

MINUTES OF A MEETING OF SALTWOOD PARISH COUNCIL HELD AT SALTWOOD PRIMARY SCHOOL ON MONDAY, 02 December 2019 at 6.30 p.m.

PRESENT: Cllr. N. Matthews (Chairman), Cllr. F. Boland, Cllr. N. Meurice, Cllr. Miss L. Sadler and Cllr. J. Stevens.

2019/

- 139. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** received and accepted from Cllr. Mrs. L. Johnson.
Apologies also received from Cllr. R. Love (KCC Ward Member) and Cllr. Mrs. L. Whybrow and Cllr. J. Martin - Hythe Ward Members.

140. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST: None

141. MINUTES OF THE PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THE 04 NOVEMBER 2019:

The Minutes of the meeting held on the 04 November 2019 were taken as a true record of the meeting and signed by the Chairman.

Proposed by Cllr. F. Boland and seconded by Cllr. N. Meurice.

142. MATTERS ARISING FROM PARISH COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THE 04 November 2019.

Co-option of Parish Councillor – The Clerk reported that there had been no response to the Parish Council's advert to fill the vacancy on the Parish Council.

143. ADJOURNMENT OF MEETING FOR PUBLIC INCLUSION:

The meeting was closed to enable local residents to speak on a planning application that had been submitted for two detached dwellings on land at Minstead, Sandling Road, Saltwood. The main concerns of the residents related to change of character of Sandling Road, traffic and road safety issues and loss of trees and hedges.

144. PLANNING - (a) Planning applications:

KCC/FH/0246/2019 – Saltwood C.E. Primary School – Renewal of permission for mobile unit (5 years). No objection.

Y19/1322/FH – Opposite The Field, Rectory Lane, Saltwood. – Re-pollard back to last cut Chestnut subject of Tree Preservation Order No.9 of 2010. No objection.

Y19/1261/FH – Minstead, Sandling Road, Saltwood – Erection of two four bedroom dwellings.

It was agreed that the following comments on the planning application be forwarded to the the Chief Planning Officer, Folkestone & Hythe District Council: -

1. Following debate, the Saltwood Parish Council does not support the above planning application.
2. The Parish Council considered the merits of this application at its monthly meeting on 2 December 2019. At least seven neighbouring households on Sandling Road attended the meeting to present their views and reasons for objecting to this application. To reinforce and explain their objection a number of them had also submitted written comments on the planning application for the Parish Council to consider. The Council understands these written objections have also been sent to the District Council's planning department.
3. The Council concluded the written comments were very well researched, refer to the most appropriate requirements set out in extant planning policy documents and are compelling in the conclusions they reach. The Council asks that Officers take notice of the views the residents put forward as they concur with its own concerns regarding this application.

The Character of Sandling Road

4. Minstead lies outside the settlement boundary of Saltwood and inside a designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The actual boundary of the AONB runs between Minstead to the west and Mayfield/Leckets to the east. Minstead is also within a Special Landscape Area and Saltwood is, itself, an Area of Special Character. Consequently, particular criteria must be applied to development proposals consistent with the policy requirements for each of these designations.
5. From the Saltwood settlement boundary until the railway station Sandling Road is an area of low-density building, emphasising the rural nature of this part of the parish within the AONB. Along this stretch of Sandling Road there are 12 homes, almost all of them set well back from the road and screened with vegetation – and, in a small number of cases, fencing – and interspersed with open farmland. Most of these plots are large and, in practical terms might be attractive to a developer to purchase and sub-divide. Were this to happen it is possible to estimate that up to 18 or 21 **additional** properties could result from such sub-division and development. This would change entirely the character of Sandling Road from an essentially rural outlook to one of increasingly dense ribbon development.
6. Such a scenario would, of course, be dependent on the granting of planning permission. However, if planning permission were to be granted for the proposed Minstead sub-division and development – in the AONB and in an Area of Special Character – on what basis could other sub-division and development proposals be denied? A previous application to sub-divide and develop on Minstead was refused in 1985 – we believe because of the undesirability of increasing building density along Sandling Road – and we believe that this proposal should, similarly, be refused.
7. The Parish Council has noted the argument put forward in the Planning, Transport, Design, Infrastructure, Environment document submitted by the architect (paragraphs 5.2.7 and 5.3.4) that the site of Minstead should be regarded as “...a natural extension of the linear development along Sandling Road...” and not as ...part of the open rolling countryside of the AONB...”. It goes on to say “It is considered that development west of Saltwood would only be deemed as inappropriate to the street scene once the property “Westlife” (sic)¹ is passed, and green land with piecemeal developments start becoming the streetscene.” This seems to be an attempt to create a subjective boundary within which development would be permitted – including of course Minstead – and outside of which development would be inappropriate. The Parish Council emphatically reject this argument: a clear boundary already exists – it is the boundary between the settlement of Saltwood and the AONB in which Minstead is situated. And, in regard to the “streetscene”, the real change in “streetscene” occurs between Leckets (up to which point houses are generally relatively close to the road) and Minstead (from which point houses are, as noted in paragraph 5, generally set well back from the road. (1 The property referred to is actually “Westeries”).
8. The Parish Council considers the houses on Sandling Road are of traditional 20th century design, excepting one 600-year old listed building, and therefore present a harmonious aspect as one travels along the road. The proposed new houses on the Minstead site are of a radically different modern design. Such a design may well be appropriate, aesthetically, in a different setting but it appears to us to clash with the character of existing housing in Sandling Road.

