

# Burwash Parish Council Planning Committee

Minutes of the Planning Committee

Held on the 26<sup>th</sup> November 2019, at 6.30pm in Parish Room (Internet Room), Bear Car Park

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Chair Cllr N. Moore, Vice-Chair Cllr Rees, Cllr McBride, Cllr S Moore, Cllr Wraight, Cllr Caulkin, Cllr Newson. Also attending; Cllr Kenny, Cllr O'Neill, Cllr Newman

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Meeting opened 6.30pm and general welcome by Cllr N Moore.

## **Public Time**

There were 12 members of the public present. District Councillors - Cllr John Barnes and Cllr Eleanor Kirby-Green- were also present.

A member of the public requested that there would be a 2-week advance warning of any public consultations and meetings being scheduled about Strand Meadow/ Watercress Field, so they had time to study the proposals. New Year was preferred.

Cllr N Moore explained that dates would be discussed at a later point in the meeting.

### **1) Apologies for Absence**

Cllr Franklin (attending SSALC Finance Course).

### **2) Disclosures of Interest**

None received

### **3) Strand Meadow/Watercress Field**

A presentation of the new set of plans was given by Mr Harry Groucott, Managing Director of MH Architects, who have been retained by the Park Lane Group to come up with a new design for the Strand Meadow site. Jake Lucas also from MH Architects accompanied him and Mr Mike Pickup, Planning Consultant to the Park Lane Group was also present.

## **Overview of Presentation**

Mr Groucott began by talking about the areas of importance when developing in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) with reference to the High Weald AONB guidelines.

### **Architects' background**

MH Architects designed Morris Close and the Rectory Court development in Burwash.

They have also had experience working within National Parks such as The South Downs and The New Forest. They have been nominated for several Sussex Awards.

A presentation on the key design elements was given followed by more detailed plans and elevations.

### **Inspiration for design**

Mr Groucott expressed the importance they put on using the historical context and the best elements of the village as a key driver in their designs.

A survey of the village showed that the use of clay tile roofs, upper story tile, clapboarding, lower mix brick/render with 45-degree pitches was typical of the area.

He also noted that most buildings are 2 storey and use tile/contrast for colour palette, also a mix of gable/barn hips. He confirmed no dormers or 3<sup>rd</sup> floor elevations were planned.

Additional trees and landscaping are planned to be added and retaining the existing tree belt was a priority in their design, as well as channelling the natural stream into the plans to make it a feature in the development.

The pre-application is with Rother and is expected back next week. They are open to the idea of some modifications and some additional design features could be incorporated. The architects are keen to hold an exhibition for residents to view plans and provide feedback.

The brief the architects are working to is for 30 dwellings, which is broken down in the design plans as follows:

1 x 1-bedroom flat

1 x 2-bedroom flat

6 x 2-bedroom 2 storey homes

22 x 3-bedroom 2 storey homes

### **Access and Block view**

The 5 units furthest along would have level access.

Other units would have a stepped approach, but less than seen in the previous plans. Stepped up features would include bin enclosures, planters and parking.

A turning head has been integrated into the plans which would allow refuse vehicles to turn easily. The turning head would also break up the development and provide a central courtyard area. The turning point has been achieved by turning the row of terrace houses to the side and therefore opening the centre.

Units would all have a minimum of 1 parking space out the front with additional parking bays across the road. The parking bays would be interspaced by trees and greenery. The bays themselves would be meshed with landscaping.

Mr Groucott expressed they would be keen to meet with the Playing Field Association to discuss the footpath that would need to be constructed to guarantee the access from the development to the village.

### **Treeline**

The site boundary would be the same as detailed in the outline plan.

Even with leaf-fall it was stated there would be good tree density.

Tree density is denser closer to Strand Meadow.

The land is well screened. Additional trees and landscaping would be added and as many of the existing trees retained as possible.

### **View and variety in the scheme**

Mr Groucott expressed there is scope for enhanced detail on home fronts.

Palette: use High Street as a reference for details. He noted that too much white might stand out in the distance spoiling the views of the AONB.

The roof scale would be reduced as exemplified in the Rectory Court development where the view from the back is smaller.

Goal is to manage access and parking with topography of the area.

### **Site Elevations**

The site elevations are between 0.5-4m lower than the previous plans.

Great care has been taken to reduce the height of dwellings.

The site and roofscape is below the ridge line and would not impinge on the existing views across the ridge. Existing Burwash roofs would be visible in distance from the development.

**Following the presentation Councillors then had opportunity to ask Mr Groucott and his colleague(s) the following questions:**

### **Q. How do the architects understand the needs of the 3 villages?**

A. 2-3 bed properties are in high demand for families, smaller houses which offer “more affordable” housing have been identified as needed.

