

FRAMFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Planning Committee Meeting held on Tuesday, 14 May 2019, at 6.30 pm in the Village Hall, Blackboys

Present: Committee Members: Keith Brandon (Chairman), Tony Hall (Vice Chairman), Maria Naylor and Sam Sharples.
In attendance: Ann Newton (Parish Clerk).
Public: Seventy.

At the meeting, the order of the items on the agenda may be varied in line with public speaking. However, the minutes are detailed in the order of the agenda.

The Clerk opened the welcomed everyone and asked for nominations for Chairman.

1. Election of a Chairman.

Tony Hall proposed that Keith Brandon be re-elected as Chairman; this was seconded by Sam Sharples. There were no other nominations so Keith was formally elected as Chairman of the Planning Committee.

2. Election of a Vice-Chairman.

Keith Brandon proposed that Tony Hall be elected as Vice-Chairman; this was seconded by Sam Sharples. There were no other nominations so Tony was formally elected as Vice-Chairman.

3. Apologies.

There were none.

4. Declarations of Interest.

Councillors to give notice of declarations of personal, prejudicial and pecuniary interests in respect of items on the agenda. There were none.

5. Minutes of the Last Meeting for Approval.

It was agreed that the minutes of the meeting held on 18 April 2019 having been circulated, be approved, adopted and signed as a correct record. (TH/KB).

6. Planning applications for consideration

The order of the applications may be changed in line with those with public speakers but the minutes are detailed in the order of the agenda.

- **WD/2019/0511/F – Use of barn for wedding ceremonies and receptions and similar private functions, with associated parking for a maximum of 28 days in a calendar year.**
BLACKBOYS STUD, CHAPEL LANE, BLACKBOYS, TN22 5LB.
Representation was made against the application from the many (approximately 70) residents in attendance.

The Parish Council strongly objects to this application and wholeheartedly supports the views of the residents.

Blackboys Stud is a large and prominent barn, in a rural area, situated on an elevated position within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It is outside of the core area for development and provides only a negative impact on the community if approved. In our view – this should be enough to warrant a refusal by WDC officers.

The letters of objections already with WDC really do express the concerns of local people. However, we would like to address the comments of the applicant and their agent in the submitted application.

The somewhat brief D&A statement and planning statement opens by referencing that they are seeking permission for a small number of days per year, (being 28) to hold 'functions', albeit that weddings are referenced in the title, it also refers to 'other events' without explanation. It also mentions that Blackboys Stud sits in open countryside and is located within the High Weald AONB and has standing permission for equestrian use. We would have thought this would be a given, considering it is a stud. However, we are led to believe that no such use is currently enjoyed, or has done for many years.

When we look at the application it is very fragmented across several documents. To pull some of the salient issues into one – this is a proposal for a 200-person maximum sized event that can operate for 28 days per year, although expected to be only at weekends and summer time, albeit this can vary to be on any day of the year. This does mean that there could in fact be 2, or at a push - 3 events within one of the allocated 28 days. This could cause considerable stress on the local community in many ways especially if the proposal of only operating in summer time is implemented, as this could be every weekend throughout the whole of the summer period.

It is true that rural farm type locations are popular for events such as weddings, but this is not a farm. It has no supporting features unlike some of the rural event locations referenced, and we must not forget that this prominent barn is situated within a valley where sounds echo day and night.

The comparisons of other venues that offer the same as this proposal are completely inappropriate to compare with i.e. a castle - these are not going to present the same problems and effects as a wooden barn in a valley.

Two hundred people and an unknown amount of staff will need to get to and from the location. Generally speaking, such grand events employ planners or external companies to provide the needs of a party such as catering and entertainment. They do not post signs and adverts asking for local residents to step forward for part time work, so it provides no benefit to the employment of local people. At a wedding there could easily be 40 plus staff, and along with the guests the proposal put forward that many will car share is completely unrealistic. There is a very limited bus service that does not operate at night or every day of the week. Taxis are few and far between, and there certainly is not an abundance of them to cater for such a large venue. Parking for 50-70 spaces is also a complete underestimate.

To suggest that there will not be a detrimental effect on the surrounding highway network is somewhat perplexing. Do they mean the M23 or the A27? because the local roads are certainly not capable of this type of traffic. The actual lane that leads to the Blackboys Stud is a single-track road with limited to no verges, and no footways at all. How are 200 guests and possibly 40 staff going to egress the site in a quiet and safe manner whilst still maintaining a reasonable route for other vehicles that wish to use it, especially those coming the opposite way?

The transport statement is woefully biased to the applicant with little regard for the local community, and is assuming that vehicles will turn left out of the venue. However, if they turn right when leaving, there are even narrower lanes to negotiate.

The applicant refers to the NPPF in regards to a sustainable development. Every point and clause they refer to fails to mention that this application does not:

- Meet the development needs of the local area
- Meet any housing requirements
- Provide sustainable evidence that the proposal demonstrates benefits over the adverse impacts that it will create.
- Promote sustainable transport modes.
- Provide safe and suitable access for ALL users.

This list goes on, and they refer to the NPPG (National Planning Practice Guidance in exactly the same way. What they are not mentioning is the fact that this application is not for a residential development – it is for a commercial business, in the AONB and outside of a core development area.

- The traffic survey should be dismissed as totally irrelevant.
- Historic accident data is irrelevant as the proposal is what is likely to cause an accident, not how it is now.
- Buses are not a realistic or sustainable option to get to this venue as already mentioned.

