

# FLETCHING PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Gabriella Paterson-Griggs

E-mail: clerk@fletching-pc.org

Website: www.fletching-pc.org



**MINUTES** of the Meeting of **FLETCHING PARISH COUNCIL** held on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2024 in The Pavilion, Fletching Recreation Ground, Fletching (6.30 – 7.35pm).

**PRESENT:** Councillors R Hannay (Chair), A Abraham, R Borton, N Collum, W Constantinou and K Minch.

Also in attendance: Gabriella Paterson-Griggs (Clerk and RFO) and Councillors C Coleman (WDC) and R Galley (ESCC)

Members of the Public in Attendance: 3

**APOLOGIES:** Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Greenish and S De St Croix

## **24/158. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Declarations of Interest RECEIVED in respect of items on the agenda, as required by the Members' Code of Conduct:

Minute 24/169 (vi) Councillor Hannay as the applicant was a friend - WD/2024/2088/FR

Minute 24/169 (iii and iv) Councillors Abraham and Minch as their properties were close to the application site – WD/2024/1874/F + 1875/F

In accordance with the FPC Code of Conduct, the councillors did not participate in the discussion or vote on the agreement of comments on these applications.

## **24/159. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the last meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2024 were a correct record and were duly signed by the Chairman.

## **24/160. MATTERS ARISING**

The Actions List as prepared and circulated by the Clerk was noted. The following items were discussed.

- CIL Funds – the Clerk reported at the meeting that the order had been put in for the replacement bins and handrail and that an installation date was awaited.

## **24/161. REPORT FROM COUNTY COUNCILLOR**

Councillor Galley reported that ESCC had met the previous week and that there was a major budget shortfall for 2025/26 which could result in cuts to services. He also explained that a Motion had been debated at the meeting in respect of ESCC being an active participant in the 'City of Sanctuary Local Authority Network'. It was noted that a letter of explanation was due to be sent to the Chairs of Parish Councils.

With regards to the lack of PCSO raised at the last meeting, Councillor Galley stated that he had spoken to the Police and Crime Commissioner, Katy Bourne, who had confirmed that all parishes have a named PCSO. It was noted that the other parishes in the area were not concerned about this issue but Councillor Galley would keep a watching brief.

Councillor Galley explained that he would be going out with the new Highway Steward for the area to show them that the state of the roads in his area were not 'fine' as he was being told. It was noted that there was still no success with getting the road from North Hall Lane to Ruston Bridge Road repaired. In response to a query about the drainage and kerbstone works being undertaken in Church Street, Councillor Galley was not aware of the details but would contact Highways to get more details.

Note: Councillor K Minch arrived at the meeting at 6.40pm during this item.

## **24/162. REPORT FROM DISTRICT COUNCILLOR**

Councillor Coleman reported that there had been an increase of planning applications submitted to Wealden as applicants were trying to get in before the biodiversity net gain deadlines. It was noted that Wealden District Council had responded to the latest NPPF consultation as had Councillor Coleman. There were no further updates on the implications for the local plan but it was hoped that

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the response to the regulation 18 consultation would be published imminently. It was noted that the responses to the Wealden Climate Change survey would feed directly into the Climate Change Strategy.

Councillor Coleman also reported that she was a member of the Wealden Food Partnership which had launched a new website – wealdenfoodpartnership.org.uk. It was noted that applications could be made to the Wealden Community Grants scheme but this was not open to Parish Councils.

## 24/163. PLANNING APPLICATION RECEIVED

The following applications were discussed. See Minute 24/169 (iii and iv) below for further information.

WD/2024/1874/F + 1875/F Old Spot Farm, Goldbridge Road, Piltdown TN22 3XN

## 24/164. WORKING GROUPS / EXTERNAL GROUPS

- i. *Neighbourhood Plan*: Councillor Hannay reported that there would be an article in the Parish Magazine requesting parishioners to identify areas and items of significant interest.
- ii. *Planning Working Group*: the report setting out an amendment to the membership of the Planning Working Group, produced by the Clerk and circulated prior to the meeting, was discussed and it was agreed that Mark Creamer, a current member of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, be appointed to the Planning Working Group. Councillor Hannay also requested that the planning advice received from Hugh Bullock, when requested by the Group, also be formally recognised. This was agreed and the Planning Protocol to be amended accordingly.