### **Affordable housing**

### **Q. Who would have the budget to purchase? Ref. to London vs. Sussex earnings levels.**

A. The previous Section 106 was cited in reference to affordable housing. It was confirmed the plans did not include affordable housing. A figure upwards of £375k was quoted for a 3-bedroom property.

The planning consultant, Mr. Pickup, added that when viability was reviewed a financial contribution may have to be made by the developer to the district council which would then be available in the form of grants for future developments. It was confirmed that this would not immediately benefit the residents concerned with Strand Meadow.

### **Q. How many 1-bedroom flats are in the plans?**

A. One

### **Q. Would a new Section 106 have to be submitted?**

A. Yes

### **Density**

### **Q. The number of dwellings and the density were questioned.**

A. The density was an acceptable element in the previous plans and so has been maintained. Design and elevation heights were among the main grounds for refusal.

### **Q. The terraced housing appears to have been squeezed in.**

A. No, it could have been put along the road. Idea in turning the row of houses is to create more interest with stepping roof form and allow for a turning head.

### **Parking**

### **Q. How many cars would each dwelling have? Shrub Lane already gets very congested. How much parking has been allocated?**

A. More than 2 parking spaces have been allocated per unit. A total figure of 65 was given.

### **Q. How would the AONB guidelines on parking be followed?**

A. Meshed with landscaping.

**Q. Which material would be used for the thoroughfare?**

A. Pavers, cobbled. Road would be curb free/ 25mm drop curb/ flush curb.

**Q. How wide is the proposed road?**

A. 4.5-5m wide. A minimum 6m reverse back out zone is required from the parking bays.

**Q. What about parking along Strand Meadow?**

A. A verge North side of Strand Meadow has been previously approved for additional layby parking. Access as previously approved to the site.

A question was raised as to whether this was currently pavement.

A point was made that the AONB guidelines does not support lots of on street parking as described in this draft proposal. Although the development will be expected to contain all the vehicles belonging to the owners.

A councillor commented that the outline plan was originally for 17 units with 40% affordable housing. 17 units would have been much more appropriate to the site and volume of vehicles accessing it to get in and out of Strand Meadow.

**Impact on Rother View and other visual considerations**

**Q. How would the view be impacted for Rother View residents? Especially the corner house.**

A. The nearest property would be 80m away. The new properties will have 10m gardens, 4.5m patio and there is also a wide landscaping buffer.

**Q. What is the window frame colour?**

A. White

**Q. As white was mentioned earlier as potentially being an eye sore, is this something that should be incorporated into the buildings or not?**

A. This was raised with the inspector. Relaxed approach to using. One idea for making the terraced houses more appealing is to incorporate a brick feature which would improve the view for homes in Rother View that would essentially look onto the large wall at the end of the terraced houses.

**Q. What fencing would there be at the back of the gardens, if any?**

A. Hedging is the preference which would then spill onto the landscape buffer.

**Q. Would there be a service charge for residents in the development?**

A. Yes there would.

Mr Pickup added that the Southern Water have agreed to extend the sewer works to the site. These works are scheduled.

## **Surface Water**

### **Q. How is surface water to be dealt with?**

A. Surface water would be captured before it runs into gardens. The streams are part of the proposed draining system. To avoid slump there is an advanced engineered solution. Tanks would hold back excess water. Planting more trees would also be a solution to reduce flooding impact.

Stormwater capacity is the greenfield rate.

## **Footpath and access to village centre**

### **Q. What is the provision for the footpath and access into the village centre?**

A. The Gradient is too high for disabled access and will be difficult for families with push-chairs and prams. The intention is to make it easy going steps/flat with shallow gradient.

The Park Lane planning consultant added that the only requirement was to provide a footpath to the playing field boundary.

This comment was challenged by councillors and the response was that if the developer can reach an agreement with the Burwash Playing Field Association then the footpath through the playing field could be provided.

Mr Groucott said that this was their intention. He also explained that the area to the top of the development near the top field could be made into allotments or a common orchard for the benefit of the public. Councillors advised an allotment wouldn't be suitable.

### **Q. How would people with prams use the footpath?**

A. A small ramp to left of the stairs could be put in to allow a pram to be pushed up or down.

## **Visibility of Site**

### **Q. Parts of the site are very visible. What steps are being taken to reduce the impact on the AONB?**

A. The parts that are visible will have visual appeal which are in accordance with the AONB. The goal is to make the development look good so that it works with the natural surrounding area, not hide it.

### **Q. How will it impact the view from Ham Lane?**

A. A visual slide was put up which showed a small roof scape in the distance.

## **Ecology**

### **Q. What impact would the development have on the existing flora?**

A. Already maintained area. No change is expected unless to improve the ecological value. Reptiles have already been translocated and a reptile fence installed. It will be surveyed again.

Goal to maximise landscape buffer.

Dark skies to be maintained – there will not be lit up edge to the village. No street lighting is planned. Only porch and occasional brick lights. Minimal spill and low light pollution.