The mitigations used of existing traffic such as 'cement lorries' when the barn was constructed is nonsensical. It bears no resemblance to a parade of 50-200+ vehicles exiting the venue at once.

Very concerning is the reference that vehicles could go onto the grass verges to allow passing (4.10) – this is a flagrant disregard for our community and environment. In many places there is not even a verge. This alone should be enough to present the fact that the highway infrastructure is not suitable for this proposal. How can WDC, or even at appeal, could an inspector approve the application that could devastate our verges not only from an aesthetic perspective but for the fauna that live in it.

Along with the disparity of spaces to be included depending on which document you read, the applicant has referred to the ESCC guidance for parking. This is guidance only and it would be reasonable common sense to assume that the transport requirements of a venue set in a very rural location are going to be completely different to those of one set in a town or city.

At night time, with the location situated on the side of a valley, the AONB will be illuminated considerably whilst cars shuffle and turn to get out of the venue. This is unacceptable.

There is far too much reference to 'tend to', 'normally', 'usually', 'typically' and many more non-committal terms. It can only be assumed that this has been done because it would be abundantly clear of its many failings were it to provide any specific information.

The traffic impact assessment presents no tangible evidence to support the application. There is no TRICS data for this type of application, and the referenced similar application's data is over a decade old. However, each of them has different highway and local infrastructure setups that do not even come close to this one.

It is odd that this barn was built in 2014 for equestrian use yet there are no equestrian activities. This must have been built at some considerable expense. Whilst economies change and business needs diverse, the proposal is overwhelmingly inappropriate and the applicant/agents own supporting commentary are the very reasons why it should be refused.

Strangely there is no habitats or ecological assessment within the application. The site is within the AONB, in the open countryside. The environmental and ecological impact is going to devastate local wildlife. By all accounts, the applicant suggests that the proposal actually complies as a sustainable development with no harm to the Ashdown Forest SAC (6.7) and with potential of over 200 vehicles per event creating 400 trips each time, it is extremely likely that there will be an impact as guests travel from across the country to visit our rural setting. With no mitigations in place, this application fails to address needs, other than their own.

In support of the letters of objection sent in by members of the public that have been seen already, the Parish Council endorse their points 100%. Noise alone will be of a great impact to residents and wildlife. With the potential that they could be subjected to this every weekend throughout the summer if approved, would cause untold harm locally. Residents should be able to enjoy the scenic and tranquil setting that they live in. The odd tractor and horse neighing is country life - and is acceptable. A band or disco reverberating around the valley across the AONB possibly until 23:30hrs or later is not. With multiple vehicles trying to exit one access point onto a single-track lane is going to extend the noise pollution. Are the guests going to exit the venue in silence? No, they are not. You only need to stand outside a pub at closing time to witness this

type of behaviour. In the dead of night with little traffic flowing across sweeping countryside – the noise will be intolerable.

The applicant has made no mention of other impacts such as fireworks, balloons and lanterns – each of which will be distressing to the residents, environment and wildlife. If there is any proposal to approve this application, strict control measures and conditions need to be put in place to prevent this kind of additional activity, often associated with weddings and similar celebrations.

The acoustic report and calculations are extremely misleading and should be disregarded. To suggest that ambient surrounding noise at some times will be higher than the noise produced from a music venue is questionable at the very least. To install a multi-stage noise limiter only enhances the upper noise levels allowing musicians and discos to exceed the limits for short periods of time. This type of restriction is only paying lip service knowing the need to keep noise pollution to a minimum. The barn is of thin construction and is very large with a singular occupancy, not dissimilar to a church. To suggest that no abnormal noise pollution will be created is far from reality. To put it into perspective - at night time, even fox calls reverberate around the valley and village.

To back all this up, planning policies in support of an objection are:

- 1998 Local Plan saved policies GD2, EN1, EN6, EN27, EN29, TR3.
- 2013 Core Strategy: SPO1, WCS14.
- 2019 (adopted) LP:
 - AF2: Air Quality Mitigation
 - EA5: High Weald AONB
 - RAS5: Rural Commercial Activities
 - NE1: Noise Pollution
 - NE2: Light Pollution.
- **WD/2019/0838/F – Removing existing roof and forming new first floor, adding rear extension, and other internal alterations.
KENHURST, SCHOOL LANE, BLACKBOYS, UCKFIELD, TN22 5LL**

The Parish Council supports the application which considers this is one of few locations where it is appropriate to increase the size of a property by such a large amount. It has been thought out well and is in keeping with adjacent properties, although matching cottage style windows would be preferred to blend in totally with the street scene.

As the location is almost adjacent to a village school, the Parish Council would like to see a construction and traffic plan which limits construction movements during school drop off and collection times.

7. Any Other Planning matters for reporting at the Discretion of the Chair.

To include any other planning applications which may arrive after the agenda has been published at the discretion of the Chairman in line with the terms of reference of the Committee. There were none

7. Next Planning Committee Meeting – to be agreed (re-scheduled due to further live applications).

Additional meetings will be called during the intervening period if the Chairman believes they are required otherwise comments are passed to the Planning Authority under the Parish Council's delegated procedure policy – available on the website, noticeboards and Parish Magazine.

The meeting closed at 7.10 pm.

AEN/21.05.2019

Circulation: Planning Committee.