It was, therefore, **RESOLVED** that:

1. The Parish Council appoint up to two non-councillors to the Planning Working Group with immediate effect;
2. The non-councillor appointees to be existing members of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group;
3. The Planning Protocol be amended to:
  - a. reflect the new membership arrangements;
  - b. state that at least one councillor must attend a site meeting;
  - c. that at least two councillors must be involved in agreeing the comments when submitting them on behalf of the Council; and
  - d. the Planning Working Group on behalf of the Parish Council can, when it deems it appropriate, ask Hugh Bullock to provide planning advice to the Group/Parish Council as an independent consultant.
- iii. *Fletching Recreation Ground Committee (FRGC)*: The Clerk reported that the meeting of the FRGC due to take place in September had been postponed but was rescheduled. It was noted that suitable chairs had now been procured for the pavilion by Councillor Hannay on behalf of the FRGC.

## 24/165. CORRESPONDENCE RECEIVED

- i. *Nature Recovery Strategy for Sussex*: It was noted that Councillor De St Croix had undertaken this on behalf of the Parish Council.
- ii. *Wealden DC – Members' Allowances and Remuneration 2025/26*: Members noted the annual request for feedback to the Independent Remuneration Panel and confirmed they had nothing to report.
- iii. *Wealden DC – Environmental Framework for Events and Licensed Businesses*: The consultation was noted and it was agreed to put this on the agenda for the next meeting.

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## 24/166. FINANCE AND ASSETS

- i. The invoices and payments for October 2024 were **AUTHORISED** and the Council's current financial position and bank reconciliation were noted.
- ii. External Audit 2023/24 – Councillors noted the External Auditor's Note and Certificate and thanked the Clerk for her work on the audit.

## 24/167. BURIAL GROUND

- i. Councillors **APPROVED** the memorial application.

## 24/168. ENFORCEMENT – PLANNING and DRAINAGE

There were no enforcement issues to discuss

## 24/169. PLANNING APPLICATIONS - RECEIVED

It was **RESOLVED** to make the comments as set out after each application in respect of the following:

- i. **WD/2023/1466/LB St Mary's House, High Street, Fletching TN22 3SS**

Re-tiling of roof.

*This is for a repair to the roof and the external tiles will be the same. Some concern is raised about using felt in an old roof because this reduces the air flow and will encourage rot of the timber and reduce the life of the roof. The Parish Council SUPPORTS this application.*

- ii. **WD/2024/0103/F Malling Farm, Down Street, Piltdown TN22 3XU**

Replacement of lawful park home with a new dwelling (Amended Plans).

*The revision to the "red site area" really just reflects land ownership boundaries and has no material impact on the application. Therefore, the Parish Council has NO ADDITIONAL COMMENTS to make*

- iii. **WD/2024/1874/F Old Spot Farm, Goldbridge Road, Piltdown TN22 3XN**

Demolition of existing farm shop and outbuildings and erection of six semi-detached dwellings with associated landscaping and infrastructure.

- iv. **WD/2024/1875/F Old Spot Farm, Goldbridge Road, Piltdown TN22 3XN**

Erection of one self-build two storey dwelling with associated landscaping and infrastructure.

*The Parish Council OBJECTS to these applications. See detailed response attached to these minutes.*

Note: Councillors Abraham and Minch declared an interest in these applications and took no part in the discussion or voting on the applications (see Minute 24/158 above).

- v. **WD/2024/1980/LBR Shortbridge Mill, Shortbridge Road, Piltdown TN22 3XA**

Removal of existing weatherboard to font elevation, repair of the timber frame construction to the upper floors and reinstatement of existing weatherboard (where sound). Any deficit made up of new timber to match existing on a like for like basis (part retrospective).

*Obviously, repairs are necessary as photographs of the rot show and the Parish Council is pleased that they are using oak throughout which is important and are not using any felt. The repairs seem to be appropriate and the Parish Council SUPPORTS the application.*

Note: Cllr Greenish declared an interest in this application as the owner is a friend and he took no part in the consideration of the application by the Planning Working Group.

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vi. **WD/2024/2088/FR Pond Cottage, North Hall Lane, Splaynes Green, Fletching**

Part retrospective application to retain existing building for continued use as residential annex and occasional use as a holiday let. No increase in footprint, bulk or volume, no external material changes.