Traffic and Road Safety Issues

9. Planning application documents describe Sandling Road as a “quiet, minor road”. It may well be “minor” but residents see it as anything but “quiet”, especially in the morning and late afternoon when people are going to, or coming back from, work via Junction 11 on the M20 and Sandling railway station, frequently exceeding the 30-mph speed limit. Along this narrow, undulating road with restricted sight lines a significant road safety black spot exists at the entrance to Brockhill Park School (around 1,500 students and staff) and Brockhill Country Park, which is opposite the entrance to Minstead. Traffic volumes on Sandling Road

Planning application Y19/1261/FH (contd.)
Traffic and Road Safety Issues (contd.).

have increased in recent years and will likely increase significantly in future if/when the proposed Otterpool development goes ahead, both as an alternative route for Otterpool residents to go to Hythe and for those with secondary school age children for whom Brockhill Park School will be the nearest secondary school.

10. During the periods when the school day starts and finishes there is significant traffic congestion in this area with numerous large buses transporting school students and parents'/carers' cars dropping off students or, in the afternoon, waiting at the entrance (often parking on the pavement). This, in itself, is a safety hazard and is exacerbated by the fact that the area of the Brockhill entrance is a request stop for buses, meaning that school students alight from or board buses here, having to cross Sandling Road on foot, avoiding car drivers who may well be frustrated by the delays they have experienced getting through this "bottleneck". The proposed development at Minstead would add provision for car access for two additional households (2x2 car ports are included in the proposal) which would increase pressure in this already difficult area. Additionally, the volume of heavy construction traffic that would need to use the entrance to the Minstead site if planning permission was to be granted would seriously increase road safety hazards while construction was in progress.
11. In this regard, the Parish Council was surprised and disappointed that the KCC Highways and Transportation Department felt it appropriate to respond to the request for comments from Folkestone and Hythe District Council Planning Department by saying "...it would appear that this development proposal does not meet the criteria to warrant involvement from the Highway Authority..." and that "...if there are any material highway safety concerns that you feel should be brought to the attention of the HA, then please contact us again...". The Parish Council asks that the Planning authority brings to the attention of KCC highways the concerns raised in paragraph 10.
12. The Parish Council believes Brockhill Park School, an immediate neighbour of Minstead, has not been officially informed of the proposed development and asks that the School be contacted for comment.
13. The area around the access to Minstead and Brockhill Park suffers from rain run-off from the northern hillside of Sandling Road causing flooding from time to time (most recently last week) which further complicates traffic flows.

Loss of habitat/biodiversity

14. The planning application lays considerable emphasis on design features of the proposed houses that are positive in promoting biodiversity through maintaining some existing features, such as hedgerows and a pond, and incorporating some design features that could provide habitat and help sustain biodiversity on the site. This, of course, is to be welcomed in any development proposal. However, it would be an exaggeration to suggest that these measures would provide an overall positive gain in biodiversity: at best, they can be described as efforts to mitigate the loss of habitat/biodiversity inherent in construction two homes on a site that has, up to now, been left in a largely natural state. It is also worthy of comment that, in anticipation of planning permission being granted (and before the application was actually submitted) substantial tree felling has been carried out on the site and approximately 10 metres of pre-existing hedgerow bordering Sandling Road has been grubbed up.
15. Moreover, residents have expressed concern over the likely disturbance to resident species given special protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended, during the ground clearing work that has already been undertaken at Minstead, any future construction work and the effects of human disturbance by three households, rather than one household, occupying the site. In particular, the Great Crested Newt is believed to be present on the site based on a survey involving a former resident and an existing resident some years ago, as well as on current observations in local gardens.

CONCLUSION

16. Saltwood Parish Council firmly believe that this proposed development does not meet the relevant applicable criteria for development outside a settlement boundary despite efforts by the developer to mitigate the effects of the development. It also raises very serious questions of principle concerning protection of the AONB from unwarranted development. The Parish Council firmly recommends that this planning application be refused.
17. Should this application be recommended for approval, the Parish Council would like to be represented at the relevant Development Control Committee meeting.

(b) Other planning matters: - No matters raised.

145. VILLAGE GREEN – Benches

Following a proposal by Cllr. Miss L. Sadler and seconded by Cllr. F. Boland it was agreed to accept the quotation for £950.00 plus VAT from Sprinks Construction Ltd. for fitting the two new benches on the Village Green.

