



Rolvenden Parish Council

Minutes of a meeting of Rolvenden Parish Council held on Tuesday 17th March 2020 at 7.30pm in St Mary the Virgin Church, Rolvenden, Cranbrook, Kent TN17 4NF.

Present: Cllr Mrs D Curtain, (Chairman), Cllr E Barham, Cllr S Bryant, Cllr Mrs F May, Cllr G Tiltman and Cllr Mrs T Turner

In attendance: Peter Setterfield PSLCC, Parish Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer.

Also attending: Ashford Borough Councillor K Walder and 12 members of the public.

The venue for the meeting was changed at short notice from the residents lounge at Monypenny due to concerns with Coronavirus and the need to have a suitable distance between people.

The Chairman changed the order of the agenda as many of the residents were attending in respect of the planning application for Land South of Swiss Cottage to enable them to leave if they so wished after this item.

402. Apologies for Absence:

Cllr Mrs L Walker (Vice Chairman), Cllr A Johnstone, Cllr Mrs I Newman

403. Declarations of Interest:

1. Declarations of Members' Disclosable Pecuniary Interests:

None

2. Declarations of Members' Other Significant Interests:

Cllr Mrs D Curtain, trustee of War Memorial Trust

Councillor E Barham trustee of Basil Russel Trust, trustee of the Windmill Trust, Royal British Legion.

3. Declarations of Members' Other Interests:

Cllr G Tiltman, member of the Village Hall Management committee

Cllr S Bryant Chairman Rolvenden Football Club

404. Planning:

Under Section 70 of the Town and Country Planning Act as amended by the Neighbourhood Planning Act 2017, local planning authorities must have regard to a post Examination

Neighbourhood Plan if an Examiner has recommended that a local planning authority should finalise the draft plan with modifications.

So all future planning applications that we consider must refer to specific Neighbourhood Plan policies when being assessed and where relevant indicate which Neighbourhood Plan policy a proposal is not in compliance with and why, and vice versa.

20/00292/AS – Land South of Swiss Cottage, Rolvenden Hill, Rolvenden – Proposed change of use from equestrian to smallholding with an educational aspect incorporated to include landscaping, observation area, woodland, paddocks, food store, stables barn/toilets, polytunnel, tepee and glamping pods, visitor parking and erection of dwelling for staff accommodation.

Resolved: The Parish Council have considered this application in depth and would like to make the following observations on the documents submitted with the application.

Design and access statement

Consideration has been given to policies TRA3a TRA6 HOU5 of the Ashford Local Plan however there is no reference to the various employment or Environment policies.

The existing permission 17/1263/AS is referred to but there is no mention of the limitation on number of horses

Rolvenden railway station is quoted as a mode of transport but this is a heritage line therefore cannot be taken into account in terms of sustainability.

Figure 2 of the statement shows one of the residents of the site, clearly a breach of planning as this is not a horse.

Planning statement

Section 2 of the statement refers again to the local railway station, however it does not mention that this is a heritage line.

Reference is made to a heavily industrialised valley however the aerial photograph shows the site outlined in red which is of similar size to the timber yard.

The planning statement quotes Rolvenden Neighbourhood Plan Policy RNP11 as Conservation of rural buildings to business use; tourist accommodation or tourist attraction, this is misquoted as the policy is for the conversion of rural buildings. This application does not fit the policy as there are no buildings currently on the site.

Business plan

The business plan is flawed. There is no justification for an educational facility of this kind in this location. The local schools are all in the rural area and are familiar with farming – if they wish to make a farm visit there would be farming families amongst the pupils who would facilitate such a visit. All 3 of the local primary schools are part of the Tenterden School Alliance and as such have access to the long established

Homewood school farm if they wish. Older young people have access to Young Farmers clubs locally. Special Educational Needs are catered for at Mount Lodge Care Farm in Biddenden and the Rare Breeds centre in Woodchurch, offering day care for young adults with additional needs in a fully supervised setting. The London Borough of Hackney owns and operates Kench Hill in Tenterden, offering residential accommodation and holidays to city children from around the country and has a large vegetable garden, livestock and qualified teaching staff.

There is already a glamping business in Rolvenden which is less than a mile from the application site, offering yurts and hopper huts on a long established working farm.

The business plan refers to a number of what appear to be individual ventures that the applicant is looking to carry out on what is a relatively small site and without an indication as to the number of animals it is difficult to see how the business can be sustainable.

Application form

Under the description of the proposal it states that work or change of use has not been started yet the Design and Access Statement submitted clearly shows that sheep are resident on the site therefore change of use has commenced.