*Planning consent was given in 2021 for “demolition of the existing garage and store, erection of new garage and store with accommodation in the roof void; new link from garage from house; new garden wall”. Condition 4 of that consent was in the following terms:*

*“The garage extension hereby permitted shall be regarded and used as an integral part of the existing dwelling, Pond Cottage, and shall not be used for nor in connection with any commercial trade or business purposes. The ground floor garage space shall not be converted into habitable accommodation, including domestic workshop, study, games room and similar uses, without the prior written consent of the Local Planning Authority.*

*REASON: To protect the visual and residential amenities of the site and to ensure the retention of parking/storage provision to obviate the need for further outbuildings having regard to SPO13 and WCS14 to the Wealden Core Strategy Local Plan 2013, Saved Policies EN6, EN19, EN27 and TR16 of the adopted Wealden Local Plan 1998 coupled with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.”*

*The applicants are in breach of this condition. The ground floor garage space has been “converted” into habitable accommodation, originally for the applicant’s father and more recently for the occasional Airbnb letting. This application is to retain that unauthorised use as habitable accommodation.*

*The 2021 planning consent is very recent. The Design and Access Statement suggests that the provision of habitable accommodation on the ground floor was made “at the time of the original construction”. If that is right, the extension wasn’t even built as a garage so the breach was pretty much “ab initio”. The Parish Council does not have any great objection in principle to an Airbnb use (it is understood there is significant demand for it in the area) but it is conscious of the reasons given for the prohibition on conversion into habitable accommodation which were: “To protect the visual and residential amenities of the site and to ensure the retention of parking/storage provision to obviate the need for further outbuildings etc.....”. This has not be addressed by the applicants and it is a pretty flagrant breach of planning control. The Parish Council OBJECTS to this application. If the District Council was minded to approve the application, the Parish Council would request that the extension could only ever be used as ancillary accommodation to the main house.*

Note: Councillor Hannay declared an interest in these applications and took no part in the discussion or voting on the applications (see Minute 24/158 above).

vii. **WD/2024/2163/F Piltdown Lodge, Lodge Lane, Piltdown TN22 3YP**

Erection of single storey extension, installation of rooflight.

*This is a very modest alteration in keeping with the main house. It is also not going to be visible as it is on the rear side of the building. The Parish Council SUPPORTS the application.*

viii. **WD/2024/2197/FA Little Wild, Sharpsbridge Lane, Piltdown TN22 3XG**

Variation of conditions 2 & 6 of WD/2024/0629/F to enable omission of 6 no. dormer windows to be replaced with standard velux skylights, alterations to internal layout, new catslide roof to accommodate taller sliding doors to the rear and enlargement of existing window openings on each side elevation.

*The proposed variations (particularly the replacement of the dormers with skylights) are an improvement to the scheme and the Parish Council SUPPORTS the application.*

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## 24/170. PLANNING APPLICATION RECEIVED AFTER AGENDA PUBLISHED

The following application was received after the agenda was published:

### **WD/2024/2267/PIP Land at rear of Roselands, Goldbridge Road, Piltdown TN22 3XL**

Erection of two bedroom single storey dwelling and associated works (Comments to be submitted by 31 October 2024)

It was **AGREED** that the response to this application be delegate to the Planning Working Group given the comments had to be submitted to Wealden DC prior to the next meeting. The Working Group to note that of those councillors present at the meeting two wished to see the application refused, one was in support of the application and three were undecided.

## 24/171. PLANNING APPLICATIONS - DECISIONS

Planning decisions **RECEIVED** from Wealden District Council since the last meeting:

### *Applications Approved*

#### i. **WD/2023/2345/F Splaynes Green Farm, North Hall Lane, Fletching TN22 3SA**

Construction of an outbuilding garden store for the secure storage of garden machinery and pond maintenance equipment/materials. (APPROVED 26 September 2024)

*Response to Parish Council: The PC comments are noted. Concerns were expressed by the case office in terms of the original proposal, which was amended, several times, to a scheme that is considered acceptable. The scheme now proposed is significantly scaled down, and details altered to give a more utilitarian feel to the building.*

#### ii. **WD/2024/1232/F Vaughans, North Hall Lane, Fletching TN22 3TJ**

Demolition of single storey sunroom and erection of two-storey extension to south eastern elevation. (APPROVED 1 October 2024)

#### iii. **WD/2024/1366/LB Churchgate House, High Street, Fletching TN22 3BS**

Repair of timber windows and replacement timber windows. (APPROVED 7 October 2024)

*Applications Refused* – none since the last meeting

*Applications Withdrawn* – none since the last meeting

## 24/172. PARISH IN BLOOM 2024

The Parish Council was delighted to have been awarded Gold and Winner of the Parish in Bloom Group for 2024. Thanks were given to all those involved in this achievement.

