on Tuesday 28 June 2016 at 7.30 pm in the Village Hall, Biddenden

Present: Cllr J Tydeman (Chair) Cllr P Harris
Cllr D Boulding Cllr A Lidgett
Cllr E Cansdale Cllr S Parks
Cllr C Friend Cllr E Stevenson-Rouse

Mrs A Swannick – Parish Clerk

Also present: Cllr N Bell, Ashford Borough Council

Approximately 30 parishioners attended

1. To Elect a Chairman

Cllr Cansdale (Planning Committee Lead) welcomed everyone to the meeting. She stated that she would be handing over the chairmanship of the meeting and proposed Cllr J Tydeman as the chair. Seconded by: Cllr E Stevenson-Rouse. **Unanimous.**

Cllr Tydeman took the chair.

2. Chairman's Opening Remarks

Cllr Tydeman explained that the purpose of the meeting was to agree a proposal to be put to the full council meeting of Biddenden Parish Council for consideration in relation to two proposals contained within the ABC Draft Local Plan recently published.

The Chairman gave a full history of what had happened regarding the ABC Local Plan to-date, which consisted of three documents leading to this evening's meeting:

- a) Community Led Plan in 2013;
- b) ABC draft Local Plan to 2030;
- c) Planning Committee minutes of 1 March 2016.

The ABC Draft Local Plan to 2030 contained two policies affecting Biddenden:

- a) S27 – a proposed residential development of 45 houses in North Street
- b) S43 – 2 permanent gypsy/traveller pitches at Priory Wood

The ABC Draft Local Plan is out for consultation between 15 June and 10 August 2016. Details of this are on the noticeboards and the parish council website and, of course, on the Ashford Borough Council website. Members of the public can make their comments online via the ABC website at: www.ashford.gov.uk/consult by 10 August.

After the consultation a revised ABC plan will be published. Any objections and appeals arising from this document will be considered by a government inspector under formal

appeal procedures.

It was noted that an email dated 27 June had been received from the developer of the proposed site in North Street giving a breakdown of the types of housing. It was read out to the meeting. The breakdown was as follows:

“The recently published version of the Ashford Local Plan seeks 40% affordable housing on rural sites. However, the Policy proposes that 50% of these (ie 20% of the total) would be Starter Homes under the Government’s new initiative to introduce discounted market sale houses to first time buyers, with the remaining 20% (of the total) being made up of shared ownership (10%) and rented (10%). Therefore, if considering a 45 unit scheme, under the proposed policy the affordable housing would comprise 9 Starter Homes, 4 or 5 shared ownership homes, and 4 or 5 rented homes.”

This is where we currently stand.

3. Parishioners’ Questions

- a) A parishioner asked why some houses had received copies of the meeting notices and not others. *This was done by individuals and had nothing to do with the parish council. Notices were put up on the parish noticeboards and on the parish website in the usual way. The parish council does not deliver meeting notices house to house.*
- b) What does the policy actually mean regarding permission to build on the land? *The development policy gives the builder permission for that development to go ahead. A planning application will then be put forward to the borough council in the normal way. However, once a borough council has identified a plot of land for residential development, if it continues turning down planning applications the developer would appeal and it would go to the inspector to decide.*
- c) Why does Ashford Borough Council not take into account the Parish Council’s recommendation? *The Community Led Plan is out of time sync with the overall ABC Local Plan. BPC was consulted and formally replied, but the council has no confirmed idea as to why ABC did not take its view into account. However, nothing is set in stone. Cllr Bell stated that Borough and District councils have to produce sites for development. If they don’t then developers can say that there is not a supply of land and on appeal inspectors may say that land supply is not sufficient and agree it.*
- d) A question was asked about the site size and the number of houses. . Concern was expressed that permission to build a smaller number of units on the site would lead to further applications and approvals and a much larger number of houses eventually being built on the site. *Cllr Bell said that he would be trying to go for 20-25 houses, but that the whole site doesn’t have to be used but conceded that there was nothing to stop further planning applications being made in addition to any number quoted in the ABC plan.*
- e) The Committee was asked what the provision was from the developer and BPC on schooling. There are children in Townland Close who have not been able to get a place at the local school and this must be addressed. *Cllr Bell stated that If schooling is an issue then it needs to be addressed and highlighted.*

- f) A question was asked about one of the plans going up to 2030. *It was clarified that the ABC plan goes up to 2030. The Community Led Plan goes up to 2022.*
- g) Could the development be phased in? *If the wish is for the development to be phased in then it has to be asked for.*
- h) A parishioner stated that on the North Street site there is a restrictive covenant on the “paddock” at the entrance allowing for only one dwelling. Applications have been made going back to 1986 and have been refused due to this. *This matter will be brought to ABC’s attention.*
- i) A parishioner raised concern with regards to the capacity of the surface water and foul water systems, stating that these are insufficient for the current number of dwellings, let alone 45.

4. Approval of the minutes of the Planning Committee meeting of 1 March 2016

There being no comments or additions, the minutes were deemed to be a true and proper record of the meeting. Proposed by: Cllr C Friend Seconded by: Cllr P Harris. **Agreed.**

5. Ashford Local Plan to 2030 – to consider the consultation document plans for the North Street Site, Biddenden

The Chairman stated that there were three items to consider under this agenda item, but that sub item d) would be added to enable discussion on the Gypsy/Traveller proposal.