Foul sewage is not clear from the application as it quotes Mains sewer, other and Composting toilet system the drainage strategy quotes that a gravity discharge may be viable across third party land and that a pre-development enquiry made of Southern Water.

Employment: the application is at odds with the business plan in that it quotes the number of existing employees and not the proposed number, the business plan implies that there will be more employees.

No hours of opening are given which would be relevant to neighbours as there is potential for a lot of traffic movements should all of the ventures planned within the business plan take place.

The layout of the plan suggests that an experienced stockperson will be needed. Any residential development should be for that employee with an AOC attached, granted under a "rural worker" exemption, not for the owner of the site. It is usual practice for a new business of this type to run on a site for approximately 5 years to prove its viability before permission is granted for a permanent dwelling.

The applicants are seeking to minimise their impact on the AONB by pointing to the Kent and East Sussex Railway and the timber yard claiming that this part of the High Weald AONB is in some way worthy of lesser protection and the usual rules do not apply. The railway, the timber yard and the site of the railway builders cottages known as "Tin Town" are in fact what makes this landscape more unique being of huge heritage importance and therefore the immediate environs deserve the highest level of protection.

There are serious concerns about road safety, the A28 is a busy very fast stretch of road offering one of the few overtaking places for several miles. As a result accidents happen on this stretch of road as evidenced on the crash data map. The sight lines are poor especially as traffic approaches at National Speed limit, from the plans the entrance drive looks narrow considering the parking proposals include one bus which would be a danger to pedestrians and possible conflict from opposing traffic.

There is no sustainable public transport to the site as the bus stop is located further up the hill and there is no footpath and the buses are infrequent. Whilst mention is made of the Railway station this is a heritage line operated by the Kent and East Sussex Railway, therefore should be discounted.

The site is not sustainable under the NPPF as there is limited public transport and the walking distances to amenities are too great especially as there are no pavements.

The proposal is contrary to the Rolvenden Neighbourhood Plan, there is no provision in the plan for this site and it is contrary to the following policies:

RNP1 (a) the designs for the built structures are not reflective of local architecture, black weatherboarding on box like structures are not heritage style.

RNP1 (b) the proposals do not protect or enhance the heritage and its setting.

RNP3 (a) the proposals do not conserve and enhance the landscape, scenic beauty or tranquillity of the High Weald AONB.

RNP4 (a and b) it is not justifiable within the context of the national level of protection nor would it enhance the distinctive quality of the landscape

In terms of the Ashford Local Plan 2030 no regard appears to have been made to the following policies

Policy EMP1

The application indicates that this is a new employment premise however the application form shows there are two current employees and no proposed new employees. Given the nature of the proposed business the levels of traffic generated to make the business sustainable would have a significant impact on neighbouring residential occupiers. Whilst provision is being made for parking there does not appear to be any provision to improve the access to the site especially as the parking is making allowance for a bus. Both of these are contrary to the policy.

Policy EMP5

The application fails to demonstrate what impact there will be on the amenities of the neighbouring residential properties by implication groups will generate noise. In terms of criteria d) no indication is given to the amount of traffic that will be generated albeit the road passing the site is an A class road it is subject to the National speed limit should the gateway not be altered there is potential for traffic wanting to enter the site being held on the main road whilst vehicles leave the site as the entrance appears narrow on the plans potentially only one way.

Policy ENV3b

The proposals show 6 glamping pods an 8 Teepee campsite a barn/toilet block as well as a dwelling house and stables on what at present is a field albeit with planning permission for a stable block for 3 horses. This level of development will not enhance the distinctive character and tranquillity of the AONB.

Policy ENV4

No indication is given as to the provision of lighting to the glamping pods or for the pathway to the toilet block. The existing planning permission contains a condition that no external lighting shall be provided. Therefore this application should carry a similar condition in order to maintain the dark skies as well as to respect the residential amenity of the neighbouring properties.

Policy ENV5

The policy is to protect the Rural features this application sits within the AONB and does not enhance the landscape or the character of the area adjoining the application site.

In conclusion the Parish Council strongly objects to the application on the grounds that it is not compliant with the Rolvenden Neighbourhood Plan and scant regard has been paid to the Ashford Local Plan as referred to in the above comments. From the number of structures being proposed this is potentially overdevelopment of the sit

Borough Councillor K Walder has been requested to call the application in to the Planning Committee at the Borough Council.

405. Public participation:

There were no issues raised.

406. Minutes:

The minutes of the meetings held on 18th February 2020 were submitted, agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

407. Coronavirus:

It is likely that the Government will pass emergency legislation to support the prevention of the spread of Covid 19. This may include restricting people's activities and travel; increasing the number of people who are asked to "self-isolate", preventing groupings of people for meetings and events. As yet we do not know what form this will take.