## 24/173. ITEMS FOR THE PARISH MAGAZINE

It was noted that the deadline for the November magazine had already passed. It was agreed that the following items be included for the next edition of the Parish Magazine:

- Date for replacement of litterbins and handrail
- Planning Working Group amendments

## 24/174. AGENDA ITEMS FOR FUTURE MEETINGS

The following items to be future agenda items:

- .gov.uk domain name and email address for the Parish Council
- Purchase of documents etc for the historical archive

## 24/175. TIME AND DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

The next meeting of the Parish Council is due to be held on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> November at 6.30pm in the Pavilion.

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## **FPC Meeting 14 October 2024 – Comments for Planning Applications**

### **WD/2024/1874/F Old Spot Farm, Goldbridge Road, Piltdown TN22 3XN**

Demolition of existing farm shop and outbuildings and erection of six semi-detached dwellings with associated landscaping and infrastructure.

### **WD/2024/1875/F Old Spot Farm, Goldbridge Road, Piltdown TN22 3XN**

Erection of one self-build two storey dwelling with associated landscaping and infrastructure.

The site covered by Application WD/2024/1874/F (**Site A**) comprises a former farm shop (now closed) set back from the road with at the front a parking/access area between the building and the public highway. The land to the rear of the shop (to the extent within the site) comprises part of an agricultural holding with a number of agricultural buildings.

The site covered by WD/2024/1875/F (**Site B**) comprises vacant undeveloped land, formerly the over-spill car park for the farm shop.

Unless otherwise stated, this is a combined response to both applications.

#### **1. Loss of Agricultural Use (Site A)**

- a. This application creates an artificial planning unit that does not exist. If it is argued that the shop is general Class E retail, then the land to the north is undeveloped greenfield land that does not form part of the planning unit since it clearly forms a part of the agricultural holding planning unit. If it is argued that the shop is an ancillary use to the agricultural holding planning unit, then the application would entail a loss of agricultural use and buildings.
- b. Thus, whichever analysis is adopted, the application would result in the loss of an agricultural use. The development as proposed would not support the rural character and function of Wealden. The Core Strategy only encourages the re-use of suitable redundant rural buildings for tourism and visitor purposes; to meet an essential rural need, support rural diversification and sustainability of the countryside, promote tourism or enhance the countryside.

#### **2. Retention of Local Services and Community Facilities**

- a. National Policy supports retention of such services (NPPF paragraph 88, d) in order to support a prosperous rural economy. Local Development policy seeks the protection of local services and community facilities such as the local shop function in communities.
- b. The applicant has failed to demonstrate that the relevant criteria for the loss of the existing use have been met (draft Policy INF7, paragraph 5). No evidence of marketing or lack of need or lack of viability has been put forward. The Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan is now of moderate weight<sup>1</sup> which is enhanced in respect of those policies to which there has been limited, if any, objection such as INF7.

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.ealing.gov.uk/info/201164/local\\_plan/3175/local\\_plan\\_guidance](https://www.ealing.gov.uk/info/201164/local_plan/3175/local_plan_guidance)