Agenda items a) – c) were discussed as follows:

Discussion took place regarding development gain. It was noted that a development had taken place in Etchingam with the same developer proposing a residential development in Biddenden. The council had been contacted and they are happy to meet with BPC to discuss their experiences further and offer any help. It was noted that the maximum benefit should be sought from the developer for the benefit of Biddenden. Flimwell has also had a similar development. It was noted that these issues were being discussed as if the development had been approved, but it was agreed that this was not the case.

It was noted that Policy S27 c) stated the creation of a pedestrian crossing and appropriate traffic calming measures on North Street. This point needs clarification as it has been proposed before and turned down as not being appropriate for an A road. Concern was expressed with regards to the volume of traffic that would be entering an already busy road and the frequency of recent accidents. There was a suggestion that a mini roundabout could be built, but it was thought that this would be inappropriate for an A road and would present a hazard.

The community facility was discussed in detail. There was concern regarding the viability of a Drs surgery given previous experience, but it was suggested that perhaps if the facility was already built and there was no contribution required from the doctors then it may be viable. It was pointed out that Parishioners opinion, as stated within the CLP, was that there is no requirement for anew village hall.

Concern was expressed regarding the fact that 45 houses did not cover the entire site and

that any development would result in a much larger development in the long term. It was stated that it was not the Parish Council's decision to build, but Ashford Borough Council's. The Parish Council had previously stated that they did not wish there to be any new development.

It was noted that the information from the proposed developer detailing the breakdown of the proposed housing stock clarified the issue, especially as nothing more has been heard regarding the proposing local needs housing Tapley Meadow

Concerns were expressed that the council had already made its position clear regarding wanting no new developments and some councillors felt that nothing had changed. Others felt that it had, particularly with the clarifying email from the developer.

It was noted that the Community Led Plan went up to 2022 whereas the ABC Local Plan went up to 2030. ABC would review the plan roughly every 5-7 years. It was pointed out that the majority of respondents to the CLP stated that infill housing was preferred and that only up to 25 units were preferred by the majority, over the 9 year life of the plan and that most of these had already been built. A number of farm buildings have recently received planning consent to be converted to houses. There was a clear consensus within the CLP that green spaces were of importance to the village and that building on the North Street site would be detrimental to this, despite it being private land, and that it would also affect wildlife.

Cllr Bell stated that he would be arguing for 20-25 dwellings rather than 0. When asked if he thought that any building would, in reality take place, he stated that he obviously could not say, but that his gut feeling was that it would.

It was pointed out that any affordable homes would not be for local needs only but would be open to all.

After intense discussion the chairman stated that a decision was required and he went round to each councillor in turn asking for their view. Questions a), b) and c) were put to each councillor. The breakdown was as follows:

- a) To consider whether to have zero development. Two councillors voted for this option.
- b) To consider the Borough Council's proposal for 45 homes. Four councillors voted for this option.
- c) To consider a reduced number of homes eg 20-25. Two councillor voted for this option.

A number of issues were also raised relating to concerns/improvements/benefits that could be put forward to the borough council in terms of benefits to the village as follows:

Schooling; starter homes, rental homes must be identified; infrastructure in terms of traffic and the width of the roads within the development must be wide enough; sewerage, drainage issues at the north end of the village need to be addressed; water supply; the parish council's wish to be fully involved in the planning of the development.

d) Policy S43 – Biddenden – Priory Wood

It was noted that ABC had to provide a set number of pitches. The pitches at Priory Wood would be permanent pitches and were in addition to the existing pitch.

Discussion took place on concerns that the site is large and that further pitches may be sought.

6. Recommendation to be put to Biddenden Parish Council

It was agreed by majority vote that the Planning Committee would put forward a recommendation for 45 homes to the parish council. However, it was also recommended that the parish council should work closely with the developer.

It was agreed to recommend a change of wording of the policy to “shall not exceed 3 traveller pitches”.

The Clerk was asked to draft a letter to Ashford Borough Council in reply to the draft Local Plan document for discussion at the full council meeting.

Proposed by: Cllr E Stevenson-Rouse Seconded by: Cllr C Friend.

It was agreed by majority vote (5 in favour, 3 against).

7. Parishioners Comments

A majority of the parishioners present were unhappy with the recommendation and felt that the Planning Committee was not taking their views into account. Others were concerned with policy S43, Priory Wood and having any further traveller pitches. However, it was stated by the chairman that the views expressed were not fully representative of the village.

Concern was expressed that there needed to be wider thinking about ideas for community benefit.

Considerable concern was expressed about the existing village infrastructure and in particular those providing sewage and water.

The subject of a cycle track from the old railway station to Tenterden was raised. Cllr Bell asked the parishioner to forward details to him.

Parishioners were invited to put forward any ideas that they might have to BPC and Cllr Bell.

Councillors were asked if they had any disclosures of pecuniary interests. Councillors confirmed that they had not.

Parishioners were reminded that they could attend the planned ABC roadshows or use the ABC website to submit their views on the ABC Local Plan by the deadline date of 10th August.

The meeting closed at 9.45 pm.

Alison Swannick
Parish Clerk