146. CHILDREN’S PLAY PARK –

- (a) Repairs to equipment** – Repairs to Cable Runway and MUGA had been completed.
Following proposal by Cllr. N. Matthews and seconded by Cllr. Miss L. Sadler payment for the work carried out by Safeplay Playground Services Ltd of £185.7+ VAT of £87.15 was agreed.
- (b) Play Park Inspection Report** – Discussion on inspection carried out on the 21 November 2019 deferred to next meeting.
- (c) Safeplay Playground Services Ltd - Increase in Play Park Inspection charges** –
Following a proposal by Cllr. F. Boland and seconded by Cllr. N. Meurice the proposed increase charge for each inspection carried out in February, May and October from £39.50 to £41.00 + VAT was agreed.
- (d) Provision of Litter Bin – Provision of** new litter bin was deferred until February 2020.
- (e) Ground Maintenance 2020** - It was agreed following a proposal by Cllr. F. Boland and seconded by Cllr. Miss L. Sadler to accept quotation from Landscape Services to carry out the following works at the Children’s Play Park during 2020 – No.1 for £424.94 + VAT carryout grass cutting with a ride on mower on 16 occasions, including back up strimming around obstacles and field perimeter and No.2 for £566.59 + VAT carryout back up mowing on children’s recreation ground on 16 occasions.

147. FINANCE –

(a) To receive balances at 02 December 2019 –

HSBC – Community Account	£5649.52
HSBC – Business Account	£15,081.07
Nat. Savings Investments	£1001.20

(b) To confirm payments since last meeting -

100302 – Paul Thompson Tree Surgery & Fencing – Village Green –Removal of tree adj. ‘Phone Box and grinding of stumps.	£350.00
100303 – Jati Ltd. – Plaque for new bench on Village Green	£45.00 (Inc. VAT of £7.50)

Following a proposal by Cllr. N. Meurice and seconded by Cllr. F. Boland the above payments were confirmed.

Finance (contd.)

(c) Accounts presented for payment –

100304 - Sprinks Construction Ltd. – Village Green – Erection of two benches	£190.00 (Deposit)
100306 - Royal British Legion – donation for wreaths	£50.00
100300 - Mr. G. Marsh – Village Green mowing – 7.5 hours @ £10.00 per hour	£75.00
100307 - Saltwood C.E. Primary School – Hire of room for meeting held on the 02 December 2019.	£20.25
100308 - Clerk's Salary – April to September	£1430.00
100309 - Safeplay Playgrounds Ltd. – Children's Play Park – Inspection of equipment 21.11.2019	£47.40 (incl. VAT of £7.90)
100310 - Frederic Hall (Solicitors) – Land adj. 16 Bartholomew Lane.	£300.00 (incl. VAT of £50.00)
Following a proposal by Cllr. N. Meurice and seconded by Cllr. F. Boland the above payments were agreed.	

148. SALTWOOD HIGHWAYS IMPROVEMEN PLAN –

The Clerk reported email received from Mr. Damien Cock, Schemes Project Manager, KCC Highways confirming, he hoped to have completed the design and actual costs for the proposed highway improvements around the Village Green by the end of November 2019.

149. OTTERPOOL PARK –

The Chairman reported email received from the Otterpool Park Project Co-ordinator requesting a date for a meeting with two representatives from Folkestone & Hythe District Council to update the Parish Council on Otterpool Park. It was agreed to suggest 6.00 p.m. before the Parish Council meeting to be held on the 06 January 2020.

150. DEFIBRILLATOR – Funding –Deferred to next meeting.

151. V.E. CELEBRATIONS 2020 – Deferred to next meeting.

152. LAND ADJ 16 BARTHOLOMEW LANE:

Report received from Mr. I. Farthing of Frederic Hall, Solicitors on his recent meeting with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman, regarding Frederic Hall acting for Saltwood Parish Council in submitting a further application to H.M. Land Registry for a Possessory Title to the land adj. 16 Bartholomew Lane.

Following a proposal by Cllr. N. Meurice and seconded by Cllr. F. Boland it was agreed -

- (a) To engage Frederick Hall, Solicitors to act on behalf of Saltwood Parish Council in submitting a further application for a Possessory Title to the above-mentioned land.
- (b) The estimated cost for carrying out the work to be between £850.00 and £1000.00 plus VAT.
- (c) A sum of £300.00 on account to be paid to Frederick Hall Solicitors.

153. OTHER CORRESPONDENCE:

The following emails had been circulated to Councillors –

07.11.2019 - Folkestone & Hythe D.C. – Purdah Guidance

13.11.2019 - Folkestone & Hythe D.C. – Polling place review and polling station changes.

28.11.2019 - Affinity Water – water resources update

154. ANY OTHER BUSINESS – No matters raised.

155. DATE OF NEXT MEETING – Monday, 06 January 2020 at 6.30 p.m.

..... (Chairman) 06 January 2020.