At the present time there is no provision for councils to meet "virtually" this has been raised with the Government as part of the solution to issues that may arise.

The Parish Council needs to be aware that the Annual Parish Meeting has to be held between the 1st March and 1st June giving at least seven days notice as specified in the Local Government Act 1972.

Any decree issued by the Government is likely to supersede the 1972 Act further instruction will be provided by the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government should there be a need to exceed the statutory time frame.

Resolved: in the light of the current position with the Coronavirus outbreak the Annual Parish Meeting will be postponed to a date to be arranged and that further meetings of the Parish Council would also be suspended. With regard to planning applications these will be circulated by the Parish Clerk who will co-ordinate individual councillor's responses and circulate a proposed response for approval before submission to the Borough Council.

408. Planning:

20/00272/AS – Korkers Sausages Ltd, High Street, Rolvenden – Erection of non-illuminated free-standing sign (retrospective).

Resolved: to support the application.

18/00974/AS Land West of Kingsgate Cottage, Frensham Road, Rolvenden Erection of 4 new dwellings with new vehicular access from Maytham Road AMENDED PLANS

Councillor Barham raised the following concerns:

The principle that 4 houses should be built on the site is agreed within the Rolvenden NDP but the current proposals would seem to be disappointing in many respects and short of detail in others.

1. The significant difference between this proposal and the previous ones of 13 Dec 2018 is the removal of House A in the plan in the south-east corner. Why is the space therefore not better used to distribute the four remaining houses around the site, retaining an open area, so that they are not so cheek by jowl and 4 houses sit more at ease in the larger space now available?
2. House A on that plan has been removed from the scheme to reduce it to 4 properties but the plot remains within the scheme and could easily be re-inserted later. If the scheme is only for 4 houses all remaining land should either be incorporated within the gardens or a unified open space.
3. The D and A submitted appears not to provide any detail on the future management of the open space, that being 3 distinct areas site: House A site, the open ground as per pg 11 of this D&A and the woodland strip fronting Maytham Road on the west of the site. How will this be managed? It is unlikely that the Parish Council will want to take on this responsibility unless suitably endowed. Will there be a management company and what assurance do the parish have that the areas will be managed appropriately? Are they only for residents or open to all?
4. The parking allocation, whilst no doubt meeting ABC standards and having the potential to provide more parallel parking alongside the access road, would seem to be oddly laid out. The central 2 houses share three parking spaces and rely upon dedicated parking on the other side of the road, a feature also enjoyed by House B. This contrasts with the plan of 13 Dec 2018, which in many ways was a simpler and superior allocation. Each property had its own 2 spaces adjacent and it would be preferable if we reverted to this proposal.

5. For reasons that are not made clear the current proposal shows houses very similar to that previously proposed, but they have been turned 90° in the layout such that all the principal rooms face away from the street, due north. The relatively few windows that face south serve hallway, stairs and utility room, with one small south window in the kitchen area. There are no windows of significance on either the east or west faces, even when they will not overlook adjacent properties, such as on the west wall of House 5 (on the 2018 plan).
6. Neither bathroom has a window providing natural ventilation. Whilst that is not a requirement it surely is preferable and ought to be possible to incorporate in at least one of them
7. The gardens to the north are currently shown as having up to 20% of length shaded by the woodland strip, plan page 9. Whilst this depiction may be diagrammatic it will become reality as the trees there grow. They are potentially already overgrown and this will get worse. Should the houses not be moved further south in the plot to produce better gardens, redistributing the land freed up by House A and maintaining the net communal area, slightly differently laid out?
8. Amongst the best form of security any community is watching eyes, to have houses opening onto communal areas. Not one of the communal rooms faces onto the access road denying the ability of residents to see life outside their own domain. Children will be unlikely to be sent to play outside in the communal area when they cannot be watched from the kitchen window.
9. Points 5-8 would suggest that the houses should be redesigned to face the street, provide natural sunlight to the principal rooms and find the opportunity for natural ventilation of some bathrooms, much of which could be achieved by readopting the proposals of 13 December 2018.

I find the current proposals a retrograde step and would ask the Council to request a resubmission of superior plans and additional information.

Resolved: that the Parish Clerk would contact the planning department for further details.

19/01484/AS Cherry Wood Cottage, Alder Lane:

The applicant and agent attended the February meeting of the Parish Council as they wished to alleviate some of the concerns raised by the Parish Council. It was agreed that the application would be reconsidered if they provided further written evidence to support the application. This has not been received therefore it was

Resolved: the original objection to the application remains.