**Q. Can an independent ecologist be allowed on site?**

A. The Park Lane planning consultant said no and gave the reason that the County Council had approved the ecologist used.

**Q. Cllrs asked if they would re-consider as it might look like they are trying to hide something. There had been concerns with the methodology of the report with the previous application.**

A. Mr Groucott said in his experience that ecologists made their recommendations regardless of who was paying them but explained an independent ecologist might be possible.

**Target Audience**

**Q. So who is the target audience?**

A. people who want to live in a rural village who might already know people in Burwash/ have connections with the village. Would not be aimed at social housing end of market.

One councillor expressed their appreciation of the plans and the good job the architects have done with them. They are a great visual improvement on the previous plans.

The planning consultant for the Park Lane Group reiterated that the reason for the first plans being rejected were on the grounds of design and loss of light. He quoted from the inspectors' report.

Councillors said that there were other objections which the inspector didn't judge as the proposal was rejected on design grounds.

**Q. A Cllr stated that the housing was not very affordable and not very accessible.**

A. Personal choice as to where to buy and people would only buy there if they were happy with the access.

**Q. Which parts of the plans are non-negotiable?**

A. The 30 units it a key component for which approval was already reached.

**Sustainability**

**Q. The gradient to the footpath steps – how steep?**

A. The gradient would be easy going with steps (height: 170mm and depth: 250mm).

**Q. Would the site be adopted?**

A. No, not usually. Soft highway approach.

**Q. What about the Spring Line?**

A. New swale water feature at the top of the development is planned.

## **Consultation Process**

### **Q. Is it possible to have the Public Exhibition and Meeting in the New Year?**

A. Developer was hoping to hold these before Christmas. Idea would be for the architects to come across for a session from around 3pm to 7.30/8pm. They were hoping to hold the exhibition the week of the 16<sup>th</sup> December so that feedback could be received and then submit final plans end of January. The Pre-Application is due back next week.

The Chairman said that full consultation was an important principle for the Parish Council. He requested that the consultation should happen after Christmas to ensure that the maximum number of people could participate. He was particularly concerned that they were already having difficulties with people's availability in the run up to Christmas. It would be problematic to meet the council's desire for full consultation as a result.

The Parish Council would like to be able to have the exhibition up for a week to allow for other sessions where residents could come and have a look. The architects wouldn't need to be present for all these sessions. It was noted they are travelling from Chichester.

Cllrs asked that an earlier start time would be better to enable more elderly residents to come out before dark as this consultation was happening in the middle of winter.

### **Q. Which materials can be left behind for our use?**

A. There are two large A1 boards with visuals of the plans. It was also agreed that some slides would be emailed through which also include visuals with extra landscaping and cars in the parking bays. It was confirmed these materials could also be displayed on the Parish website.

### **Q. Residents would prefer the Public Exhibition to take place in the New Year as it could be perceived as trying to push it all through over Christmas when people are otherwise occupied.**

The Chair thanked Mr Groucott and his colleagues for coming.

It was requested by Mr Groucott that any key elements for feedback about the designs would be much appreciated.

*A few minutes pause was given to allow the architects and Mr Pickup to leave and members of the public not wanting to stay for the remainder of the meeting were given the opportunity to leave. Cllrs O'Neill, Kenny and Newman left.*

#### **4) Accuracy of the Minutes of the previous meeting**

The previous meeting minutes from the 18.11.19 were approved and Cllr N Moore signed them.

#### **5) Planning Applications**

(List No. 46 dated 19.11.19)

##### **a) RR/2019/2557/P**

DEL 54 Shrub Lane, Burwash TN19 7EB

Single storey rear extension with canopy and internal alterations.

**Support approval**

## **6) Correspondence to the Clerk**

### **a) Obstructed footpath**

A resident has contacted the Parish Council to complain about an obstruction to a footpath from St Bartholomew's Church along the ridge to Glebe Farm A265.

An update was given following an emailed received on 25.11.19 from Mr John Harmer on the previous actions taken. It is apparently on-going issue and it was felt this item should be raised at the Full Council Meeting on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 2019.

**Action: Clerk to add item to agenda for 10/12/19 full Council Meeting**

## **7) Information for noting or including on a future Agenda.**

Report on training session attended by Cllrs N Moore and I Rees on 22.10.19.

## **8) Any Planning Results received.**

### **Kestrel House, Heathfield Road, Burwash Weald RR/2019/2017/P**

Erection of detached garage, workshop and store (revision of RR/2018/981/P)

Permission has been granted with an included condition to ensure it is only used for the purposes stated on the application and it is not to be used for trade, business or altered internally or externally for use as habitable accommodation.

**The next meeting is scheduled for 17<sup>th</sup> December 2019 at 6.30pm.**

**Meeting closed at 8.50pm.**