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## 3. Spatial Strategy

- a. Adopted and Emerging Development Plan policy both set a clear spatial strategy for the sustainable future of the predominantly rural District. The recent Appeal Decision<sup>2</sup> in Piltdown (**Piltdown Appeal Decision**), has clarified that application of national and local policy to the specific circumstances of Piltdown.
- b. This Piltdown Appeal Decision (August 2023) in respect of Little Barkham Farm, only some 300m from the application sites, proposed four dwellings each on two sites referred to as Upper Field and Lower Field. The appeals addressed fully not just the site-specific factors of Little Barkham Farm but more importantly the generic issues of the 5-year land supply and the overarching principles of sustainable settlement patterns, of which Piltdown does not form a constituent element. We have added emphasis and commentary where particularly relevant.
- c. The Piltdown Appeal Decision found that:
  5. *There is no defined development boundary for Piltdown, which is a rural settlement characterised by ribbon development along Goldbridge Road, the A272, between Haywards Heath and Uckfield. It is therefore in the countryside for the purposes of planning policy.*
  6. *Saved Policy GD2 of the Wealden Local Plan 1998 (Local Plan) seeks to resist all development beyond settlement boundaries. Saved Policy DC17 of the Local Plan specifically resists residential development in the countryside, although the supporting text sets out a series of exceptional circumstances where housing may be acceptable. It has not been suggested that any of these exceptions apply in this case.*
  7. *Policy SPO3 of the Core Strategy seeks to focus development primarily around Hailsham/Hellingly, Polegate/Willingdon/Stone Cross and Uckfield and the district's secondary towns of Crowborough and Hailsham rather than in the rural areas. Policy SPO8 of the Core Strategy supports some additional growth in the district's villages. Policy SPO7 seeks to reduce the need to travel by car. To achieve this aim development will be directed to places where there are opportunities to use public transport and improve the quality of journeys that can be made on foot or by bike.*
  8. *Piltdown has a convenience store associated with the petrol station, a pub and a farm shop (this has now closed, being the subject of the current applications). However, there is no primary school; the nearest is at Fletching and it would be necessary to go to Newick to see a doctor. Piltdown therefore lacks the characteristic facilities of a village. To reach employment opportunities, secondary education, leisure activities and a wide range of shops residents would have to travel several miles to Uckfield, Haywards Heath or further afield.*
  9. *..... To reach most facilities and services it would be easier, quicker, and more convenient for future occupants to do so by car, notwithstanding the bus services along the A272. Using a car would almost certainly be the default choice of travel mode for anyone who has access to private transport*

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<sup>2</sup> Little Barkham Farm, Piltdown - Ref APP/C1435/W/22/3297438 and APP/C1435/W/22/3297916

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10. *(The appeal site) lies immediately to the rear of existing development on the A272, a busy road with a speed limit of 40mph. Nevertheless, it is within a few minutes' walk of the garage/convenience store, pub and bus stops, all of which are less than 300m away. This suggests that there are realistic opportunities for future occupants to meet some of their day-to-day needs on foot. However, it would not be such an attractive proposition to walk to the farm shop (now closed) as the footway does not extend sufficiently far along the A272. To access other facilities and services residents could also choose to catch a bus into the nearby towns, although it would be easier and more convenient to travel by car. Therefore, although Upper Field, provides the possibility for residents to make a limited number of journeys on foot and by bus, it is still likely that they would predominantly choose to use a car to meet most of their off-site needs.*
- d. The Inspector therefore concluded that
  11. *..... Lower Field is not a suitable location for new housing as future residents would be over reliant on the private car to access most of the facilities and services that they would need. The proposal would be contrary to the Council's spatial strategy set out in the above policies, which seek to locate development within identified settlements and where a genuine choice of travel mode is available.*
  12. *..... Upper Field is not a suitable location for new housing. It would be contrary to the Council's spatial strategy and policies for the same reasons that apply to Lower Field.*
- e. The Inspector gave specific consideration to housing land supply and the tilted balance:-
  25. *The Council is unable to demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites; the position set out in its appeal statement was that the supply stood at 3.66 years, which is a significant shortfall. Therefore paragraph 11 d) of the Framework is engaged.*
  26. *The Framework advocates strategic policies which maximise the use of previously developed land and manage growth by locating development where there is access to a wide range of facilities, thus limiting the need to travel and providing genuine travel choice. In rural areas it states that housing should be located where it will enhance or maintain the vitality of rural communities whilst recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside. The Framework also promotes good design by ensuring the developments are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting.*
  27. *The Council's policies, although adopted 1998 and 2013, are broadly consistent with this approach and therefore carry significant weight in the assessment of the proposals. They recognise that development beyond settlement boundaries will be necessary in view of the shortage of housing land in the District. However, paragraph 80 of the Framework does not imply that housing must be 'isolated' for restrictive policies to apply. Furthermore, there is nothing in the Framework to indicate that the definition of settlement boundaries is no longer a suitable policy to direct development towards the most appropriate locations, having regard to other objectives in the development plan. Although neither of the appeal sites could be described as isolated, neither of them is close to any development defined by a*