409. Telephone kiosk:

A sketch of the proposed artwork was circulated and risk management has been undertaken.

410. Village Fete 2020:

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic the Village Fete has been cancelled.

411. Finance:

Payments authorised at the meeting

Cheque No.	Payee	Net amount	VAT	Payment
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242 & 243	Staff costs			£771.85
244	Litter Picking			£120.00
245	Cornex Garage	£130.26	£26.06	£156.32
Direct debit	ID Mobile			£5.00
246	Ashford Borough Council	£3,370.00	£674.00	£4,044.00
247	Rolvenden Rocket expenses			£606.04
248	D Curtain			£10.00

Report RPC/19/16 brings to the Parish Council a summary of the receipts and payments together with bank reconciliation and funds statement for the period ending 29th February 2020.

Resolved:

1. To receive and note Report RPC/19/16
2. To receive and acknowledge the financial movements for the period 1st April 2019 to 29th February 2020.

£24.00 in cash was passed to the Parish Clerk in respect of sales of Rolvenden Reflections.

Councillor Curtain confirmed verification of the entries to the bank account.

Information Technology: The Parish Council have been awarded a grant in the sum of £500 from Kent County Council to enable the purchase of a laptop and software for use solely with the Rolvenden Rocket.

Councillor Barham suggested that the money would be better spent on purchasing a laptop for the Clerk's use and the Rocket data place on the "cloud".

It was pointed out that the grant terms and conditions were explicit in what the funds were to be used for and could not be diverted away from the project.

Resolved by majority: To purchase a laptop computer and software for use solely for the Rolvenden Rocket.

The Parish Clerk is currently using his personal computer for all Parish Council business with all files being stored on a USB stick. This is not ideal and the Parish Council are asked to consider the purchase of a laptop computer and Office software. It is anticipated that the total cost will be less than £500.

Councillor Barham requested that the laptop be clearly marked as the property of Rolvenden Parish Council.

Resolved unanimously: to purchase a laptop computer and office software for use by the Parish Clerk, to be clearly marked property of Rolvenden Parish Council.

Update on the missing funds:

Councillor Curtain advised that the documentation requested by the loss adjuster would be ready for submission by the end of the week. The Solicitor appointed to look at the Bank aspect has undertaken his enquiries and is preparing his submission to Lloyds Bank.

With regard to the former Clerk a proceeds of crime claim has been processed the result being he has no assets and therefore is required to pay £1 or spend an extra day in prison.

Councillor Barham left the meeting as he is a Trustee of the Basil Russell Trust.

Streyste Play area: Application has been made to Ashford Borough Council for the release of S106 monies to enable the purchase of the replacement equipment. The Basil Russell Trust has offered to provide the Parish Council with a grant of £5,000 and a loan of £5,000 interest free pending recovery of the missing funds.

Due to the restrictions on borrowing funds it was

Resolved: to thank the trustees of the Basil Russell Trust for the kind offer and to accept the £5,000 donation but decline the offer of a loan.

Councillor Barham returned to the meeting.

412. Bollards:

Enquiries have been made of Kent Highways as to whom would be permitted to install a knee rail between Monypenny and the Vicarage.

In response Kent Highways advise that the Department guidance states that fences on the Highway should be a minimum of 1100mm in height and bollards a minimum of 1000mm. this is so not to present as a hazard for the visually impaired. The knee height fences represent a trip hazard and as such would not be permitted on the highway especially where pedestrians and cyclists are likely to encounter them on their journey. Bollards would therefore be a more appropriate solution in this location as all street furniture – fences, guardrail and bollards should be mounted 450mm back from the kerb edge.

In view of the current situation the issue will be held over until such time as meetings resume.

413. Village Newcomers:

In view of the current situation no arrangements have been made.

414. Rolvenden Rocket:

A number of bookings have been cancelled due to the coronavirus outbreak, at the present time the Cranbrook School run is continuing. The organised trips that bookings are currently being accepted for will be reviewed and possibly be rearranged or cancelled.

415. Highways matters:

A resident has recently complained about the road surface on Mount Lane where it joins the A28 as it is breaking up. This has been reported to Kent Highways who advise that it has recently been inspected and that no essential works are required, A further visit will be undertaken to ascertain if any resurfacing works can be undertaken in the future.

416. Items for information:

Kent County Council have been contacted with regard to the provision of high speed broadband in response the TN17 4BU area should receive superfast in September 2020 and the Layne next year.

The Village hall are following closely the recommendations for the Coronavirus and are considering the potential shut down of the village hall to reduce the overheads.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 9.20pm.