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*settlement boundary. There are therefore no policies in the development plan that offer support for either of the schemes. As the proposals would be contrary to all the policies referred to above, both would conflict with the development plan as a whole.*

28. .... As each of the schemes would provide four new homes, this would be a public benefit of moderate weight which weighs in their favour particularly given the acute shortage of housing land in the district.

f. The Inspector further concluded:

29. (As regards Lower Field) .... Notwithstanding the Frameworks objective of significantly improving the supply of housing, the proposal would conflict with its policies relating to the location of development and the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

30. Consequently, the adverse impacts of the proposal would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when considered against the Framework as a whole. The presumption in favour of sustainable development therefore did not apply

31. In respect of the proposal for the Upper Field, I find that the site would not be suitable for new housing, even though future occupants could choose to walk to the limited facilities nearby, and could catch a bus to the nearest towns to meet some of their needs. However, the scheme would make a minimal contribution to the vitality of the rural community and, to reach most of the services and facilities they would need, residents would be highly likely to rely on the private car.

- g. Thus, the Piltdown Appeal Decision, as a matter of principle, is on all fours in its applicability and relevance to the current applications.
- h. Indeed, since the Piltdown Appeal Decision, WDC has completed public consultation on the Reg 18 Draft Local Plan. The Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan is now of moderate weight and should be given greater weight in respect of those policies to which there has been limited, if any, objection such as SS1.
- i. Draft Policy SS1 sets a clear spatial strategy based on typology of settlement by reference to overall suitability for development including based on a wholistic assessment of sustainability. The village of Fletching (the lowest order Type 6 settlement) has no housing land allocation at all and is currently expected to see 14 net additional windfall dwellings over the full life of the plan. The scattered hamlet of Piltdown, separated from the village, is not categorised as any type of settlement within the hierarchy. This is consistent with the longstanding strategy for the District and, on the evidence, recently acknowledged, accepted and upheld by the Inspector in the Piltdown Appeal Decision.
- j. As found by the Inspector, Piltdown is situated in the countryside through which the A272 passes. Draft Policy INF2 supports draft Policy SS1 in seeking to secure concentrated development in existing settlements dependent on their population and services.
- k. In preparing the Reg 18 Draft Local Plan, WDC examined the results of a call for sites in the SHELAA 2024. The subject application sites (Site Reference 1196/1630) were promoted and then assessed, albeit in advance of decisions on the planning strategy in the WLP. WDC rejected the location concluding that (emphasis added):-

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*The site comprises of a farm shop and car park located to the west of Piltdown and to the north of the A272 (Goldbridge Road). The southeastern and southwestern boundaries of the site are bounded by a group Tree Protection Order (TPO). The site in its entirety is included within a Biodiversity Opportunity Area. The site is remote from existing services, amenities and public transport, and is visually and functionally separated from Piltdown to the east and the A272 has no footpaths at this juncture. Housing development in this location would be out of keeping with and would result in a detrimental impact upon this semi-rural landscape. In addition, it is likely that a vehicular access may prove difficult to achieve, given the speed of the road (50 mph speed limit) and visibility.*

- l. It follows that the development of dwellings on these sites conflicts with adopted and emerging Development Plan Policy and would conflict with the clear spatial principles of National Policy endorsed by the Inspector in August 2023.
- m. It is suggested that the mere introduction of easier bus facilities (whether by additional bus-stops or provision of additional pavement) renders a site suitable in terms of sustainability. This represents a crude, simplistic and single-issue analysis of the many and complex factors required to render a settlement, of any form, sustainable.
- n. Thus, simply providing an additional bus-stop within a few hundred meters of an existing bus-stop does not “convert” Piltdown into a sustainable location as the Spatial Strategy, as applied to Piltdown by the Inspector in the Piltdown Appeal Decision, clearly demonstrates. Neither does the introduction of some pavement linking to other parts of Piltdown overcome the fundamental issue of spatial geography of the district and Piltdown’s location and character as a small, scattered hamlet.
- o. With particular reference to Site B, WDC recently refused an application for permission in principle to erect a detached three-bedroom single-storey dwelling with car port and associated works on the site of a former sand-school in Piltdown (Ref: WD/2023/3137/PIP). The principal grounds of refusal (consistent with the Piltdown Appeal Decision) were:
  - i. *The application site occupies an unsustainable rural location outside a development boundary where new housing is resisted and where there is very limited access to local and day-to-day services other than by private car. The provision of one dwelling would not significantly or demonstrably outweigh this harm. The site does not therefore constitute a sustainable location for housing contrary to policies GD2, EN1 and DC17 of Wealden Local Plan 1998; policies SPO7, SPO13, SPO14 and WCS6 of Wealden Core Strategy 2013; and paragraphs 83, 108, 114 and 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework.*
  - ii. *The proposed development and related residential use would have a harmful urbanising impact on the rural location contrary to policies EN1 and EN27 of Wealden Local Plan 1998; SPO1, SPO13 and WCS14 of Wealden Core Strategy 2013; and paragraphs 131, 135 and 182 of the National Planning Policy Framework.*

## 4. Character and Appearance

- a. The general principle of the impact of concentrated residential development in the hamlet of Piltdown were specifically considered by the Inspector in the Piltdown Appeal Decision who concluded that (emphasis added):-

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18. "The proposal) would consolidate and intensify the looser and more dispersed pattern of built development in the locality. In addition to the significant bulk of the dwellings, the proposal would introduce hard-surfacing, boundary treatments, parking spaces and domestic paraphernalia. Any sense of the site being countryside would be displaced by a domestic character with all the activities and comings and goings associated with the use of permanent homes.
  19. Furthermore, the proposed courtyard layout would have a regimented appearance with buildings close to and at right angles to each other. This would not reflect the more informal arrangement of existing buildings and the organic way in which the surrounding area has evolved over time. The two, large, detached dwellings would be mirror images of each other and their size and bulk would be out of keeping with the scale of other nearby dwellings. The design details with garages, dormer windows, balconies and chimneys would serve to emphasise the domestic appearance and suburban character of the development. The lack of space for effective landscaping within the courtyard and the need for parking spaces would result in a sterile appearance preventing the establishment an attractive place to live. Therefore, the proposal would fail to integrate effectively within this semi-rural environment.
  24. ..... the proposal would harm the character and appearance of this semi-rural area, arising from its poor siting, design and layout. It would conflict with saved Policy EN27 of the Local Plan and Policy SPO13 of the Core Strategy. These policies, amongst other things, seek to promote good design, and require the scale, form and layout of development to respect its context.
- b. These applications would similarly conflict with the relevant national and local policy as applied by the Inspector in the Piltdown Appeal Decision and as applied by WDC in application no. WD/2023/3137/PIP, to the specific circumstances of the character and appearance of Piltdown.
  - c. The Emerging Wealden Local Plan (2024) also sets down policy parameters for development which are not met in these applications. Policies HO1 (all proposed dwellings are 3 beds with no smaller units for which there is greater acute need), HO2 (in this case, the proposed density is excessive give the circumstances of Piltdown) and DE1 (the proposal conflicts with the context, identity and built form of the site and the lack of compact sustainable forms of development in Piltdown)
  - d. The applicant's Design Statement refers to the use of red bricks and orange roofing tiles. These materials are typical of industrialised homebuilding at a scale for example at Ridgewood in Uckfield. Such materials are not part of the context or design of the more traditional housing in Piltdown. Brickwork in traditional hamlets and villages is darker and more subtle, for examples Sussex Dark Multi Stock Brick, Type: Soft Mud Sanded Texture, Colour: Red Blue Buff Grey Multi Tonal. Roof tiles are typically Traditional Antique & Sussex Colours such as Medium Antique, Dark Antique, Red Antique, Jubilee, Weathered Earth from the 'Traditional' range.

# FLETCHING PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk: Gabriella Paterson-Griggs

Tel: 07534 959772

E-mail: clerk@fletching-pc.org

Website www.fletching-pc.org



- e. Tones of brickwork should emulate the prevailing character of the hamlet. It is a perennial issue that too much design of new housing is generic pattern book design unsupported by adequate analysis of context of rural historic context.
- f. The design fails to adopt any contextual approach to design. The overall heights of the buildings are excessive (8.5m and 7.9m) when compared with the character of dwellings in Piltdown. This unfortunate effect of excessive height and density is prevalent in too many proposals. It is important to recognise the excessively large and tall roof voids enable later loft conversion to add bedrooms which results in dwellings that are no longer 3-bedroom dwellings. Planning conditions should always be imposed to prevent such conversion.
- g. Drawings numbered 03/B and 04/C amply demonstrate the problem. We consider that the views of the Inspector in the Piltdown Appeal Decision could be applied equally to this proposal:
  - 11. It “..... would amount to a substantial and incongruous visual intrusion of suburban style development into the open countryside. Its separation from other nearby development would make this particularly harmful. It would not relate to, or integrate effectively with, any of the nearby buildings and would be completely at odds with the appearance of the surrounding rural area”

## 5. Case Law

The analysis set out in this objection is consistent, not only with the relevant provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework and the policies of the Wealden Local Plan (1998) and Wealden Core Strategy (2013) but also with the emerging policies in the Draft Wealden Local Plan (2024). It also wholly consistent with the finding of the Inspector in the Piltdown Appeal Decision. The Inspector in that case would, when making his decision, have been fully familiar with the case law (handed down in 2017 and 2018) extensively cited by the applicant concerning the tilted balance; yet effectively dismissed in Piltdown Appeal Decision.

## 6. Planning Appeals

The applicant also cites appeal decisions elsewhere yet fails to make any mention of the Piltdown Appeal Decision which is within the immediate proximity of the application site (within 300m) and is of far greater relevance and of substantially greater weight.

## 7. Planning Histories

- a. The applicant also cites various other decisions in Piltdown. There is only one decision cited (WD/2022/2692/F) which was made after the Piltdown Appeal Decision. The other decisions relied upon by the applicant are historic and irrelevant. Even that one decision cited (The Wattles) is no more than a minor infill between existing dwellings for a new single dwelling, consistent with the Inspectors finding in the Appeals Decision that Piltdown “... is a rural settlement characterised by ribbon development”
- b. The applicant fails to make any reference to the recent refusal of planning permission in Piltdown (WD/2023/3137/PIP) discussed above. The refusal of planning permission in that case is consistent with the spatial principles established by the Inspector in the Piltdown Appeal Decision

## 8. Previously Development Land (Site B)

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Clerk: Gabriella Paterson-Griggs

Tel: 07534 959772

E-mail: clerk@fletching-pc.org

Website www.fletching-pc.org



The applicant is incorrect in arguing that Site B constitutes previously developed land. This is a common error of misconstruction of the meaning within the National Planning Policy Framework. The issue was specifically addressed in the case of a recent proposal in Piltdown<sup>3</sup>. The carpark is not land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, nor is it within the curtilage of developed land (NPPF, Annex2). Thus, it is not PDL/brownfield land.

## 9. Self-build (Site B)

The applicant appears to argue that, in some way, self-build justifies some other application of usual planning policy and practice. All the factors set out above apply with equal force to both applications.

## 10. Affordable housing

- a. Given the sites are less than 0.5 ha, no affordable housing is proposed. Yet it is evident that the application site boundaries are predominantly random and are reduced for the sake of the policy argument.
- b. Such application boundaries also leave open the clear possibility for later applications which would serve not only to intensify development but also would bypass normal affordable housing policy by disaggregating the 10-unit threshold over multiple applications to avoid that provision.

## 11. Conclusion

- a. For all the reasons set out above, the Parish Council OBJECTS to these applications and considers they should be refused. There are no other considerations, including the provisions of the Framework, which outweigh this conclusion.
- b. The refusal of planning permission would be consistent with the principles of development within Piltdown established by the Piltdown Appeal Decision.
- c. The grant of planning permission would be inconsistent with the refusal in WD/2023/3137/PIP
- d. Historic grants of planning permission in Piltdown are now of no weight in the light of the appeal decisions.
- e. In applying the tilted balance to development in the specific case of Piltdown, the adverse impacts of the proposal would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when considered against the Framework as a whole. The threshold for the presumption in favour of sustainable development is not therefore met and in consequence the presumption does not apply.

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<sup>3</sup> Little Barkham Farm WD/2023/3137/PIP